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The Echoes of Fitna: Developing Historiographical Interpretations of the Battle of Siffin

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Abstract

The Battle of Ṣiffīn (36/657) is the flash point in the emergence of sects within the Islamic religion. This dissertation traces the presentation of the story Ṣiffīn in a specific line of Arabic universal histories, starting with the establishment of the ―vulgate‖ text, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī's Waqʿat Ṣiffīn, and culminating in the Sunnī Syrian works of Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and Ibn Kathīr. As the vulgate text, al-Minqarī's Waqʿat Ṣiffīn forms the basis for every presentation of the story that follows it, including often being reproduced word for word. Developments in the Islamic political and religious spheres, as well as developments in styles of Arabic historical writing, were highly influential in shaping the development of the story. Of particular focus is the development of a narrative voice that seeks to use the story to rehabilitate early Syrian figures by later Syrian historians.

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THE ECHOES OF FITNA:

DEVELOPING HISTORIOGRAPHICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BATTLE OF

ṢIFFĪN

Aaron M. Hagler

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THE ECHOES OF FITNA: DEVELOPING HISTORIOGRAPHICAL

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BATTLE OF ṢIFFĪN

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather-in-law, Haim Bronshtein,

who always put his family first, and to my wife Elana, son Asher, and daughter Dina.

Acknowledgements

A project as extensive as the present study obviously does not appear out of nowhere, and I am indebted to a great number of people for helping bring it to completion. First and foremost is my advisor at the University of Pennsylvania, Professor Paul Cobb, who was everything an advisor should be: helpful, communicative, understanding, supportive and encouraging. He asked challenging questions that helped the rough ideas of the early part of the dissertation process morph into the more refined ideas of the final product without ever "giving me the answer" or presupposing the outcome of my research. It is no exaggeration to say that I could not have done it without him.

I am also deeply indebted to my committee, Professor Joseph Lowry and Professor Jamal Elias, both of the University of Pennsylvania. Professor Lowry in particular provided me with a set of detailed, thought-provoking, and insightful comments on an earlier draft that were essential in helping me express the ideas in this dissertation in a clear and full way. This study would be a much poorer one but for his insights.

I would also like to thank Professor Aram Shahin for providing me with a copy of his paper, "In Defense of Muʿāwiya," as well as Professor Avraham Hakim and his editor Ahmed Chleilat for making available to me his unpublished section of Idrīs' ʿUyūn al-Akhbār. Thanks also to Nancy Khalek, who provided bibliographical guidance in the

ultimately dissatisfied with the outcome, scrape off her work with a palette knife, sandpaper it down, and start on that section anew, without even a small hesitation. Her example kept me from becoming disheartened when, inevitably, I needed to select hours of work of my own with the mouse, press the delete key, and start again.

The standard disclaimer naturally applies: while this study is indebted to the brilliant work of a great number of scholars, none of them bears any responsibility for any possible errors appearing within it.

Abstract
THE ECHOES OF FITNA:
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ṢIFFĪN

Aaron M. Hagler
Paul M. Cobb, Supervisor

The Battle of Ṣiffīn (36/657) is the flash point in the emergence of sects within the Islamic religion. This dissertation traces the presentation of the story Ṣiffīn in a specific line of Arabic universal histories, starting with the establishment of the "vulgate" text, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, and culminating in the Sunnī Syrian works of Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and Ibn Kathīr. As the vulgate text, al-Minqarī's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* forms the basis for every presentation of the story that follows it, including often being reproduced word for word. Developments in the Islamic political and religious spheres, as well as developments in styles of Arabic historical writing, were highly influential in shaping the development of the story. Of particular focus is the development of a narrative voice that seeks to use the story to rehabilitate early Syrian figures by later Syrian historians.

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A Note About Transliteration and Arabic Words and Names

The transliteration follows the style of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition (Leiden, 1960-2004), except in the case of *jīm*, which as transliterated as j rather than dj, and *qāf*, which is transliterated as q rather than ḳ. Arabic names are always rendered in the nominative case, except when governed by an *iḍāfa* within the name. For example, Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī is always rendered as Abū Mūsā, and never as Abā Mūsā or Abī Mūsā, regardless of his grammatical role within the sentence; however, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib is never rendered as ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib. "God" is always substituted for "Allāh" except in cases where "Allāh" is part of a name (such as ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās) or occurs in a transliterated phrase and, especially, if it is the object of an attached preposition (such as *lā ḥukma illā lillāh*).

Tāʾ marbūṭa endings are transliterated as –a and as –at in iḍāfas (thus: *shīʿa,* but *shīʿat ʿAlī*), except when quoting from an English source that employs a different system (thus, *Muʿāwiya* may sometimes appear as *Muʿāwiyah* in quotations from other English sources, particularly in the translated work of al-Ṭabarī). When translating from French or German sources, in cases where the style of transliteration is different from the *Encyclopedia of Islam* style, the transliteration has been adapted to conform to the style used here; however, Arabic words and names in quotes from German and French scholarship will adhere to the transliteration of the source.

Dates are always presented with the Hijri date first, Gregorian second; for example, the battle of Badr took place in 2/624.

Abbreviations

Concordance = Wensinck, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*

GAL = Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*

GAS = Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*

IJMES = *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*

Irshād = Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb ilā Maʿrifat al-Adīb*, or *Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ*

JSAI = *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*

W.Ṣ. = Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*

Introduction

On the 18th of Muḥarram, in the Hijri year 36 (July 17, 656), the third Caliph of the early Islamic Empire, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, was assassinated. He was not the first Caliph to be assassinated; his predecessor, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, had been attacked and mortally wounded by a slave twelve years earlier. The assassination of ʿUthmān, however, was a direr event for the nascent Islamic state; unlike ʿUmar, ʿUthmān had been slain by fellow members of the Arab elite.

So began the first *fitna*, or period of civil strife, in Islamic history. The men who killed ʿUthmān were supporters of the man who would become his successor, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the Prophet Muḥammad's first cousin and son-in-law.[1] ʿUthmān himself was from a powerful family, the Banū Umayya, a major branch of the Meccan tribe of Quraysh. The Prophet and ʿAlī were born of the Banū Hāshim, a lesser branch of that tribe, and the Umayyads had been early enemies of Islam, and late converts to it. Their power over the city of Mecca still afforded them great influence throughout the empire; Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, a cousin of the slain Caliph, administered al-Shām (Syria, more or less) as its governor.

When ʿUthmān was slain, the old Meccan rivalry between the Banū Umāyya and the Banū Hāshim reared its head. ʿAlī had been named the next Caliph, supported by most of the Muhājirūn (the group of 70 converts from Mecca who had emigrated with the Prophet from Mecca to Medina) and the Anṣār (the Prophet's Medinan supporters), as well as (if the sources are to be believed) most of the people in all lands of the Empire

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[1] Whether ʿUthmān's assassins were supporters of ʿAlī at the time of the assassination or became ʿAlī's supporters subsequently is unclear. However, the support of men who were closely implicated in the assassination was critical for ʿAlī as he sought support in Kūfa.

save Syria. However, the opposition from Syria was strong. It was unclear to the Syrian partisans and notables what role, if any, ʿAlī may have played in the assassination of ʿUthmān, and their suspicion was exacerbated by ʿAlī's protection of the assassins. ʿAlī, in an attempt to shore up his support, set out against the rebels Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr, who were accompanied by the Prophet's wife ʿĀʾisha, and fought them at what became known as the Battle of the Camel. Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr were killed at the battle, and ʿĀʾisha was captured and confined to Mecca.

While he was campaigning against these two rebels, ʿAlī must have been aware of the storm brewing in Syria. ʿUthmān's bloody shirt and the tips of the fingers of his wife Nāʿila, which, the story went, had been severed when she raised her hand to defend her besieged husband, came to ʿUthmān's kinsman Muʿāwiya in Damascus, and were displayed for the people to see. Worked up into a furious frenzy, Muʿāwiya's armed Syrian supporters vowed to seek revenge for the murdered Caliph, and agreed to withhold the *bayʿa*,[2] or pledge of allegiance, from ʿAlī until he turned the killers over to face their justice.

ʿAlī was obviously unwilling to accept this state of affairs; convinced that his accession had been legal and binding, it was Muʿāwiya's duty to pledge allegiance to him as Caliph. He set out in force for Syria to get what he felt was his due obedience. Muʿāwiya, for his part, had claimed the right of blood revenge for his murdered kinsman, intimated that ʿAlī was complicit, if not actively involved, in his death, and set out from

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[2] The *bayʿa* is a concept that is integral to the Ṣiffīn story, and one whose meaning changes slightly in usage over time. Originally a Qurʾānic concept, one of nine words in the Qurʾān used to denote a religious or political covenant, the verb *bāyaʿa* rapidly became the main word for oath of allegiance to Muḥammad and then to caliphs, at least from the 680s onward. For a discussion of the concept of the *bayʿa* in the Qurʾān and in the time of Muḥammad, see Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 43 and p. 43 n. 9. See below, p. 35 ff.

Syria with a force of his own. The two armies, sending envoys back and forth as they approached each other, met at the banks of the Euphrates River near the village of Ṣiffīn.

This dissertation will examine how different Arabic historians, of different times and locations, recorded what happened next, at the Battle of Ṣiffīn. The battle itself, and its outcome, was a hinge upon which much of Islamic political history, sectarianism, and theology would turn. Although this dissertation ends its own examination of the battle at the point generally considered by the Arabic historians to be its natural conclusion—the declaration of Muʿāwiya as Caliph by his commander and arbiter, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ—the importance of the battle lies not only in what happened and what was said at Ṣiffīn, but in its aftermath. Ṣiffīn is unusually positioned in history, such that the course of the major events within the Islamic polity in the subsequent formative years are all predicated upon the course and conclusion of Ṣiffīn. As a direct result of the battle, ʿAlī's camp splintered into factions, one of which was the Khawārij, who forswore their allegiance to ʿAlī as a result of his acceptance of arbitration to settle the dispute. Four years after the battle, Ibn Muljam, one of the Khawārij, assassinated ʿAlī. Muʿāwiya was almost universally accepted as his successor. When Muʿāwiya's son Yazīd succeeded him as Caliph, ʿAlī's younger son al-Ḥusayn refused to pledge allegiance to him, on the grounds that Muʿāwiya had illegally attempted to establish a hereditary dynasty, among other reasons. Yazīd's men slaughtered al-Ḥusayn, whom the Shīʿīs would come to revere as the third imam (after ʿAlī himself and al-Ḥusayn's older brother, al-Ḥasan), at the Battle of Karbalāʾ on the tenth of Muḥarram of the year 61/680, a day still mourned by Shīʿīs and commemorated with the holy day of ʿAshūrāʾ.

The death of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī was a seminal event in the establishment of Shīʿī Islam, just as the deaths of ʿUthmān and ʿAlī were decisive for Sunnī theology. It was made possible by a series of events which began with the assassination of ʿUthmān and included the battle of Ṣiffīn, the emergence of the Khawārij, the assassination of ʿAlī, and the rise of Muʿāwiya (which also has its roots in the events at Ṣiffīn). Islam's lasting division into sects is thus a direct result of the first *fitna*. Thus, a great number of key events either occurred at, or have their roots at, the series of skirmishes and one large brawl on the Euphrates River in Syria, which later became known simply as the battle of Ṣiffīn: the death of a number of Companions of the Prophet, including ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, an event the historical memory of which, for the Sunnīs, symbolically marked the end of the community's remembered unity and the death of the age of the Prophet; the beginnings of Umayyad ascendancy in the post-Rashīdūn era; the spawning of the Khārijī sect; ʿAlī's loss of power and prestige; his subsequent martyrdom, and, following that, the theologically critical martyrdom of his son, al-Ḥusayn—an event which, from a religious standpoint, would ultimately be the historical point of contention that split the Shīʿīs from the Sunnīs once and for all. Even if, as Hodgson points out, partisanship for ʿAlī developed into genuine sectarianism slowly,[3] later generations of Shīʿīs would come to see the whole sequence of events, starting even before the assassination of ʿUthmān with the election of Abū Bakr, not ʿAlī, as Muḥammad's successor, as the period critical to distinguishing them from the Sunnīs as an entirely separate entity of Islam. As an event of such deep importance on a theological level, as well as a political level, and with the well-known difficulty of establishing a positively verifiable version of early Islamic

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[3] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shīʿa become Sectarian?" in *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* Vol. 75, No. 1 (January-March, 1955), p. 3.

historical events, the battle of Ṣiffīn became fertile ground for polemicists, theologians, and political theorists alike. The fact that it is a story that explains how, through their trickery and the idiocy of some of ʿAlī's "supporters," most especially Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, the iniquitous Umayyads came to power, heightens for subsequent pre-modern historians the importance of the event in Islamic history and history-writing.

Ṣiffīn is an event with a highly-charged potential to explore the critical dilemmas facing both the early and later Islamic communities. The first saw the appearance of schisms; the latter saw the development and crystallization of genuinely sectarian identities within Islam. The historians who wrote about Ṣiffīn—indeed, who wrote about all of the first *fitna*—were writing about the period of schism while facing a threat from competing sectarian identities and variant perspectives on Islam's holiest times.

The Sectarian Context

A brief discussion of what is meant by "Sunnī" and "Shīʿī" is in order. Since Ṣiffīn is positioned at such a critical juncture within Islamic history in general, and within the history of sectarianism in Islam in particular, the evolution of the story that is treated in this study must be seen in the context of the developing sects that came to be known as Sunnī and Shīʿī. It goes without saying that these two sects were not always the highly theologically and ritualistically developed entities that they are today. Indeed, at the time of Ṣiffīn, there were no such sects. Mention is made in some of the historical sources of certain individuals belonging to *shīʿat ʿAlī* or *shīʿat Muʿāwiya,* but this political application of the term *shīʿa* (meaning "party," or, in this case, "party of") should not be

confused with religious Shīʿism, which would indicate a belief that particular members of the house of Hāshim are in receipt of divine inspiration, and are thus guided by God whether or not they hold any political authority. There were certainly a great number of members of the *shīʿat ʿAlī* in the political sense, but few of these can also confidently be counted as religious Shīʿīs; those ideas appeared in any developed form, at the very earliest, with the advent of the *Tawwābūn* (the Penitents) who were martyred following the death of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī.[4] Even as late as the early ʿAbbāsid period, when speaking of Shīʿism we "are still only speaking of certain broadly recognizable tendencies, often in mutual conflict, with much fluidity about them."[5] Since we possess very few Shīʿī works from much before the 4th/10th century,[6] these "broadly recognizable tendencies" are often so broad as to conflate Shīʿism with support for ʿAlid claims (as we will see in the case of al-Ṭabari, the two categories are not always identical), and are now often found only in extant works that are hostile.

This dilemma in defining what precisely is meant by "Shīʿism" in the early Islamic period also has the benefit of suggesting to us the contours of the relationship between early Shīʿism and what Muhammad Qasim Zaman calls "proto-Sunnism," or, more simply, how Sunnism and Shīʿism developed in relation to each other. Shīʿism, as a religious sect, became increasingly defined through the assimilation by ʿAlid supporters of the theological ideals of those who would later be termed *ghulāt*[7] and subsequent philosophical, theological, historical, and juridicial writings based upon the notions that were born in that interaction on the one hand; on the other hand, the impetus to the

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[4] Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), esp. p. 63.
[5] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and PoliticsUnder the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), p. 35.
[6] Momen, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam,* p. 61.
[7] Ibid., p. 66.

formation of a Shīʿī identity, and the factor that gave it its most fundamental and distinctive doctrine—that of the Imamate—namely, the ʿAbbasid revolution. This was a critical time for the emerging Shīʿī community, as the revelation that the ʿAbbasids had employed Shīʿī notions of the legitimacy of the *ahl al-bayt* (literally, "people of the house," a phrase used to reference the family and descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad) and applied them not to the Banū al-Muṭṭalib but to themselves, the Banū al-ʿAbbās, required a specifically ʿAlid doctrinal response. This doctrinal challenge probably accounts for the fact that so many of the most important Shīʿī *ḥadīths* are referred back to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), who is remembered as the sixth Shīʿī Imam, and the Imam at the time of the ʿAbbasid revolution.[8] To put the matter summarily, "Shiʿism during the first one hundred and fifty years of Islam started as a principally political movement focused on the house of ʿAli, centred in Iraq, and antagonistic to Umayyad-Syrian domination. It was neither an organised nor a uniform movement and would perhaps be better described as a sentiment than a movement."[9] This sentiment, however, would develop and crystallize into the full-blown religious sect by the 4th/10th century,[10] which is the very era in which many of the surviving Arab historians lived and wrote. It was in Baghdad during the period of Būyid rule (333-446/945-1055), and also during the period of many of the historians examined here, that "Twelver" Shīʿism finally developed religious practices and a sense of communal identity that were distinct from the general Muslim community.[11] New elements that distinguished the Shīʿīs from other

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[8] Ibid., p. 70.

[9] Ibid., p. 70.

[10] See Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shîʿa Become Sectarian," *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* vol. 75, no. 1 (January-March 1955), pp.1-13; Patricia Crone, *God's Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[11] Hugh Kennedy, "The late ʿAbbasid pattern 945-1050," in Chase Robinson, ed., *New Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 360-393, esp. p. 387.

sects included the public denigration of the first two caliphs, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and the development of certain specifically Shīʿī festivals, including mourning for al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī on the tenth of Muḥarram and the celebration of Ghadīr Khumm on the eighteenth of Dhū al-Ḥijja, commemorating the event at which Shīʿīs believe that the Prophet acknowledged ʿAlī as his rightful successor in 10/632.[12] Furthermore, the tombs of ʿAlid family members became centers of pilgrimage. These three elements, writes Kennedy,

> "characterise the development of the mature Shīʿism of the fourth/tenth century as distinct from the reverence for ʿAlī or support of ʿAlid pretenders to the caliphate which had been common in previous centuries….The three distinguishing features of the new Shīʿism were all essentially public acts, and at least two were exclusive; while any Muslim could accept the veneration of the tomb of ʿAlī, if not those of all his descendants, no one could accept the celebration of Ghadīr Khumm or the cursing of the first two caliphs without cutting himself off from a large number of other Muslims."[13]

Tensions between the Shīʿīs and their Sunnī neighbors came to a violent head in 361/972, as the religious differences between the two sects spilled over into the political realm. These tensions resulted in the division of Baghdad into fortified quarters split on sectarian lines. Ultimately the divisions of both the city and *umma* (Muslim community) became permanent.[14]

It is common to think of Shīʿism developing in response to Sunnī developments. In a poltical sense, perhaps, this is true, as Sunnīs held temporal sway over the Islamic world for most of its premodern history (the most notable exception being the Fāṭimids, but also including the Būyids). However, doctrinally, the situation is much more fluid. Shīʿī claims led to Sunnī counter-claims, and these counter-claims would then have to be

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[12] Ibid., pp. 388-9.
[13] Ibid., p. 389.
[14] Ibid., p. 390.

answered by the Shīʿīs, and so forth. This process was not, as was emphasized above, immediate, but a slowly evolving literary and theological back-and-forth in which Shīʿism and Sunnism fed off of each other to become ever more defined in opposition to each other.

There were, of course, points of overlap; ʿAlī, for example, was regarded as legitimate by both Shīʿīs and Sunnīs. What makes Ṣiffīn such a critical juncture is that it is the moment when the differences between those whose ideas about the legitimacy of the ruler would later make them Sunnīs and those whose ideas about the legitimacy (and proper identity) of the ruler would later make them Shīʿīs first found expression. As far as the historians examined in this study go, the way they present the story of Ṣiffīn, employing their source material to either alter or keep, to omit or to expound upon the elements of the story that they had received must always be viewed with this intellectual dance between Sunnism and Shīʿism in mind.

Previous Scholarship

This dissertation, which examines the ways in which the battle of Ṣiffīn was remembered in Arabic historical writing, draws especially upon two relevant bodies of previous scholarship. The first is the scholarship concerning the battle of Ṣiffīn itself. One cannot write anything relating to the battle of Ṣiffīn without making use of a number of works by Martin Hinds, especially, but not exclusively, his article "Kūfan Political Alignments and Their Background in the Mid-7th Century AD," which discusses the emergence of the Khawārij and the Shīʿīs in Kūfa following the first *fitna*. While the

article's main argument, namely that the Shīʿīs and the Khawārij were rebels against the traditional Arabian tribal power structure rather than central authority *per se*, falls outside the scope of this dissertation, the article is useful for its wealth of documentation and for its perspective on the development of the Shīʿīs following Ṣiffīn. Of equal importance is his article "The Ṣiffīn Arbitration Agreement," which treats the climax of the Ṣiffīn story, namely the call for arbitration and the agreement hammered out by Abū Mūsā and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and then reneged upon by ʿAmr. The article gives a general timeline of the development of the arbitration agreement as if the negotiations progressed precisely as described in his sources; the second part of the article, which contains a discussion of which historians included which of two versions (one of which he regards as spurious), a comparison of those two versions of the agreement, and the Arabic text of both (in a particularly convenient side-by-side format), is far more useful. Hinds' article "The Banners and Battle Cries of the Arabs at Siffin (657 AD)," is similarly useful for particulars of the battle. In general, Hinds offers the best examples of text-criticism harnessed to reconstructing the "real" events of the battle. However, he wrote in a time of relative innocence when it came to the Arabic historiographical tradition. The present study, by contrast, abandons these same texts as sources of "fact," and instead examines them as more valuable sources of commentary on the meaning of the battle to later generations of Muslims. The events that really happened at Ṣiffīn will never be known with certainty; we can only access what later generations made of those events.

Beyond Hinds' pioneering work is the fundamental study of E. L. Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in Early Arabic Tradition* (Munksgaard: Copenhagen, 1964). *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in Early Arabic Tradition* is instructive to the current study in a number of

ways. Like the present dissertation, Petersen's work is a mostly successful attempt to "demonstrate conspicuously the intimate correlation which in all phases exists between the politico-religious development and the formation of the [historical] tradition."[15] In so doing, he not only makes the general point about the relationship between the political and theological spheres on the one hand and the developing treatment of these two theologically critical early Islamic figures on the other, but also very usefully traces the evolution of the later ninth-century historians' discussions of a number of subjects, including Ṣiffīn. He examines the works of al-Balādhurī, al-Dīnawarī, al-Yaʿqūbī, and al-Ṭabarī in particular. However, given that the study is explicitly confined to the *early* Arabic tradition, he does not trace the development of his topic beyond the tenth century. In fact, as this study will show, the discussion of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in general, and Ṣiffīn in particular, develops in a way generally consistent with Petersen's thesis well into the middle ages, but with important alternatives that his exclusive focus on the early period could not take into account.

The second relevant body of scholarship is a much larger one, and that is the scholarship on Arabic historiography in general. There is a great deal of opinion regarding the best ways to engage with Arabic texts from the early Islamic period; indeed, this question has been at the center of studies of early Islamic history since the dawn of the field. These disagreements, and the methodologies they engendered, are well documented, including by Robinson[16] and Donner.[17] The earliest attempts at western engagement with Arabic historical writing (beyond mere acceptance) is exemplified by

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[15] E.L. Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in Early Arabic Tradition* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1964), p. 177.

[16] Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[17] Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Arabic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998).

the "source-critical" work of Wellhausen and "tradition-critical" work Goldziher, which

employed the *Quellenforschung* that was the center of European biblical scholarship.

Since this methodology can lead to reductivism, scholars like Albrecht Noth, who also

used the term "source-critical" to describe his own work, more recently added a literary

aspect to this approach in that he sought to find topoi and motifs in historical accounts,

which can be seen as a kind of precursor to the work most applicable to this study.

However, Noth still looked at historical writing in an attempt to find a "kernel" of

historical truth. As Donner points out, in some cases the application of these

methodologies seems to reduce the "historical kernel" to nothing. As for Donner himself,

his description of the various methodologies still seems to be focused upon the idea of

authenticity and the probability or improbability of finding out "what actually happened,"

advocating what he calls a "skeptical" approach. In the context of the present study, this

concern with historical authenticity is a distraction; much more applicable is the work of

scholars such as Tayeb el-Hibri and Stefan Leder. These scholars (and others like them)

represent a broadly literary approach, which reads these histories and the stories within

them as if they were fiction, and attempts to divine, through the comparing of different

accounts, the ways in which they were shaped as literary artifacts.[18] This more recent

literary approach to the Arabic historiographical corpus is most fruitful methodology to a

subject like the battle of Ṣiffīn for a number of reasons, preeminent among them the

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[18] Some of these works include Tayeb el-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); also his *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010; Stefan Leder, "The Literary Use of the Khabar: A Basic Form of Historical Writing," in A. Cameron and L.I. Conrad, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East,* vol. 1: Problems in the Literary Source Material (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1992, pp. 277-315; Letizia Osti, "Tailors of stories: biographers and the lives of the *khabar*," in *Monde Arab,* no. 6, (2009), pp. 283-291; R. Stephen Humphreys, "Qurʾanic Myth and Narrative Structure," in F. M. Clover and R. S. Humphreys, eds., *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 271-290.

resonance the Ṣiffīn story has for the emergence and development of sectarian identities—this literary approach lends itself to the literary shaping of historical memory.

Finally, the present study makes use of the concept of a historiographical "vulgate" used most recently by Antoine Borrut in his study of Umayyad historical memory, *Entre mémoir et pouvoir: L'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbasides:*

> "Ultimately, the [base] material [ie, the vulgate text] elaborated and imposed what can basically be termed a framework, a grid through which to read Islamic history. All [subsequent] narratives, in effect, provide a reading based upon a limited number of key events, which are shared by all authors of every stripe; unfortunately, many other episodes, which would be of interest to the modern historian, are passed over in silence. More than a historical canon, this group of works forms a well-established historically canonical body of material. This framework does not rule out new interpretations [of the events described], but seeks to contain them in a field of fixed possibilities."[19]

Borrut's study focuses upon the culture of historical writing that existed in 2nd/8th century Syria, seeking to discern a history of the meaning of the very space of Syria. This period does not have direct relevance to the Syrian historical writers who will be discussed in this work, as they all lived centuries later. However, his description of the phenomenon of the vulgate in Islamic historical writing is directly applicable to *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn. Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* does indeed elaborate the framework of the course of the battle of Ṣiffīn for subsequent authors, who write in a variety of styles and with a variety of new interpretations. However, these later authors never describe an event at Ṣiffīn that was not first presented in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, even if that event was presented differently in the earlier work. While the words may change from historian to historian (often, they do not),

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[19] Antoine Borrut, *Entre mémoir et pouvoir: L'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbasides* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), pp. 102-3

the framework of what "counts" as the Battle of Ṣiffīn remained that of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim.

The present study, therefore, exists in the space where the literary approach to Islamic historiography intersects with the existing corpus of Ṣiffīn scholarship. However, most of the work on Ṣiffīn has been aimed at fashioning as authentic a picture of the battle as possible, rather than examining the battle's remarkable role as a kind of laboratory in which Arabic historians worked out, in its retelling, some of the most fundamental issues related to the rise and maturation of Muslim political and sectarian identities. This study hopes to fill that gap in the modern work on Ṣiffīn by exploring how the literary development of the Ṣiffīn story informs, and is influenced by, developments in Islamic historical memory, theories of political legitimacy, sectarian concerns, and evolutions in styles of historical writing.

Methodology

This dissertation traces the presentation of the battle of Ṣiffīn in Arabic universal chronicles and some key texts that use those chronicles or their sources to construct entries in biographical dictionaries. Despite the general agreement about the course of the battle itself, the battle's role in the history of the early Islamic state develops in surprising ways. In what follows, I examine the battle of Ṣiffīn as it has been presented in the main narrative sources of the early Islamic period, comparing the various accounts with one another in an effort to trace the growth and development of the story over time.

Relevant sections will be translated into English and compared to other early histories of a similar style.

Given the fact that one text—Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*—emerges as the dominant source for all subsequent presentations in the main historical narratives of Islamic history, the first chapter is an examination of it and a contemporary text, Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ,* an exploration of the differences between the two, and a discussion of the impact of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*'s emergence as the "vulgate" of the Ṣiffīn story. Other early presentations of the battle, we shall see, are heavily reliant upon *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn.* These presentations are episodic in nature and generally follow the *akhbārī* style of historiographical writing. In this regard, the distinction between *akhbārī* and *muʾarrikhī* modes of historical writing highlighted by Robinson was especially useful for the present study. In general, *akhbārī* works are characterized by the use of *akhbār*, a recounting of an event or chain of events which "is transmitted serially and orally, eventually finding its place in a written collection…self-contained and independent stories, which are attributed to earlier authorities."[20] The *akhbārī*s are primarily concerned with the relation of past events. Often, the same event is recounted a number of times, with minute differences in the details or with a different *isnād,* the chain of authorities cited within many Arabic texts to authenticate the material presented. Keeping with the intention to record events, in the case of Ṣiffīn, these accounts tend to be dry and factual, and to lack any substantive distinction from each other. The *akhbārī* histories examined in the second chapter are al-Dinawārī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh,* and al-Ṭabarī's famous *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk.*

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[20] Ibid.,p. 16.

The third chapter will examine histories that fall into the category of *muʾarrikhī*, rather than *akhbārī*. The former category is distinguished from the latter both in terms of content and intention. Rather than seeking to record events, *muʾarrikhī* histories—represented here by al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab,* al-Maqdisī's *al-Badʿ wa-al-Taʾrīkh,* and Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*—are more concerned with the nature of history and history-writing itself. As was the general trend with ninth- and tenth-century histories, these books largely abandoned both the *khabar* and its obligatory *isnād* in favor a less scholarly, but more readable, account. This trend towards greater readability meant that details could be appended to the story with relative impunity. This is not to imply that these men simply fabricated anecdotes; it is possible (given the fragmentary nature of the sources, indeed, it is likely) that many of the new details were gleaned from sources now lost to us. The consequence of the *muʾarrikhī*s' stylistic conventions or their access to additional sources is that the story of Ṣiffīn suddenly explodes with detail around the middle of the tenth century, and the modern reader has no reliable way to determine the origins of these new details.

Most importantly, a degree of "argumentativeness" makes its way into the work. This "argumentation" takes a number of forms, and is characterized by the appearance of material that is not present in any of the earlier sources or material that changes, in however minor a way, the evident meaning of events in the Ṣiffīn story from their presentation in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* the key source for all subsequent Ṣiffīn accounts.

Too much must not be made of this distinction between *akhbārī* and *muʾarrikhī* historical writing. The *akhbārī-muʾarrikhī* distinction is a very messy one—it attempts to describe a difference in the style of writing, and not a very complicated one at that.

However, the categories are useful as convenient hermeneutic devices that can generally describe differences in these works. The primary arc of the present argument hangs upon chronological change and literary style both.   Time marches on, naturally, but developments in style are complex, difficult to categorize, and almost impossible to define. While *akhbārī* style writing tends to dominate historical approaches in early centuries, and while it gets more or less replaced by *muʾarrikhī* style writing (and other styles, like biography) later on, there is no rigid "age of *akhbārī*s" that gives way to a rigid "age of *muʾarrikhī*s." Al-Dīnawarī, for example, presents a long-form narrative without *isnāds*, but is categorized as *akhbārī* simply because of his extensive dependence, often a word-for-word adaptation of everything in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's paradigmatically *akhbārī* account, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* with the exception of the *isnāds*. On the other hand, Ibn al-Athīr is categorized as a *muʾarrikhī* in spite of his evident dependence on al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* simply because of a few extra discussions that appear in his *Kitāb al-Badʿ wa-al-Taʾrīkh.*

Within the broad context of these loosely-defined distinctions, the literary analysis of this dissertation will attempt to trace emerging literary elements, which include changes in the behavior and actions of minor characters, references to tribes, the use of certain key turns of phrase, ahistorical utterances (these often take the form of predictive statements), and the changing nature of Islamic concepts of authority and legitimacy to rule, among others. As we shall see, these new specifics allow both for new arguments about Muʿāwiya's villainy and for some light sympathy for Muʿāwiya and his cause to appear in the developing accounts.

Following the trail of sympathy for Muʿāwiya, the fourth and fifth chapters look at Syrian historians who sought to rehabilitate the Umayyad image to conform to a more orthodox brand of Sunnī history. The first part of chapter IV examines two biographical dictionaries which focused on Syrian history: ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir's history of Damascus, *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* and the history of Aleppo it inspired, Ibn al-ʿAdīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab.* Biographical dictionaries were essentially annotated lists of names, categorized according to the intentions of their authors; in the case of Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, they included everyone they could with any connection to the cities of their focus. However, since these men were writing with another clear intent, namely to change the implications of the story, when Ṣiffīn appeared in any given man's entry, it became a site for explicit argumentation, some of it about the nature of the imamate, but most of it about the Umayyad legacy in Islamic history. It would be inaccurate to categorize these arguments as "pro-Umayyad;" it would be more appropriate to call them "not-anti-Umayyad." However, given the strongly anti-Umayyad tenor of anything written after the ʿAbbasid Revolution—which is, incidentally, the earliest era from which we possess any extant literary discussion of Ṣiffīn—the emergence of this "not-anti-Umayyad" perspective is indeed a significant development in Arabic historiography.

The fifth chapter focuses on the work of one man, Ibn Kathīr, and his *muʾarrikhī*-style history *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya*, which uses the argumentation present in the aforementioned historiographical dictionaries to complete the process of moderating, and even reversing, the obvious anti-Umayyad bias in the story as received, a process which had its beginnings with some of the works examined in chapter III. While not militantly attacking the legitimacy of ʿAlī, like some of his arch-Sunnī colleagues and

contemporaries, nor defending every action Muʿāwiya took, Ibn Kathīr—for reasons of his own—uses the episode of Ṣiffīn to defend the Umayyad dynasty's beginnings and implicitly justify some of the Syrians' actions at Ṣiffīn—actions which the histories examined in chapters I and II find to be among the most objectionable.

This study, therefore, categorizes the histories examined herein both by chronology and by literary style. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī are explored as foundational texts for narratives about Ṣiffīn, and are followed in subsequent chapters that trace the development of this foundational material. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* emerges as the "historical vulgate" text for Ṣiffīn—this means that it demonstrably becomes the sole basis, from this early period, in which subsequent histories root their own treatments of the Ṣiffīn story. Since styles of historical writing tended to have their own general periods, the development of the story from the vulgate of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* into later historical writing was formal and chronological; the *akhbārīs* generally preceded the *muʾarrikhīs*, and the texts apologetic for the Umayyads, to be examined in the latter chapters, were written in response to later developments in Shīʿī identity in particular and Islamic history in general. The goal in this study is to demonstrate first the basis for subsequent Ṣiffīn stories in the "vulgate" of the story, which will be demonstrated in chapter I; to see its establishment in the *akhbārī* histories of chapter II; to see the expansion of, and beginnings of argumentation modestly more conciliatory to the Umayyads in the Ṣiffīn stories of the *muʾarrikhī* histories of chapter III; and, finally, to trace the culmination of the thread of Arabic historiography's not-anti-Umayyad presentation of the Ṣiffīn story in Syrian biographical dictionaries in chapter IV and the work of Ibn Kathīr in chapter V. Thus, by gathering the literary raw materials of the

Ṣiffīn narrative and then analyzing how these raw materials were recycled, manipulated, added to, omitted, and explained away in later cultural situations, this dissertation will show that the reinterpretation of these materials by later Ayyubid- and Mamluk-era Syrian authors across a range of historiographical works turned a vehemently anti-Umayyad narrative into a much more sympathetic presentation of the battle's Syrian contingent's actions for the purpose of rehabilitating Syria's role in Sunnī Islam's sacred historical period.

A Brief Note About "The Shīʿī Tradition"

For the period and texts covered by the first two chapters of this study, any rigid distinction made between the Shīʿī and Sunnī traditions would be contrived. Given that, at the very least, sympathy for the Banū Hāshim and the plight of the ʿAlids was a regular feature of nearly all our sources, such distinctions are not useful. More to the point, even the most fervent Sunnī, of any time, would agree that ʿAlī was a legitimate caliph, one of the *Rashīdūn,* who was tricked at Ṣiffīn and iniquitously robbed of his position. For those who would later self-identify as Shīʿīs, it was just one in the string of indignities for the imams; and for those who would later self-identify as Sunnīs, the description of Ṣiffīn was all part of the greater divine plan, part of an indispensible sequence of events that shaped the later Islamic community, and was thus not to be questioned. Thus, the prevalence of pro-ʿAlid perspectives in basically all of these accounts should not lead us to identify them as examples of "Shīʿī historiography" in any sectarian sense, nor, indeed, should they be understood as a dismissal of "the Sunnī historiographical tradition."

However, the fourth and fifth chapters of this study pursue a specific line of an explicitly Sunnī tradition. This is most specifically due to the fact that there were no significant developments in perspectives on the Ṣiffīn story from Shīʿī points of view, although a hyper-Shīʿī source, Idrīs' *Uyūn al-Akhbār*, is discussed in an appendix. Indeed, much of what later Shīʿīs would wish to say was already implicit in the earliest historical accounts of the battle, as the authors of those accounts were Shīʿīs (or at least pro-ʿAlid) themselves, as was just discussed. Muʿāwiya, ʿAmr, and the Syrians were the villains; ʿAlī was the hero of the story, the legitimate imam who was unjustly tricked; and a section of his camp, most especially those who would later become Khawārij, were weak-willed hypocrites who first demanded ʿAlī accept the call for arbitration, then demanded the credulous Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī serve as his arbiter opposite the sly ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and then forswore their allegiance to him, all the while claiming *lā ḥukmā illā lillāh*. The version of the story presented by the historians in the first two chapters of this study requires no adjustment in order to fit within a Shīʿī *weltanschauung*: it casts ʿAlī in the role he is due, characterizes Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads as underhanded and illegitimate, and as the slaughterers of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī at Karbalāʾ just over a decade later, and heaps scorn upon the Khawārij for their faithlessness and hypocrisy.

For later Sunnīs, however, and especially Syrian Sunnīs, the story required either massive alteration (which was impossible) or careful commentary to explain some of the Syrian actions and mitigate the damage the story does to the Umayyad reputation. Although the Syrian historians examined in this study were by no means Umayyad loyalists, they were trying to rehabilitate Muʿāwiya—after all, a Companion of the Prophet and Commander of the Faithful—and the Umayyad legacy. With the story

presumably too well-known to alter in any significant way, the Syrian historians examined in the fourth and fifth chapters sought to use the story to accomplish their main task—to repair the Umayyad image—by making small but significant alterations to the story, and providing the occasional moment of commentary at literarily and dramatically critical junctures of the narrative. It is these historians' use of the story of Ṣiffīn—a most challenging episode!—among other episodes to accomplish this particular endeavor that is the principal topic of this dissertation. After all, if they were to accomplish their evident goal, they would need to be extremely creative—and their creativity will be examined in subsequent chapters.

The Essential Ṣiffīn

Once categorized, some basis for comparison among the different histories of different styles and different eras is necessary, but the distinction in their styles represents a variable that makes such a comparison highly problematic. For example, the an *akhbārī* historian writing about ʿAlī's early emissary to Muʿāwiya, Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī, and his role in the Ṣiffīn story, is impossible to compare to a biographical dictionary's treatment of the story, where the nature of the genre means that no such story appears. A common denominator is necessary for comparison.

Ideally, we would have a certain and verifiable documentary record of the course of the battle. Failing this, we could have more surviving accounts, some of them from politically and theologically disinterested observers, perhaps non-Muslims, who could present at least a nonpartisan view. Alas, we have none of this; we have a few partisan

sources, most especially Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/774), ʿUmar ibn Saʿd (d. ca. 180/796), ʿAwāna ibn al-Ḥakam (d. 147/764), and Sayf ibn ʿUmar (d. 180/796), all of whom recorded the event in writing at least a century after the fight was over. Still, although we may despair of ever reconstructing the "actual" battle, we may still treat the historical accounts themselves as historical markers of a later time. With that in mind, the first step here is to reconstruct, as it were, an "essence of Ṣiffīn," an identification of the key events and episodes, upon the occurrence of which all the historians agree, even if they disagree about their details or ultimate significance. The following section will undertake to construct such an "essence."[21]

The Journey of ʿAlī from Baṣra to Kūfa to Ṣiffīn and Muʿāwiya's Journey to Ṣiffīn

In Rajab 36/December 656, following the Battle of the Camel at Baṣra, ʿAlī and his followers begin their journey past Kūfa to meet Muʿāwiya's army at Ṣiffīn. During this journey, one of the most important events is the dispatch of an emissary, Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh, to Muʿāwiya in an attempt to convince him and his followers to take the *bayʿa* (oath of allegiance) and pledge their allegiance to ʿĀlī. The interaction of Jarīr with Muʿāwiya is different in the different versions.

As ʿAlī makes the journey to the banks of the Euphrates, he interacts with the locals in a variety of ways. Sometimes he is forced to confront them, to demand their quarter; sometimes, he takes on new supporters. One important anecdote, which does not

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[21] Primary sources will not be cited here, but will instead be discussed individually and in detail in later chapters.

appear in all the versions, is ʿAlī's reluctant enlistment of the foolish and fickle Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī in Kūfa. Abū Mūsā would later be appointed as ʿAlī's representative in the arbitration.

Meanwhile, Muʿāwiya comes to Ṣiffīn as well, gathering support along the way. His most notable recruit is ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. He arrives at the Euphrates River before ʿAlī.

Eventually, ʿAlī and his followers get to the Euphrates to find that Muʿāwiya controls the drinking water supply.

The Battle by the Water

Thirsty after their long journey, ʿAlī and his men ask Muʿāwiya for access to water to slake their thirst, but are denied. They attack and conquer both banks of the Euphrates, and magnanimously distribute the water to both sides.

The Makeup of the Armies and the Early Skirmishes

Most of the accounts include, in varying degrees of detail, a discussion of the makeup of both ʿAlī's army and Muʿāwiya's army. In addition to numbering the soldiers, usually classified as Muhājirūn and Anṣār or by city of origin, these discussions mostly concern which Companions of the Prophet were on which side. ʿAmmār ibn

Yāsir, an elderly companion of the Prophet, is among those prominently mentioned as a supporter of ʿAlī's.

The so-called Battle of Ṣiffīn, following the battle by the water, was actually a series of small skirmishes, followed by one major fight. Many of the accounts do not go into much detail on the small skirmishes, while others present them in great detail.

Laylat al-Harīr—the Main Battle

There is a large battle between ʿAlī's soldiers and Muʿāwiya's, lasting for days. This main battle is recorded for posterity under the name *laylat al-harīr*—the "night of clamor."

Call for Arbitration; Appointment of Arbiters; Withdrawal of the Armies

By far the most famous and complex episode of the story of Ṣiffīn is the call for arbitration by Muʿāwiya's camp and ʿAlī's acquiescence. Seeing that the fighting favors ʿAlī, Muʿāwiya's shrewd general ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ comes up with a plan either to provide the Syrians with respite, capitalize on the existing divisions within the Iraqi camp, or, ideally, both; by raising copies of the Qurʾān upon their lances, the Syrians appealed to the religious instincts of ʿAlī's men and provided an alternative means of ending the

conflict to those soldiers who were appalled that the struggle over ʿUthmān's blood had engendered a necessity for Muslims to fight other Muslims.

The arbitration agreement required both camps to send forward an arbiter to negotiate and agree upon a ruling that would settle the affair in a just manner. Muʿāwiya immediately, and without resistance from his followers, appoints ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. ʿAlī, however, plagued by the aforementioned divisions within his ranks, is blocked from sending his first choice, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, because of objections to the nepotism implicit in ʿAlī's appointment of his cousin. ʿAlī's second choice for representation in the arbitration, al-Ashtar, is similarly rejected on the grounds that the latter was one of ʿUthmān's attackers, and would thus, naturally, be unacceptable within the ranks of ʿAlī's Umayyad adversaries. So he is forced to send Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, a late-comer to the struggle, having joined up in support of ʿAlī under some duress while ʿAlī was in Kūfa, making his way toward the Euphrates. Abū Mūsā is presented in the sources as a fickle, weak-willed and gullible member of the Arab elite.

Frequently, at this point in the narratives, there is a discussion of the terms of the arbitration. One important episode revolves around the way in which the document of agreement refers to ʿAlī. ʿAmr refuses to allow ʿAlī to be referred to in the document by the title *amīr al-muʾminīn*, Commander of the Faithful, and his refusal becomes a sticking point. ʿAlī acquiesces on this point, on the grounds that the Prophet himself had allowed himself to be designated simply as Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh, rather than *Rasūl Allāh* ("God's Messenger"), during his negotiations with the Meccan Qurashīs at Ḥudaybiyya. It was Abū Sufyān, the father of Muʿāwiya, who had objected to Muḥammad's claim to

divine prophethood on that earlier occasion.[22] It is agreed that both armies should withdraw, to reassemble only when ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Abū Mūsā have made their decision.

When the terms of the arbitration are settled, ʿAlī and his men retire to Kūfa, while Muʿāwiya returns to Damascus. At this point, the divisions in ʿAlī's camp that ʿAmr had hoped to exploit are realized; a group of soldiers, asserting that "there is no judgment but that of God" (*lā ḥukmā illā lillāh*), object both to the decision to cease fighting when the battle was so clearly proceeding in the Iraqis' favor, and to ʿAlī's apparent use of the leadership of the Muslim community as a bargaining chip (and, even worse, his willingness to forfeit it), and rebell against him, ultimately forming the Khārijī ("dissenting") sect. The decision to accede to Muʿāwiya's call for arbitration would have fateful consequences for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, as a member of this splinter group would later be responsible for his assassination; Khārijīs would also make attempts on the lives of Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ.

Negotiation, Ruling and Reneging

The two arbiters discuss the matter before them, evidently searching for common ground to solve the division plaguing the Islamic community. The discussion (or, more accurately, representations of the discussion) between ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī is widely documented. Several possible solutions are discussed, including a

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[22] Given the coming ascendancy and subsequent vilification of the Umayyad branch of the Quraysh (and the artistry of Arabic history-writing), it is not surprising by any means to see the literary character of Muʿāwiya following in his father's legendary footsteps.

number of potential third-party replacements for ʿAlī as caliph, but in the end it is ʿAmr who suggests the idea that, for immersing the *umma* in strife, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya both should be deposed, and the Muslims should select a new caliph for themselves. Given Abū Mūsā's strong antipathy towards *fitna*, ʿAmr sets out the perfect bait to entice the other to abandon his cause. Abū Mūsā's agreement to the ouster of both men is already a major victory for Muʿāwiya. Coming into the conflict, he had been a governor of Syria and claimant on his kinsman's blood, but had no claim to the imamate. Thus, when ʿAmr agrees on Muʿāwiya's behalf to remove him from the *caliphate*, and not the governorship of Syria, Muʿāwiya relinquishes nothing; indeed, he is elevated to legitimate potential claimant. ʿAlī, by contrast, had been universally acknowledged as the Caliph following the Battle of the Camel, even by Muʿāwiya, who had made his *bayʿa* conditional upon justice for ʿUthmān, but, with that condition met, presumably would have been willing to acquiesce to ʿAlī's imamate and content himself with ruling Syria (or so Muʿāwiya's stated position suggests). Now, having foolishly allowed ʿAlī to appear as Muʿāwiya's equal on the document regarding the terms of the negotiation, with the title *amīr al-muʾminīn* removed, Abū Mūsā has agreed to the abdication of ʿAlī himself. This sequence of events beneficial to the Syrian governor comes, of course, after the call for arbitration, which had been an act of desperation by Muʿāwiya.

The two armies reconvene at Dūmat al-Jandal. Abū Mūsā, flattered by ʿAmr in the latter's invitation to address those assembled first, foolishly declares the caliphate of ʿAlī at an end, rejects any caliphate of Muʿāwiya, and calls for elections, as had been agreed upon. ʿAmr likewise deposes ʿAlī in front of the masses, but reneges on his promise and declares Muʿāwiya caliph, causing a scuffle to erupt.

The outcome of the arbitration was a crushing blow to ʿAlī's prestige, and a significant enhancement of Muʿāwiya's. With the latter's political star in ascendance, the general acceptance of his imamate when a Khārijī assassinates ʿAlī is essentially an accomplished fact. The subsequent course of events, discussed above, provide ample testimony to the battle's critical position in Islamic history.

Chapter I

Establishing the Vulgate of the Ṣiffīn Story: Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī

<u>Historiographical Perspective</u>

Although this study makes the point that it was not just the passage of time that allowed the Ṣiffīn story to develop into a rehabilitative episode for the Umayyad legacy, but most especially developments in historiographical style and the reemergence of Damascus as a major cultural center under the Ayyubids and the Mamluks, a perusal of all the texts, discussions, and arguments surrounding the battle of Ṣiffīn leads to the incontrovertible conclusion that Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* was the "historical vulgate" text. Composed entirely of *akhbār* with *isnāds* intact, often repeating the same story, and with a clear goal (among others) of recording for posterity as many of the details of the event as possible, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, as it has been reconstructed for us, is an *akhbārī* text *par excellence*. Very little is known about the biographical details of its author, Abū al-Faḍl Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī al-Tamīmī (d. 212/827); he was originally from Kūfa, but later moved to Baghdad, and he wrote on a number of topics concerning the first *fitna,* with treatises on the Battle of the Camel, the murder of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, the murder of Ḥujr ibn ʿAdī, and the merits (*manāqib*) of the Shīʿī imams, in addition to Ṣiffīn.[23] Unfortunately, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is the only book that has

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[23] See Carl Brockelmann, "Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim: der älteste Geschichtschreiber ser Schia," *Zeitschrift für Semitisk und verwandte Gebiete*, IV (1926), pp. 1ff.; Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, pp. 78 ff.; Franz

survived. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim was a member of the Banū Tamīm, a tribe which, in pre-Arabian times, had inhabited Najd and northeastern Arabia;[24] the great extent to which the Tamīmī tribe and its members appear in his accounts is reflective of his background.

It is perhaps because of his evident "Iraqi and Shīʿī inclinations"[25] that Brockelmann categorized him as "Shīʿism's earliest historian," although as Sezgin rightly points out, he was predated by (and cites from) Abū Mikhnaf.[26] However, one should not conflate sympathy for ʿAlī's position with outright Shīʿism; as previously discussed, even Sunnīs, and particularly Sunnīs in an ʿAbbasid milieu, believed strongly in ʿAlī's legitimacy. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* relies on the testimonies of all the most important early historians, such as Abū Mikhnaf, Ṣayf ibn ʿUmar, ʿUmar ibn Saʿīd, Muḥammad ibn ʿUbayd Allāh al-Qurashī, and ʿAmr ibn Shimr. We possess a version of this work now thanks to the efforts of ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, who reconstructed it based upon later citations, primarily in the *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* of al-Ṭabarī, the *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha* of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd and the *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* of al-Dīnawarī. There is something of a paradox in this fact; comparing Naṣr to al-Dīnawarī and al-Ṭabarī is circular, since what we have of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is only what Hārūn took from those texts. Even given this, however, the importance of the book is undeniable; the mere fact of the possibility of recreating it in such detail from the works of historians of the stature of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd testifies to its value.[27] Since

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Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1952), p. 64; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (*GAS*)(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967)*,* I, 313; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (*GAL*), Supplementband I, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937), p. 214.

[24] Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 16.

[25] A. A. Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 47.

[26] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in Early Arabic Tradition,* p. 101. For more, see Ursula Sezgin, *Abū Miḫnaf, ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umaiyadischen Zeit* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971).

[27] Ibid., 48.

we do not possess Naṣr's work in its original form, all we know for certain is that later quotations that are identical have a common source or are identical to each other; however, whether or not the words recorded for us as *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* genuinely appeared in a book by that name (there is no compelling reason to assume that they do not), it is certain that from the time of al-Ṭabarī (at the latest) onward, the text identified as *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* in the form presented in this study, survived as the vulgate text.

Furthermore, as this dissertation traces an argumentative streak, apologetic to the Umayyads, that developed in later histories, it should always be borne in mind that only very rarely does a genuinely novel *event* appear in later versions of the narrative. The Ṣiffīn events in all the later narratives all appeared first in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* (or, more specifically, in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's sources). However, in some of the most important cases examined in this study, multiple *akhbār* appear, some of which have significant impacts upon the natures of the most important characters. Which *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* narrative a given later author chooses to include is often instructive for determining his priorities and perspective. Of course, while no *events* are created to add to the narrative, elaborations, supplements and interested commentaries will appear in later historiographical writings. One must remember not take this to mean that *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is historically accurate from a documentary standpoint; however, it is certain that all of the other historians (with the obvious exception of Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, about whom see below) examined in this dissertation were aware of the work, either as such or in the form of *akhbār* cited by other authors.

Despite the fact that *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is certainly the most important source of "historical" information for subsequent histories, fortunately for us it is not the only text

extant from that early period. The existence of the contemporaneous *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is significant in that it demonstrates to us that later authors had a choice about which source they would employ. Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī was an Iraqi historian of the 2nd-3rd/8th-9th centuries, about whom very little is known other than his work.[28] His *Kitāb al-Futūḥ,*[29] which is examined here, proves to be a major source for the early history of the Muslims, from the caliphate of ʿUthmān to that of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Despite the fact that *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* was composed roughly contemporaneously with (or perhaps just a few years earlier than) Naṣr ibn Muzāhim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* his work is distinguished from Naṣr's in that it is written formally like a *muʾarrikhī*-style account, rather than an *akhbārī* one. Robinson points out that he, like al-Azdī (d. 250/864), wrote "conquest monographs where romantic heroism is as prominent as a careful chronology is absent." Robinson describes his tone as "sometimes epic."[30] M.A. Shaban says that "the value of the work is enhanced by the list of Ibn Aʿtham's authorities, which include al-Madāʾinī, al-Wāḳidī, al-Zuhrī, Abū Mikhnaf, Ibn al-Kalāʿibī and other lesser traditionists,"[31] who are, of course, the same authorities relied upon by the *akhbārīs*, including Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim. Ibn Aʿtham's style flows much more than the "standard" *akhbārī* collection of repetitive and short narratives, as he made a conscious choice to "combine their traditions into a connected historical narrative"[32] and to omit *isnāds* and repetition from his work. Thus, although he and Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim used the same sources, they produce two significantly different versions of the narrative. Conrad argues

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[28] See *GAS* I, p. 329; Yāqūt, *Irshād* I, p. 379; *GAL* I, p. 150.
[29] The critical version of Kitāb al-Futūḥ used here was published in Beirut, at Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, in 1914 and reprinted 1986.
[30] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 42.
[31] M.A. Shaban, "Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī" *Encyclopedia of Islam*.
[32] Ibid.

that the critical factors in Ibn Aʿtham's decision to shape *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* as he did included the fact that he was a *qāṣṣ*, a storyteller, and sought to create a unified, flowing narrative—a choice that, as we shall see, set Ibn Aʿtham apart from Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim in a critical way.[33] The *qāṣṣ* (pl. *quṣṣāṣ*) was a loosely defined office or career that roughly overlaps with storytelling, preaching, providing some exegesis, and in general giving popular sermons on matters ranging from Islamic history to tales of the *jāhiliyya,* from the Qurʾān to Judaeo-Christian legends and heresies—a breadth of topics that caused early state officials to attempt to regulate their activities, ultimately resulting in the replacement of the *quṣṣāṣ* by official preachers.[34] Even though the religious role of the *qāṣṣ* was generally taken over by the state, the position survived in the form of popular storytellers.[35]

These two texts, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, provide the earliest extant accounts of the battle of Ṣiffīn within Arabic historical writing, and it is clear that even the later *muʾarrikhī* historians, who have much more in common stylistically with Ibn Aʿtham, still opted to rely more upon *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* for their facts.

The Tradents

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[33] L.I. Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī," in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature, Volume 1* (TJI Digital: Padstow, Cornwall, Great Britain, 2003), p. 314.

[34] Ch. Pellat. "Ḳāṣṣ." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman; , Th. Bianquis; , C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 15 February 2011 http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2403/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-4002 (Print version: Volume IV, page 733, Column 2).

[35] See Jonathan Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001). Berkey demonstrates that the debate over the propriety of "popular" preachers and *quṣṣāṣ* is tied to the "larger and highly problematic question of religious authority in Islam." According to Berkey, popular preachers and storytellers filled the void left by the undelineated limits of the authority of the ʿulamāʾ.

Although this dissertation traces the study essentially from Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim onward, it is important to consider his tradents, the sources upon which he relied to construct *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* and whose work is frequently cited by later historians directly. What makes the differences between *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* all the more intriguing is that both historians constructed their narratives using the same sources—there are enough similarities in the two accounts, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* to make that determination, even with the absence of *isnād*s in the former work. The most frequently cited source is Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/774). Abū Mikhnaf was the author of more than thirty books, on topics such as the Ridda, the conquests, the *shūrā* that elected ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān caliph, as well as on Ṣiffīn and subsequent events.[36] His grandfather, Mikhnaf, was a partisan of ʿAlī's, the leader of the Azd tribe's force at Ṣiffīn, and died there.[37] The importance of his work to *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is discussed by Ursula Sezgin:

> "Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim cited Abū Mikhaf by name thusly: "*ʿan rajul wa-huwa Abū Mikhaf*" [on the authority of a man who is Abū Mikhaf] , or "*yaʿnī Abā Mikhaf*" [meaning Abū Mikhaf], and even "*ʿan rajul qad sammahu*" [on the authority of a man who has already been named]. In each case, the citation to Abū Mikhaf is through the mediation of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd. We find that excerpts from the corresponding sections of al-Ṭabarī…coincide [with the account of Abū Mikhaf present in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*]. These quotes are apparently a direct reissue of the accounts of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, which are also identical to the *isnād* cited by al-Ṭabarī, that is through…Abū Mikhaf."[38]

ʿUmar ibn Saʿd's[39] (d. ca. 180/796) accounts are generally very close, if not identical, to those of Abū Mikhnaf; as Sezgin points out, his accounts often draw from

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[36] Duri, *Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs,* p. 45; *GAS* I, p. 308.
[37] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, index.
[38] Ursula Sezgin, *Abū Miḫnaf,* pp. 47-48.
[39] In some secondary sources, including Petersen's *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, his name is rendered as ʿUmar ibn Saʿīd, perhaps so as not to confuse him with ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, the leader of the force that killed al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī. In *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and elsewhere, his name is clearly rendered as ʿUmar ibn Saʿd.

Abū Mikhnaf's.[40] Almost nothing, beyond the events he recorded, is known of his life.[41]

His *akhbār* were much employed by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, to the extent that on a number of

occasions, ʿUmar's customary *isnād* is cited by Naṣr in shorthand as "ʿUmar ibn Saʿd—

isnāduhu," referring to his informers Numayr ibn Wāʾila and al-Shaʿbī.[42] ʿUmar ibn

Saʿd's writings, all pro-ʿAlid and representative of, as Petersen terms it, "the Umayyad

eras' Shiite tradition,"[43] occasionally will pause from their more standard chronicling of

events to insert hagiographic traditions, all of which serve to bolster the character and

legitimacy of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Petersen distinguishes him from Abū Mikhnaf by

categorizing the latter as pro-ʿAbbasid, and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd as Shīʿī.[44] The unattributed

manuscript explored by Hinds makes extensive use of ʿUmar's *akhbār*.[45]

ʿAwāna ibn al-Ḥakam al-Kalbī (d. 147/764 or 153/770), another of Naṣr's

sources, was, according to Ibn al-Nadīm, a blind Kūfan narrator and scholar in poetry and

genealogy who compiled a work on the life of Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads, *Sīrat*

Muʿāwiya wa-banī Umayya.[46] He was charged by Yāqūt with a partiality towards the

ʿUthmāniyya and the Ummayads,[47] probably because the tribe of Kalb was a pro-

Umayyad tribe,[48] although Saleh El-Ali argues that the quotations from his works "show

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[40] See Ursula Sezgin, *Abū Miḥnaf*, p. 137 ff. and particularly p. 139; Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya,* pp. 101-6.

[41] *GAS* I, p. 311.

[42] Ibid., p. 102.

[43] Ibid., p. 104.

[44] Ibid., p. 100.

[45] Martin Hinds, "The Banners and Battle Cries of the Arabs at Ṣiffīn (657 AD),")," *al-Abḥāth* (American University of Beirut), 24 (1971), p. 5. Hinds postulates that the work in question is "either a fuller recension of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim than has hitherto been known or, more probably, the compilation of an as yet anonymous contemporary or near contemporary of his." Although this work is of great use in a study like that of Hinds, its similarity both in style and in content to *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* has prevented its inclusion in the present dissertation.

[46] Ibn al-Nadīm (Bayard Dodge, trans.), *The Fihrist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 197-8. See also Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography,* p. 92 (2nd ed., p. 89 ff.).

[47] Yaqut, *Irshād* 9, p.94.

[48] Duri, *Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs,* p. 45. See also *GAS* I, p. 307-8.

little evidence of prejudice, whether for the Umayyads, or for Kūfa, or for Kalb."[49] However, according to Petersen, the more fiercely anti-Umayyad *akhbār* are offset by some of ʿAwāna's own, who transfers the initiative in the agitation of the Syrian people in their demand for vengeance from Muʿāwiya to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ; for example, in the story of Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Simṭ related in al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, it is ʿAmr, not Muʿāwiya, who asserts ʿAlī's complicity in the murder of ʿUthmān.[50] In the accounts of ʿAwāna's related by the later historians, "it is no longer Muʿāwiya, but ʿAmr who makes the final decision or adopts measures for the combats against ʿAlī."[51]

Little, too, is known of Sayf ibn ʿUmar (d. 180/796),[52] like Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim born of the Banū Tamīm. He became a symbol of unreliability to most students of Islam following Wellhausen's critique of himin 1899 in his *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*.[53] His reputation was somewhat rehabilitated by Ella Landau-Tasseron, who points out that, although he was not impeccably trustworthy, in that he picked and chose material, applied sophisticated methods of editing, reproduced biased accounts and added his own interpretations in the guise of historical reports—probably a "methodology" that was common to everyone—he did not deserve the derision that was cast upon his works,[54] as other historians (including a number examined in the present study) were guilty of the same "sins." He was used extensively by al-Ṭabarī throughout *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-al-*

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[49], Saleh A. el-Ali, "ʿAwāna b. al-Ḥakam al-Kalbī." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman; , Th. Bianquis; , C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 28 January 2011 <http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2403/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-0865> Print version: Volume 1, page 759, column 2.

[50] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, p. 33.

[51] Ibid., p. 33.

[52] *GAS* I, p. 311-2; *GAL* Supplementband I, pp. 213-2.

[53] Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Sayf ibn ʿUmar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship" *Der Islam* v. 67 (1990), p. 1.

[54] Ibid., pp. 1-23.

Mulūk, but most of the *akhbār* recorded specifically on the subject of Ṣiffīn itself come from Abū Mikhnaf and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd and appear in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*.

The Battle of Ṣiffīn: Early Perspectives

The following section will compare key passages from these two early works on Ṣiffīn, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ,* relating to the six critical episodes of the affair at Ṣiffīn as identified previously, namely: 1) The journey of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya to Ṣiffīn; 2) the battle by the water; 3) descriptions of the armies and early skirmishes; 4) the main battle; 5) the call for arbitration and the appointment of arbiters; and 6) negotiation, ruling and reneging. Each section will include a discussion of the key differences among the presentations of each episode.

The Journey to Ṣiffīn and the Rallying of Support

ʿAlī dispatches Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī to Muʿāwiya, against the better judgment of al-Ashtar. Emissaries are exchanged. Muʿāwiya wins the support of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. The key arguments of both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya are made clear.

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim:

> 1. When ʿAlī came from Baṣra he removed Jarīr from [his governorship in] Hamadān, and then, when ʿAlī was looking for a messenger to send to Muʿāwiya, Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh said, "Send me, for he likes me. When I get to him I will call him to acknowledge your authority, to acknowledge the truth, and tell him that he will be one of your commanders, and one of your governors, in obedience to God; and I will tell him to follow what is

in the Book of God, and to call upon the people of Syria[55] to be obedient to you and to your appointed administrators. Most of them are my people and countrymen, so they will not refuse me." Al-Ashtar said to ʿAlī, however: "Don't send him! By God! I suspect that they think alike, and that his intentions are their intentions." "Let him go," replied ʿAlī, "and we shall see what he brings back to us." So ʿAlī (peace be upon him) sent Jarīr with his message to Muʿāwiya: 'Indeed, my position among the Companions of the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) and the people of *dīn* and *raʾy* is as you have seen, and as you have accepted in accordance with the words of the Messenger of God.' [ʿAlī said to Jarīr] "Go with my message to Muʿāwiya, and tell him to enter into that which all the Muslims, including the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, have entered into, with the exception of those who are with him. Inform him that I have no intention of making him a commander, and that the general public has no intention of investing him with the title of Caliph." [56]

2. [ʿAlī] dispatched Jarīr, who left and travelled until he came to al-Shām and stopped before Muʿāwiya. He came to him, praised God and extolled him, and said, "Now to our topic, O Muʿāwiya. ʿAlī has already achieved the support of those whom your cousin [ʿUthmān] appointed over the *Ḥaramayn* ["two sacred precincts," or Mecca and Medina] and over Baṣra and Kūfa, as well as the people of the Ḥijāz, Yemen, Egypt, al-ʿArūḍ and ʿUmān, and the people of Baḥrayn and Yamāma, and none remain except for the people of these entrenchments that you are in. I have come to you to call you to pledge allegiance to the same man whom those who invested your betters with leadership have now invested." Then he gave him ʿAlī's letter. It said:

"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Now to our topic. In Medina I demanded you pledge allegiance to me, while you were in al-Shām. Those who pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān have pledged allegiance to me just as they did to them. It was neither for those present to choose, nor for those absent to oppose. As for the *shūrā* of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, they have chosen a man and named him as their imam, as commanded by God. Some dissenters left his command and challenged him in a way that is not the way of the believers. God has appointed for [those dissenters] and confirmed their fate, to roast in hell.

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[55] The phrase *ahl al-Shām*, translated here and elsewhere in this study as "the people of Syria," does not refer to the entire population of Syria, but rather to the Syrian force that supported Muʿāwiya at Ṣiffīn.
[56] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* (Qum: Manshūrāt Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-ʿUẓmá al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, 1302 [1962 or 1963]), p. 27.

Truly, Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr gave me their allegiance and then revoked it, and that revocation was tantamount to their apostasy. I fought them for this for the sake of the just truth and the clear desire of God in this, to which they were averse. So enter into that which the Muslims have entered; if you refuse, I will fight you for the sake of God, who will curse you. You have made much of the killers of ʿUthmān, so enter into that which the Muslims have entered, and bring [your people] to me; I will deliver them to you for judgment based upon the Book of God. I also inform you that you are one of the *ṭulaqāʾ*[57] to whom the office of the caliphate is forbidden, and that you are not eligible for it in a *shūrā*. Thus I send to you and to those with you Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh, who is one of the men of belief and the *hijra*. So, give me allegiance and do not take any strength save in God alone."[58]

3. When the people gathered, Muʿāwiya climbed the stage and said, "Praise be to God, who has granted Islam sustenance and support and made it the path to true belief, who lights the coals of the earth in his holiness, which God has brought to the Prophets and to those righteous men who are his servants. He has found these men in the people of Syria, and he has been pleasing to them, and they to him….O you people! You all know that I am a deputy of Commander of the Faithful ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and that I am a deputy of Commander of the Faithful ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, and that I will not raise a man of you into any disgrace. I am the *walī* of ʿUthmān, who was killed unjustly. For God has said, (He who is killed unjustly, you shall give his *walī* power [to seek retribution]. But let him not exceed the issue in the manner of taking life. Truly, he is helped.)[59] And I would know what your souls say to you about the killing of ʿUthmān."
Then the people of Syria all stood and answered the call for retribution for the blood of ʿUthmān, and swore allegiance upon that."[60]

4. Naṣr—ʿUmar ibn Saʿd and Muḥammad ibn Ubayd Allāh: Muʿāwiya wrote to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who was in Palestine, "Now to our topic, which is the matter of Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr against ʿAlī, which you know. Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam informed us of the turncoats of Baṣra, and now

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[57] The last-minute conversion of the Meccan resistance to the Prophet were "set free" (*ṭalaqa*) since if they had remained pagans, they would have been enslaved. The most famous of the *ṭulaqāʾ* was Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, Muʿāwiya's father.

[58] Ibid., pp. 28-30.

[59] al-Isrāʾ, 17:33.

[60] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, p. 32.

Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh has come to us demanding we take the *bayʿa* for ʿAlī. I would like for you to come to me and advise me in this matter."

When the letter was read to him, ʿAmr requested the advice of his two sons, ʿAbd Allāh and Muḥammad. He said, "My two sons, what is your opinion?" ʿAbd Allāh said to him, "I believe that the Prophet of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) died while he was pleased with you, and the two Caliphs after him, and that ʿUthmān was killed while you were absent from him. Stay in your house, and do not be taken in by a Caliph. For you do not want to be beholden to Muʿāwiya on matters of your *dīn,* even a little. That is my advice." Muḥammad said, "I think that you are a Shaykh of the Quraysh and a master of their affairs. If this matter passes and you are unknown in it, your influence will wane. The people of Syria have the right, so be one of their hands. Demand retribution for the blood of ʿUthmān, and you will be remembered for it by the Umayyads." ʿAmr said, "As for you, O ʿAbd Allāh, you have given me counsel for the good of my *dīn,* and as for you, O Muḥammad, you have given me counsel for the good of my standing in this world. I will sleep on it."[61]

5. Naṣr—ʿUmar ibn Saʿd—His *isnād*: Muʿāwiya said to ʿAmr, "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, I have called you to holy war against the man who has offended his creator and killed the Caliph, made *fitna* appear, and split the community." ʿAmr said, "Against whom would you have me wage holy war?" Muʿāwiya said, "I call you to *jihād* against ʿAlī." ʿAmr said, "By God, O Muʿāwiya, how are you and ʿAlī to be compared? You did not perform the *hijra* with him, nor do you have his precedence in Islam, nor his close relation to the Prophet, nor his history of *jihād,* nor his wisdom in the law, nor his religious knowledge….By God, what would you give me to become a member of your faction and war against him, when you know he is the best and the finest?" He said, "Whatever you decide." He said, "Give me Egypt." And Muʿāwiya promised it to him.[62]

Ibn Aʿtham:

1. ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) gave a speech [to the Kūfans], calling them to Jihād against the Syrians, and to go at them. He said, "Go to battle the Syrians, who are ignorant and foolish! Go against Satan's

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[61] Ibid., pp. 34-5.
[62] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

helpers, the enemies of the Sunna and the Qurʾān! Go against deceit and treachery, against the killers of Muhājirūn and Anṣār! Go!"[63]

2. ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) wrote, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. From ʿAlī, servant of God and Commander of the Faithful to Muʿāwiya, the son of Ṣakhr. Now to our subject. O Muʿāwiya! You have heard of the *shūrā* of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, and indeed they have agreed upon a man to name as their imām, who was pleasing to God, great and mighty....you also know of what transpired in Baṣra, from which nothing has been concealed to you, and how I fought [those who opposed me] stridently until the matter was settled in a way pleasing to God. Now I see that you have gathered an army over the issue of the killing of ʿUthmān. I command you to enter into the same thing that the Muslims have all entered into, that is, to take the *bayʿa* and pledge allegiance to me, so that I may rule wisely over the nation and carry them and you, by the book of God, great and mighty and the Sunna of his Prophet Muḥammad (may God's prayers and peace be upon him)….I also know that you are one of the children of the *ṭulaqāʾ*, to whom the caliphate is forbidden.[64]

Discussion

Since the lead-up to the battle makes up the bulk of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, the excerpts presented above are only representative samples, containing the most important elements of the story—in this case, "important" is defined as episodes which will be repeated in subsequent works. In general, the sections of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* that disappear are long speeches, conversations between (usually minor) characters, and poems (although new poems often appear in their place). It is important to note that for this section, as in all subsequent sections, Naṣr's reports about the actual events at Ṣiffīn, if not necessarily their meaning, become the basis for all further discussion of this section

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[63] Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1914), vol. 2, p.460.
[64] Ibid., (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿIlmiyya, 1914), pp. 515-6.

of the Ṣiffīn story. As for Ibn Aʿtham, this portion of the story is given somewhat less weight relative to the hefty treatment afforded it in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn.* It would not be at all accurate to say that he skips over the section; indeed, he devotes considerable space to reports about ʿAlī's journey, specifically. He does not, however, include the lengthy correspondence between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya that makes up the bulk of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's version of this section, an inclusion which allows the latter the opportunity truly to flesh out both the arguments in support of each character's position and the personal characteristics of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya themselves. Lacking the somewhat dry presentation of the letters (most of which are just restatements of the obvious points, namely that ʿAlī insists that Muʿāwiya take the *bayʿa* and Muʿāwiya insists that ʿAlī give him ʿUthmān's killers to face justice), Ibn Aʿtham's version of the story includes long speeches by ʿAlī, exhorting his men to honor and glory, encounters between ʿAlī and various notables along his way, and stories of how ʿAlī convinced these men to join his cause (or, in the case of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, failed to do so). The letters between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, however, are absent; and this treatment of the approach to the battle presages a similar treatment in the *akhbārī Taʾrīkh* of al-Yaʿqūbī, who more or less glosses over the whole run-up to the battle, as in all of the *muʾarrikhī* works, which tend to include versions of this section that are similar to Ibn Aʿtham's account. This does not mean that these later historians necessarily looked to Ibn Aʿtham for stylistic or structural inspiration; indeed, when they include stories of ʿAlī's encounters with notables on his way to Ṣiffīn, their source is exclusively Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim. However, it is likely that they, like the storyteller Ibn Aʿtham, recognized that the repetitive letters are neither

particularly compelling dramatically nor particularly controversial, and this makes these letters less critical to include in any argumentative endeavor.

On the subject of the *bayʿa*, it should be recalled that it is not entirely clear at this point in history whether it was used in this context: in the Qurʾān, it appears as a commercial term (as in *Barāʾa,* 9:111), in which a bargain (*bayʿ*) is made between God and the Muslims, namely that they fight for Him and He rewards them with paradise; in *al-Fatḥ* (48:10 and 48:18), those who pledge allegiance to Muḥammad (*yubāyiʿūnaka*) implicitly pledge allegiance to God, and once again are rewarded for the bargain; and in *al-Mumtaḥana* (60:12), in which women (and, later tradition adds, non-combatant men) wish to pledge themselves to the Prophet and to God (*yubāyiʿnaka*), the Prophet is instructed to accept the pledge from them (*fa-bāyiʿhunna*) and ask forgiveness for them from God. It should also be noted that, in early Islamic times, the gesture associated with a *bayʿa*—that is, a handclasp—was identical to the gesture associated with concluding a business arrangement:[65]

> "In the Qurʾānic *bayʿa* we have a ritual that combines ancient Arabian ideas of covenant before a patron deity, confirmed by a handclasp, with genetically related ideas about covenant found in late antique Christianity. The *bayʿa* also unites the pre-Islamic rhetoric of unity for success in war (God, it is worth remembering is *khayr al-nāṣirīn*, 'the best of allies in war' [Q 3.150]) with parallel monotheist ideas about martyrdom and pious self-sacrifice in God's cause."[66]

In this context, and in light of its appearance (and the appearance of its related verb) in the Qurʾān, the *bayʿa* must be understood in terms of exchange, as a mutually beneficial arrangement. One gives the *bayʿa* to another, be it to God, a caliph, a military leader (often all three at the same time), in return for victory, booty, justice and salvation.

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[65] See Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, esp. pp. 40-57.
[66] Ibid., p. 57.

During the three decades of conquest following the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, a number of religio-political institutions came into being, including the caliphate (*khilāfa*) and the *bayʿa*, through which the incumbent caliph was recognized as *amīr al-muʾminīn*, Commander of the Faithful. Marsham concludes that "these pledges were a fusion of long-standing, pre-Islamic religio-political custom with late antique monotheist ideas about leadership and authority."[67] Muḥammad accepted the *bayʿa* from the Meccans when he entered the town,[68] and Abū Bakr accepted it, sometimes through his commanders, during the Ridda wars.[69] It was a natural outgrowth of its role as an exchange of loyalty for rewards that it grew, with the first caliphs, to become not just an affirmation of loyalty, but the standard accession ritual for a new caliph. What is clear from the literature is that it was a bidirectional oath; ʿUthmān, according a tradition related by Sayf ibn ʿUmar, "led the people in prayer [and] increased [their stipends]" upon his accession.[70] This is exactly in keeping with ʿAmr's demand for Egypt, and places his own swearing of allegiance in a more understandable context—that is, he gives the *bayʿa* (to Muʿāwiya, in this case) in return for a reward (namely, governorship of Egypt). As cynically as pro-ʿAlid sources may view ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ siding with the (at best) erroneous Muʿāwiya, and his motivations for doing so, there is no reason, given the Qurʾānic and early Islamic context for allegiance, to single him out for denigration for expecting something in return for his loyalty and council.

There is one ahistorical comment in this section, and it is one that will be repeated in different forms and at different points in the various Ṣiffīn narratives, and that is the

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[67] Ibid., p. 60.

[68] The account of this is included in almost all chronicles of the time, including al-Ṭabarī, i, p. 1630 ff.

[69] Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy,* p. 66.

[70] See Ibid., p. 70.

predictive denial of any right Muʿāwiya has to be caliph. In this case, ʿAlī makes the statement to Jarīr, with the intention that the latter should pass it along to Muʿāwiya, that "the general public has no interest in investing him with the title of caliph."[71] The notion that Muʿāwiya might end up as caliph at the end of the affair is naturally not a historical one, especially given the rationale for Muʿāwiya's ineligibility for the imamate, elaborated slightly later in this section of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and in the presentation of the rallying of armies and gathering of support in Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūh*; namely, that Muʿāwiya is one of the *ṭulaqāʾ*. The *ṭulaqāʾ* (the plural of *ṭalīq*) referred to the Meccan Qurashīs who, according to Islamic law, technically became the Prophet's lawful property when he conquered Mecca in 8/630. However, instead of retaining them as captives, the Prophet released them as freedman (*ṭulaqāʾ*). Ibn Aʿtham also includes, perhaps by way of making sense of that argument, a section in which Muʿāwiya claims the right to the caliphate for himself:

> "I am the scribe of the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him), my sister was his wife, and I have been a governor for ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. My mother is Hind bint ʿUtba ibn Rabīʿa, and my father is Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, and even if the people of the Ḥijāz and Iraq have given [ʿAlī] the *bayʿa*, the people of Syria have given the *bayʿa* to me. In this matter, these two groups of people are equals."[72]

Interestingly, the point regarding Muʿāwiya's ineligibility to hold the imamate later falls briefly out of disuse. This is odd, particularly for the *akhbārī* historians of the early ninth century, who were writing under early ʿAbbasid patronage, and would thus have had plenty of reason to cast whatever aspersions upon the character and historical figure of Muʿāwiya they could. Perhaps the men writing between the time of Ibn Aʿtham and of

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[71] See above, p. 43.
[72] Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, p.550-1.

al-Masʿūdī were more careful about their chronology; after all, it is highly unlikely that anyone actually pointed out what would have been the obvious fact of the ineligibility of their adversary to the imāmate, when nobody had ever even mentioned the possibility of his assuming it beforehand (unless, of course, Muʿāwiya had brought up the point himself; but beyond this section of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ,* this possibility is not even hinted at by any of the other historians). It is also possible that the paganis of al-ʿAbbās precluded them from casting aspersions of this kind on Abū Sufyān.

In this section, we also see the first instance among the works examined in this study of the idea of the *walī*, a term of ambiguous meaning whose role in the Ṣiffīn story helps shape its development in the works of subsequent historians. The word *walī* comes from the root w-l-y, meaning "to be close to," or "to be friends with," and can possess any number of meanings, including helper or supporter; benefactor; patron; relative; owner; or legally responsible person. It is this ambiguity of meaning that becomes important in the story. In *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* Muʿāwiya himself makes the claim (although for the most part in the Ṣiffīn story, it will be ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ making the claim for him during the arbitration with Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī) that he is ʿUthmān's *walī*. But what precisely does he mean by this? In this case, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's Muʿāwiya is arguing both that he is ʿUthmān's relative and, most of all, legally responsible person, in the sense meant in the Qurʾān;[73] that is, legally entitled to seek revenge on ʿUthmān's killers. The Shīʿī concept of *walāya* that would develop thereafter has decidedly different implications; it can mean, in addition to the more earthly meanings listed above, spiritual inheritance of esoteric knowledge and divine proximity and sanctity (these are, in part,

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[73] *al-Isrāʾ,* 17:33.

what modern Shīʿīs mean when they term ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib *walī Allāh*).[74] The spiritual

senses of the term have their basis in the Qurʾān; however, in the Ṣiffīn story, the term

walī is never used in a spiritual sense, but rather is always employed with reference to a

kind of limited worldly authority. It is certainly not incorrect for Muʿāwiya to claim to

be ʿUthmān's *walī* here, and later for ʿAmr to make the same claim about Muʿāwiya;

walī can also mean "governor," or "near representative," so Muʿāwiya was ʿUthmān's

walī over Syria. This does not give him any more right to seek revenge on ʿUthmān's

killers than it gives to ʿAlī's lukewarm supporter al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, who was

ʿUthmān's *walī* (governor) over Adharbayjān. The ambiguity of the term allows it to be

exploited by Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr for their own purposes. Nonetheless, from a literalist

standpoint, the Qurʾān says that the *walī* of an unjustly slain man shall be given power;

Muʿāwiya *is* ʿUthmān's *walī,* at least in one sense of the word. The proper use of the

term *walī* is one of the fundamental disagreements between ʿAlī and his supporters on the

one hand and Muʿāwiya and his supporters on the other.

Another concept that is introduced in this section, particularly in the narration of

the conversation between ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and his two sons concerning the proper role for

ʿAmr to play in the situation, is the idea of *dīn*, which, in a general sense refers to

"religion," but contains some nuances of meaning that are important to understand.

Besides the idea of "religion," there are two other distinct senses of *dīn*. The first sense,

"judgment," or "retribution," refers to the Hebrew and Aramaic root of the word; the

second sense, "custom" or "usage" refers to the Arabic root *dāna* (debt, money owning).

Dīn can signify obligation, direction, submission, or retribution. It can refer to the

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[74] See Maria Massi Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shiʿite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), pp. 23-31.

practice of following something, such as a military leader, a school of law, or a religion in general, as well as the worship of God. When placed in opposition to *dunyā*, or "world," it marks a clear contrast between the spiritual world, signified by *dīn*, and the material world.[75] In this section of the Ṣiffīn story, in Naṣr's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, the term *dīn* is used twice. The first instance refers to ʿAlī's supporters as *ahl al-dīn wa-al-raʾy*—in this case, "the people of proper practice [or belief] and [proper] opinion."[76] The second instance occurs when ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ cautions his father to avoid being beholden to Muʿāwiya on matters of *dīn*. ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr, who is later described by Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī as a righteous man, is warning his father not to follow the wrong man with his *dīn*—which in this case has both the sense of following a commander and, implicitly, the sense that places it opposite *dunyā*.

The section covering the run-up to the encounter on the Euphrates also allows for the introduction of some of the most pivotal characters in the Ṣiffīn story, beyond ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, who presumably are already well-known to the reader. One such is Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī, introduced as ʿAlī's emissary, who was a powerful tribal chief in Kūfa. His loyalty to ʿAlī's cause is cast into doubt by al-Ashtar, who cautions ʿAlī against sending him because, in al-Ashtar's opinion, Jarīr and Muʿāwiya "think alike" (*hawāhu hawāhum;* literally, "his air is just like theirs," a phrase that will be oft repeated through the corpus of texts examined in this study), and share the same intentions. This opinion comes despite the fact that Jarīr is from Kūfa, a city whose citizens are among

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[75] Gardet, L. "Dīn." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman; , Th. Bianquis; , C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 14 February 2011 http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2403/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-0168 (Print Version: Volume II, p. 293, Column 2).

[76] *Ahl al-Raʾy,* in this case, does not refer to the group that was formed in opposition to the *ahl al-Ḥadīth*.

ʿAlī's staunchest supporters. Jarīr's lukewarm support for ʿAlī is similar to that of al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, whose support for ʿAlī would similarly waver later in the narrative: both men had been in Iran when ʿAlī came to Kūfa, and only joined ʿAlī's camp after ʿAlī had largely secured Kūfan support. It had been al-Ashtar's vocal support of ʿAlī and opposition to Muʿāwiya that had swayed most of the Kūfans, and the men that the powerful tribal leaders al-Ashʿath ibn Qays and Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh brought with them never struck al-Ashtar as loyal. After Muʿāwiya's star rose following Ṣiffīn, both men saw their own fortunes increase as recompense for their lukewarm support of ʿAlī and their ultimate defection, if not to Muʿāwiya's cause then at least to a position of neutrality.[77]

Among the characters introduced to the Ṣiffīn story at this point, but already well known to the reader for his role in the conquests, was Muʿāwiya's chief of staff and general, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. ʿAmr was an early convert and had been an emissary of the Prophet's to Oman, but he is best known for his conquest of Egypt and the founding of the garrison city Fusṭāṭ. He was widely known for his political shrewdness and wiliness. These characteristics are amply represented in this first part of the Ṣiffīn story. Given the attitude of later historical writers towards the Umayyad dynasty, of which Muʿāwiya would be the sire, one may reasonably expect a certain degree of emphasis on his less-than-savory characteristics and on those of his key supporters. ʿAmr's role in calling for arbitration on the basis of the Qurʾān, and, even more so, his beguiling of the gullible Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī at Dūmat al-Jandal, earned him a reputation as an opportunist and a liar; later accounts tend to include more stories which demonstrate this opportunism, and

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[77] See Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (Second Edition)* (Harlow, England: Pearson Educations Limited, 2004), pp. 70-84.

which include attempts to take advantage even of his benefactor, Muʿāwiya. He had remained, to this point, aloof in the conflict, no doubt waiting to see which side would gain the advantage or, perhaps more to the point, which side would offer him a greater return for his *bayʿa*.

Ibn Aʿtham, for his part, is clear in his preference for ʿAlī—a preference which certainly does not set him apart from the rest of the early historians examined in this study, all of whom supported ʿAlid legitimacy. He includes the long and arduous communication between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, the sending of emissaries such as Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī and ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, which does not, in general, survive into later historical accounts of the Ṣiffīn narrative.

The Battle by the Water

ʿAlī and his men arrive at the Euphrates to find Muʿāwiya's men blocking their access to the drinking water. After diplomatic efforts to secure drinking water for his men fail, ʿAlī authorizes them to fight for the water. A battle ensues, and ʿAlī's men are victorious. After they achieve control of the water supply, ʿAlī allows both armies to drink.

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim:

1. Naṣr—ʿUmar ibn Saʿd—Yūsuf ibn Yazīd—ʿAbd Allāh ibn Awf ibn Al-Aḥmar: When we came to Muʿāwiya and the people of Syria at Ṣiffīn, we found that they had set up camp in an even, wide and spacious position and taken the road in front of them. Abū al-Aʿwar [al-Sulamī] had formed up ranks of both cavalry and infantry. He had placed his archers in front of his men, and with them were pikemen with shields and helmets upon their heads. They had resolved to prevent us from reaching the water, so we made haste towards the Commander of the Faithful [ʿAlī] and informed him of this. He called Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān and said, "Go to

Muʿāwiya and say, "We have traveled this journey of ours, and I am loathe to fight you before pleading with you. You have taken the initiative with your cavalry, and thus you have fought us before we fought you. You have started this fight against us, and our action is restraint until we call you to do right and impose our arguments upon you. This is just the most recent thing you have done, that is, taking position between the people and the water. Release the water for everyone, so that we may look into this matter that is between us; the matter for which we have come, and the matter for which you have come. But if it is pleasing to you to put aside that for which we have come, and instead to fight over the water until only the victor is the drinker, then we will do so." Then Muʿāwiya said to his companions, "What do you think?" Al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba said, "Deny them the water, as they denied it to Ibn ʿAffān [ʿUthmān]. Blockade it for forty days, denying them the refreshment of the water and the nourishment of food. Kill them thirsty, may God damn them!" ʿAmr [ibn al-ʿĀṣ] said, "Release the path to the water for the people. Then they will not be thirsty, and you will still be well-watered; but look what the situation is if you deny them the water." Al-Walīd repeated what he said, and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Sarḥ, who was ʿUthmān's foster brother, said, "Deny them the water until nightfall, and if they are not able to get it, they will withdraw, and their withdrawal will be their catastrophe. Deny them the water, and may God deny them on the Day of Resurrection!"[78]

2. [Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays] said: "O Commander of the Faithful, shall they keep us from the waters of the Euphrates while you are with us, and we have swords? Allow me and the men to go, and by God we shall not return until either we drive them back or we die." Al-Ashtar was passing upon his horse, and stopped where they were deliberating. Then [ʿAlī] said [to al-Ashʿath], "This shall be your battle." Then al-Ashʿath returned, and cried out to the people: "Who wants water, and who wants to die? The appointed time is the dawn! I am headed for the water!" And twenty thousand men followed him, bracing their weapons….When he began to advance in the throng, every member of which had his sword upon his shoulder, al-Ashʿath extended his spear in front of him, saying, "By your fathers and mothers, advance the length of my spear!" He continued doing this until he confounded the Syrians, calling out, "I am al-Ashʿath ibn Qays! Release the water!" Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī yelled out, "Never, by God, not until our swords have taken you all!"[79]

3. ʿAmr sent a message to Muʿāwiya, "Release the water! Do you think that the nation will die thirsty, when they can see the water?" Then Muʿāwiya sent word to Yazīd ibn Asad, "Release the water, O Abū ʿAbd

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[78] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* pp. 160-1.
[79] Ibid., p. 166.

Allāh." Yazīd, a strong ʿUthmānī, said, "Never, by God! We will kill them thirsty, as they killed the Commander of the Faithful!"[80]

4. Naṣr—Muḥammad ibn ʿUbayd Allāh—al-Jurjānī: ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said,"O Muʿāwiya, what do you think of the people? Will they today deny you the water as you denied it to them yesterday? Do you think that you will now have to fight them for it, as they fought you for it?" He said, "Enough of what has passed! What do you think?" He said, "I think that he will not deny you what you denied to him, and that those who fought with him upon the water will not deny it to you." Muʿāwiya responded with an angry retort.[81]

Ibn Aʿtham:

1. ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) summoned Shabath ibn Rubʿī al-Riyāḥī and Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān al-ʿAbdī and said to them, "Go to Muʿāwiya and say to him, 'Your cavalry has taken position between us and the water. If we have arrived before you we would not have taken position between you and it. If you wish, release the path to the water until we and you both have drunk our fill, or, if you wish, we shall fight you upon it until we have defeated you.'" So Shabath came to him and said, "O Muʿāwiya! You have no more right to this water than we do, so release the water so that we do not die thirsty, with our swords upon our shoulders." Then Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān spoke, saying, "O Muʿāwiya! Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib says to you, "We have come a long way. We loathe the notion of fighting you before importuning you [to find another solution to the conflict]. You and your cavalry came and fought us before we fought you, and you began battling us while we simply stood our ground until we could importune you and impress upon you [the need for a peaceful solution]. This is the last time that you will do this. You have taken position between my men and the water, and I swear by God we will drink from it."

Then he said to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "What is your opinion, Abū ʿAbd Allāh? He said, "I think that ʿAlī will not die of thirst when he has soldiers and cavalry under his command. He can see the Euphrates but not drink from it. I suggest that you release the water and fortify another position, and they and we both can drink." Then al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba said, "O Muʿāwiya! Truly, these were the men who denied water to ʿUthmān

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[80] Ibid., p. 180.
[81] Ibid., p. 186.

ibn ʿAffān while they surrounded him for forty days! Deny them the water and let them die thirsty, or I will fight them, may God damn them." Then ʿAbd Allāh ibn Saʿd ibn Sarḥ spoke, saying, "Al-Walīd is correct in what he says. Deny them the water, and may God deny them on the Day of Judgment!"[82]

2. [Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays] said, "O Commander of the Faithful! Shall they keep us from the water while you are with us, and our swords are on our shoulders? Give me command of the vanguard, and by God I will not return from the water without it, or else I shall die without it!" Al-Ashtar said something similar, and ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him] said [to al-Ashʿath], "This is your matter. Do as you wish." Then al-Ashʿath went out from ʿAlī in the morning, and then called out to the people: "Who wants to die, and who wants to take the water, God willing?" Instantly, about twenty thousand men answered him, including al-Ashtar.[83]

3. The people of Iraq feared that they would wipe out the Syrians on the water, as al-Ashʿath commanded the foot-soldiers, ordering them forward by the length of his lance: "Onward, by your mothers and fathers, Iraq, onward!" He did not stop doing this, he and al-Ashtar, as they yelled out to the companions of Muʿāwiya, "Release the water!"….The men stood on the banks of the Euphrates and fought a fierce battle. A large group of Syrians were killed, and as many drowned in the Euphrates. The water passed into the hands of ʿAlī and his companions.

Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ came to Muʿāwiya and said, "What do you say now? Do you think that now they will deny you the water, as you denied it to them?" Muʿāwiya said, "Enough of this! But what do you think ʿAlī will do?" ʿAmr said, "By God, I think that ʿAlī will not bar you from the water as you tried to bar him from the water, for he has already achieved something greater than control of the water. I counseled you at the beginning of this whole affair not to deny him the water, but you ignored me and took your advice from Ibn Abī Sarḥ."[84]

Discussion

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[82] Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 3-4.
[83] Ibid., p. 8..
[84] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Echoing the story in which the Prophet Muḥammad seized the wells at the battle of Badr (2/625), the battle by the water is an episode that, like the journey of ʿAlī from Kūfa to Ṣiffīn, has had little lasting theological impact; however, also like the previous section, it carries a literary importance, in this case one that serves both to show the recurrence of the Umayyad grudge that the Prophet had prevented the Meccans from drinking at Badr[85] and to clarify further some of the key characters and their attributes. The purported villainy of Muʿāwiya in denying the water to the Iraqis is juxtaposed against ʿAlī's magnanimous release of the water after he had conquered it. This section shows such distinctions in character between the protagonist ʿAlī and the antagonist Muʿāwiya that it reads nearly melodramatically. Not only does ʿAlī distribute the water to both sides once he has conquered it, but he is also presented as trying to avoid armed conflict, even at such a late stage and in such dire circumstances; the Syrians, meanwhile, are presented as withholding the water with the intent of watching the Iraqis wither away before slaughtering them.

Naṣr, in fact, includes a number of different versions of the story, including one where Muʿāwiya even goes so far as to order his men to release the path to the water so that ʿAlī and his men can drink, but this version of the story, as we shall see, goes out of style until the Syrian composers of the local biographical dictionaries revive it half a millennium later.[86] Assuming they were using these earlier historians and their tradents as sources, the change in attribution of the order to bar the water from ʿAlī reflects a later desire to cast Muʿāwiya himself in a more villainous role. His influence truly began to wax in the conflict with ʿAlī, and the subsequent widespread distaste for the Umayyad

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[85] See Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs,* p. 212.
[86] See pp. 248-253 below.

dynasty undoubtedly focused the critical attentions of historians on its founding figure. There is, of course, plenty of villainy to go around for the Syrians, at least as far as these historians are concerned; but there is a tendency among the historians writing in a more developed early ʿAbbasid milieu to focus the villainous acts on Muʿāwiya (who was, of course, the leader of what they saw as an illegitimate party and the founder of an immoral dynasty) and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, whose role in the story (particularly the later episodes of the story) is so prominent that his villainy could not be attributed to anyone else.

One of the literary elements that makes Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* such an anachronism, other than its non-*akhbārī* narrative style, is its tone; if anything, the drama is even higher in that earlier account:

> He said, "I think that ʿAlī will not die of thirst when he has soldiers and cavalry under his command, and he can see the Euphrates and not drink from it. I suggest that you release the water and fortify another position, and they and we both can drink." [87]

In general, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ receives kinder treatment in the three *muʾarrikhī* accounts (al-Masʿūdī, al-Maqdisī, and Ibn al-Athīr) than he does in the *akhbārī* ones (al-Dīnawarī, al-Yaʿqūbī, and al-Ṭabarī), [88] and that begins here with Ibn Aʿtham. Of course, ʿAmr's advice to Muʿāwiya to allow ʿAlī and his men access to the water appears in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn;* however, the focus in the *akhbārī* accounts is more upon the act of barring the water from the Iraqis, while here much more attention is paid to ʿAmr's notion that all should have access to the water. Even if his humanity is driven by self-interest, and a lack of desire to face ninety thousand armed and thirsty Iraqi partisans, this slight shift in focus has the effect of beginning to dissipate the level of his villainy, softening him into a

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[87] Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*., vol. 2, p. 3.
[88] See pp. 137-142 below.

wily and dishonest general serving the wrong commander. Ibn Aʿtham attributes this shift, by his tone, less to cowardice or humanity and more to a keen sense of overall strategy: why force the Iraqis to fight for their very survival when (as later events confirm) fighting them for the identity of the imam and the nature of the imamate is something about which they are far more ambivalent and fractious, and far less zealous? Even later historians, like Ibn Kathīr, confirm ʿAmr's reluctance to go along with Muʿāwiya's decision to bar ʿAlī and his men from the water,[89] as well as the notion present in al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl,* that the suggestion came from the ultimately minor characters al-Walīd ibn ʿUqbā and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Sarḥ, rather than Muʿāwiya or ʿAmr themselves.

Ibn Aʿtham's account contains the story of Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān, whom ʿAlī sends to Muʿāwiya as an emissary, which also appears in the account of Naṣr ibn Muzāhim. Ibn Aʿtham's account places the threatening request to release the water upon the character of Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān as he delivers it to Muʿāwiya, whereas in the Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim/al-Ṭabarī version, the entreaty is recorded as ʿAlī tells Ṣaʿṣaʿa what to say. It should be noted that, in this account, as well as others where it will appear later, in the interchange between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, the former is always the one looking for a diplomatic solution in the early stages of the skirmish. Emissary after emissary is sent to Muʿāwiya, who returns ʿAlī's messengers to him with his responses. It is only when the battle ultimately goes against him that Muʿāwiya makes any peaceful overture, and that of course evolves into ʿAmr's deceitful ruse using the Qurʾān. The narrative signification of these messengers is that ʿAlī is first in peace; the message of his victories is that he is first in war; and the message of the fact that he is ultimately on the losing side of the

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[89] See pp. 279-282 below.

battle of Ṣiffīn is that he is deficient in machinations, politics, and chicanery. This sets him up as an absolutely heroic and religiously perfect figure whose ultimate defeat is nonetheless theologically explicable.[90]

Descriptions of the Armies and Early Skirmishes

The armies are described in terms of soldiers, their positioning in the ranks, and the identities of their commanders. Violent hostilities begin in earnest in the form of single-combat duels.

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim:

> 1. Alī stood between the warring parties at Ṣiffīn and yelled out, "O Muʿāwiya!" over and over. Muʿāwiya said, "Ask him what he wants." He said, "I want him to come out to me, I just want to say one word to him." Then Muʿāwiya stepped out, and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ was with him. When the two of them approached ʿAlī, he ignored ʿAmr and said to Muʿāwiya, "Woe unto you! You know very well that the people are fighting over us, they are hurting each other! Come to me; whichever one of us kills the other, wins the day." Muʿāwiya turned to ʿAmr and said, "What do you think, O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, of the matter before us? Shall I duel him?" ʿAmr said, "The man has acted justly towards you, and I know that if you shrink from him there will still be disgrace upon you and your progeny." Muʿāwiya said, "O ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, I am not deceived about my stature compared to him. By God, Ibn Abī Ṭālib has never dueled any man but that the ground was watered by that man's blood!" Then he returned to his place at the back of the ranks with ʿAmr. When ʿAlī (upon him be peace) saw this, he laughed and returned to his post.[91]
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> 2. ʿAlī placed ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir in charge of the cavalry; over the infantry, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Budayl ibn Warqāʾ al-Khuzāʿī; he honored

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[90] Cf. Chapter II, p. 140, below. Boaz Shoshan points out that the structure of al-Ṭabarī's account is implicitly quite critical of ʿAlī.
[91] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *W.Ṣ.,* p.274-5.

Hāshim ibn ʿUtba ibn Abī Waqqāṣ al-Zuhrī with the great banner. He placed al-Ashʿath ibn Qays over the right flank, and ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-ʿAbbās with the left flank. Over the right infantry, Sulaymān ibn Ṣurd al-Khuzāʿī; over the left, al-Ḥārith ibn Murra al-ʿAbdī. He placed the Muḍar tribesmen of Kūfa and Baṣra in the center, the tribesmen of Yamen on the right, and the tribesmen of Rabīʿa on the left...[92]

3. Dhū al-Kalāʿ went to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who was with Muʿāwiya, as well as other people, including ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr, who was goading the people up for war. When he stopped before the men, Dhū al-Kalāʿ said to ʿAmr, "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, do you have a man among you who is of good council, who will not lie to you on the subject of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir?" ʿAmr said, "And who is this man?" He said, "This man is my cousin, and he is one of the people of Kūfa"....[ʿAmr] went forward and called, "I charge you by God, O Abū Nūḥ, to be truthful and not lie to us. Is ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir with you?" Then Abū Nuḥ said to him, "I will not inform you of anything until you inform me of the reason for your question. Truly, we have many of the Companions of the Messenger of God (God's prayers and peace be upon him) with us beside him, and they are all eager to fight all of you." ʿAmr said, "I heard the Messenger of God (God's prayers and peace be upon him) said, 'Truly, ʿAmmār will be killed by the rebel band,' and he did not believe that ʿAmmār would be separated from what is just, nor that he ever taste hellfire." Then Abū Nūḥ said, "There is no God but God, and God is most great, and by God he is here with us, and determined to fight you." ʿAmr said, "By God, he is determined to fight us?" He said, "Yes, by God, whom there is no God other than he."[93]

Ibn Aʿtham:

1. That day, a man of the Ḥimyar, whose name was Abū Nūḥ, was with ʿAlī, and he was speaking to him, reminding him that he had honor, strength, and standing among the people. He said to ʿAlī, "O Commander of the Faithful! Will you permit me to speak with Dhū al-Kalāʿ? He is from my tribe and a leader of the Syrians, but I have doubt that he is really with them in spirit!" ʿAlī said to him, "O Abū Nūḥ! If you can get Dhū al-Kalāʿ to turn his back on the Syrian cause, I would be happy to meet with him. I will greet him kindly, and you as well."

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[92] Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, *W.Ṣ,* p. 205.
[93] Ibid., pp. 334-5.

So Abū Nūḥ sent word to Dhū al-Kalāʿ, "I would like to meet with you, so please come to me so that I may speak with you." Dhū al-Kalāʿ then went to Muʿāwiya and said, "Abū Nūḥ wants to talk with me. I will not speak with him without your permission. What do you think? Should I talk to him or no?" Muʿāwiya said, "What does he want to talk to you about? By God, we do not doubt your rightness nor his wrongness, your correctness and his error." "In that case," Dhū al-Kalāʿ said, "permit me to speak with him." Muʿāwiya said, "As you wish."

Abū Nūḥ advanced until he stopped between the two groups, and Dhū al-Kalāʿ went out until he was standing before him. Then Abū Nūḥ said to him, "O Dhū al-Kalāʿ! In both of these two groups, there is nobody who will give you better advice than I. Truly Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān is in error, and has dragged you into error with him on a grand scale. One error is that he is one of the *ṭulaqāʾ*, to whom the Caliphate is forbidden. He is in error in that he demands your allegiance, and he leads you wrong when he takes the *bayʿa* from you. He is in error in his demand for blood revenge for ʿUthmān, and he has dragged you into error with him, for there is another who would take precedence over him in the demand for revenge for ʿUthmān's blood. He is in error that he has blamed ʿAlī for ʿUthmān's blood, and he has dragged you into error with him, for you believe him and assist him. This is the matter we have seen personally, and from which you were absent, so fear God, and woe unto you, O Dhū al-Kalāʿ! For ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, the truth of what happened to him is for the Day of Judgment. The people have given the *bayʿa* to ʿAlī, which he and they both find acceptable, for he is the right person from among them to lead them. The people of Syria do not have the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār among them. If you were to say, 'ʿAlī is not better than Muʿāwiya, and not more correct than he in this matter,' then give me a man from the Quraysh whose *sābiqa* is on par with ʿAlī's, and whose *dīn*!" Then Dhū al-Kalāʿ said, "Abū Nūḥ, I have heard what you have said! All of this is known about ʿAlī. Tell me, is ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir among you?" Abū Nūḥ said, "Yes, he is with us." He said, "Would you mind if he and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ met to speak, and I will listen?" Abū Nūḥ said, "Yes."[94]

2. Muʿāwiya placed ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in charge of the cavalry, and over the infantry Muslim ibn ʿUqba al-Murrī. Over the right flank, he placed ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and over the left flank, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama al-Fihrī. He honored ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn

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[94] Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, vol. 2., pp. 68-70.

Khālid ibn al-Walīd with the great banner. He placed al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays al-Fihrī over the Damascenes, who were in the center, Dhū al-Kalāʿ al-Himyārī over the people of Ḥimṣ, who were on the right, and Zufar ibn al-Ḥārith over the people of Qinnasrīn, who were [also] on the right. Sufyān ibn ʿAmr al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī was placed over the people of Jordan, on the left, and Maslama ibn Khālid over the people of Palestine, who were also on the left...[95]

Discussion

This section, covering the description of the armies as they prepare for the major battle, is, with a few exceptions, a list of names. In many contexts of Islamic historiography, these lists can be important; mostly, they are important for the time in which they are written, rather than for the events they describe. They record the lists for posterity for the sake of bolstering social status of certain groups—the ones who later claimed to have notable ancestors at important events. Most of the time, the problem is that the lists are all different; however, in this case, once again, with a very few exceptions all the historians examined in this study copied the list of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim. It is fairly well-known that, according to the sources, most of the Anṣār sided with ʿAlī; the only two exceptions are mentioned later by al-Yaʿqūbī, and they are Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr and Maslama ibn Mukhallad, who were known to be hostile to ʿAlī out of loyalty to ʿUthmān. The rest of the Anṣār, however, were generally opposed to ʿUthmān, supportive of ʿAlī, and would become a pious opposition to the Umayyads.[96]

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[95] Ibid., p. 206.
[96] W. Montgomery Watt, "al- Anṣār." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 08 July 2009 http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:3678/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-0678 (Print Version: Volume I, page 514, column 1).

The exceptions to those name lists come in the accounts of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and, later, al-Dīnawarī. Naṣr tells the tale of ʿAlī's challenge to Muʿāwiya, offering to settle the whole affair by single combat. Muʿāwiya is reticent, given ʿAlī's famous prowess with a blade; the whole episode is a clear attempt to insult and damn the Syrian governor, even putting some damning words into the mouth of ʿAmr, his general: "The man has acted justly towards you, and I know that if you shrink from him there will still be disgrace upon you and your progeny." A bit like Oedipus blithely calling down the curse of the gods upon the cause of the blight plaguing Thebes, little realizing that he was the cause, ʿAmr casually condemns not only Muʿāwiya, but his whole dynasty. If the readers are meant to accept ʿAlī as a great warrior who would have no trouble dispatching Muʿāwiya, it is unlikely from a literary point of view, certainly amongst these historians, to see ʿAmr of all people used as a mouthpiece to take a position, based upon the idea of justice and righteousness of all things, that would cost his party its cause and, more importantly, would cost him Egypt. In fact, it rather seems that ʿAmr is being used as little more than a mouthpiece for Naṣr's own tendencies, and the focus is on Muʿāwiya himself. This episode further denigrates the Syrian not only as villainous, as in the battle by the water, and conniving, as in his offer of Egypt to ʿAmr, but also, and perhaps most damningly, as a coward.

The story of Dhū al-Kalāʿ al-Ḥimyarī, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and Dhū al-Kalāʿ's cousin Abū Nūḥ appears in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, but then disappears until the time of the biographers discussed in chapter IV. Although it does not advance Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's story in any way other than to imply that it is the Syrians who are *al-fiʾa al-bāghiya*—the "rebel band"—this story is presented in a more detailed form in the earlier *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* of Ibn

Aʿtham and then picked up as a trope in later stories. The Ḥadīth regarding who would kill ʿAmmār is a very significant one, since, as used here, it amounts to the Prophet's endorsement of ʿAlī at Ṣiffīn. What sets Naṣr's version apart from the works of Ibn Aʿtham, ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, however, is that here alone, it takes place from the point of view of Dhū al-Kalāʿ, rather than the point of view of Abū Nūḥ. This difference in narrative perspective shows quite clearly that the later historians did not follow Naṣr's words slavishly; while there is no substantive difference to the different perspectives in terms of the development of the narrative, it is a distinct indicator that literary adjustments were made to *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* when later authors utilized of it as a fundamental source of information regarding "what actually happened" at the battle.

What stands out in this section is Ibn Aʿtham's description of the meeting between two Ḥimyarīs on opposite sides of the battle: ʿAlī's companion Abū Nūḥ and Muʿāwiya's commander Dhū al-Kalāʿ. This episode appears in an abbreviated form in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, and then returns in the much later Syrian biographically-organized histories of Ibn al-ʿAdīm and ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir (expanded and modified, of course), but is absent from the *muʾarrikhī* works of al-Masʿūdī, al-Maqdisī and Ibn al-Athīr. It is clear from the similarities in a number of the stories appearing in both *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, especially the letter from ʿAlī to Muʿāwiya examined in the first part of the Ṣiffīn story, that Ibn Aʿtham and Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim were heavily reliant upon the testimonies of the same tradents, in this case not only Abū Mikhnaf, but ʿAwāna ibn al-Ḥakam and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, as well. Thus it is unusual to see the story, in the early *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* of Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, from the perspective of Abū Nūḥ, while Naṣr's version is told from the perspective of the other Ḥimyarī, Dhū al-Kalāʿ; one of them must have

made an early choice to make an adjustment in the narrative point of view, and it is not immediately clear why the historian in question might have made this choice. The fact that it is Naṣr's version, alone, among those accounts wherein this episode appears, that presents the story from Dhū al-Kalāʿ's perspective suggests that the tradents probably presented the story from the point of view of Abū Nūḥ.

The role of the story within the narrative is to remind the reader of the Prophetic Ḥadīth concerning ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, namely that he would be killed by "the rebel band" (*al-fiʾa al-bāghiya*) and to establish that there is concern from those on the Syrian side that, should the elderly ʿAmmār fail to survive the coming battle, that Ḥadīth would implicitly cast them as the "rebel band" and completely de-legitimize them theologically. There is also, of course, a dramatic purpose to the death of ʿAmmār, one which endures throughout all the histories. His death summarizes the real tragedy of *fitna* and highlights the trauma for those generations that did not live through it. He absolutely serves as a place-hlder for all the Companions of the Prophet, and even for the whole generation of the early Community that was destroyed by *fitna.* His death marks the end of the age of righteousness and unity that was eclipsed by the subsequent rise to power of the Umayyads and the formation of Islam's sects.

In all, Ibn Aʿtham includes a very long discussion of the specific skirmishes and lead-up to *laylat al-harīr*, covering more than 180 pages in the edition used here; this section is a good read, to be sure, but of little lasting importance as far as this study is concerned, as *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* was not used in the construction of later histories. His narration of the encounter between the two Ḥimyarīs is interesting in that, unlike in the other accounts of the encounter between Dhū al-Kalāʿ and Abū Nūḥ, the discussion

between ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī when they are setting the ground rules for their arbitration is foreshadowed. This, implies Ibn Aʿtham, is how the discussion between ʿAmr and Abū Mūsā should have gone. Abū Nūḥ elaborates to his tribesman Dhū al-Kalāʿ why the key points that would be brought to bear by ʿAmr are "in error." First, and once again, Muʿāwiya is one of the *ṭulaqāʾ*, a point Ibn Aʿtham evidently finds worth emphasizing by repeated reminder to his readers. Second, he has no right to claim blood revenge for ʿUthmān, as the murdered Caliph had closer kin than Muʿāwiya with more right to make the claim. Furthermore, ʿAlī was not complicit in his death; and, even if he had been, argues Abū Nūḥ, what happened to ʿUthmān is "for the Day of Judgment;" whether he had been killed *ẓāliman* or *maẓlūman* was not quite as clear as ʿAmr would make it out to be. Finally, ʿAlī enjoys the support of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, preceded Muʿāwiya to Islam and has more right to the imamate than anybody in the Quraysh. These are powerful arguments for ʿAlī's rightness, legitimacy, innocence, and for Muʿāwiya's error, all of which Abū Mūsā will concede without argument when they are denied by ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. The clarity of Ibn Aʿtham's argument, presented at such an early stage in the story, makes it somewhat surprising that *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* was not utilized to a greater extent in the construction of later works of history. The absence of this argument in later works is certainly reflective of the extent to which Naṣr's early text, rather than Ibn Aʿtham's, flourished and became ubiquitous. It may also reflect the trend towards sympathy for the Umayyads. While even Ibn Kathīr would not disagree with any of the arguments presented by Ibn Aʿtham in this section, the clarity of the argument certainly does nothing to advance Ibn Kathīr's goal of rehabilitating the Umayyad image, and that could in part explain why he, Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and

the Syrian *muʿarrikh* Ibn al-Athīr chose to overlook it as a source of narrative information. It is thus a matter of some irony that in order to compose their strongly argumentative works, the historians who would use Ṣiffīn as a site for explicit argumentation would prefer to consult the less argumentative of these two foundational texts, Naṣr's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*. It was not, however, the gentler argumentation of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* that made the Syrians employ it; as we shall see, it was the preferences of the *akhbārīs* that allowed Naṣr's work to survive and flourish, and that condemned *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* to relative obscurity.

Laylat al-Harīr—"The Night of Clamor"

There is a great battle.

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim:

> The people gathered together, and they released volleys of arrows and flung stones until they ran out [of stones], then they thrust at each other with spears until these broke and shattered. Then the armies went at each other with swords and iron shafts. Nothing but the clang of iron on iron could be heard; indeed, in the hearts of the men, a more terrifying sound than thunder. [One of the Syrians] said: "The sun appeared gloomy [in the dust] that was kicked up, and the flags and banners dipped low." Al-Ashtar took command of the middle left, and commanded all the tribesmen to advance. They fought with swords and iron shafts from the early morning prayers until midnight, stopping only to pray. Al-Ashtar continued to lead the people thusly….About seventy thousand were killed that day and that night, which became known as *laylat al-harīr*, or "the night of clamor." Al-Ashtar was on the right, [ʿAbd Allāh] ibn ʿAbbās was on the left, and ʿAlī was in the center as the people were fighting.
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> The battle continued from the middle of the night until the sunrise. Al-Ashtar was exhorting his comrades from among them, urging them to advance towards the Syrians: "Advance the length of this, my spear." When they had carried out his order he said, "Advance the length of this

bow!" And they did, and continued like this until most people of the [Syrian] band [*fiʾa*][97] had run out of courage.[98]

Ibn Aʿtham:

> The cavalry started riding and they clanged their swords together, volleyed arrows and kicked up dust….The sun rose and set, and nobody in either party prayed; indeed, there were no prayers that day but the *takbīr*.
>
> The night set upon them and the war intensified. This was *laylat al-harīr*, the night of clamor, and they whimpered at each other, embraced each other, and honored each other.
>
> ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) came, hour after hour, raising his head to the sky, calling out, "O God! To you I give my feet, and to you give my heart, and to you I raise my hands to my neck, asking you for what I need! O God, grant victory to us, to our group, in truth and justice, for you are the great conqueror!" His voice carried through the black of the night, and the people rode with him, with every one of them killing a Syrian, and crying "*Allāhu Akbār!*"
>
> I count that there were a total of five hundred twenty-three *takbīrs*, and each *takbīr* was a Syrian's death, more or less.
>
> The leaders of the Syrians called out in that overpowering deluge, "O soldiers! God, God for those who remain!" The people fought each other all that night until the morning came, and there numbered thirty-six thousand dead. The sun rose towards noon, and the day reached its height. This was on a Friday, and the swords took the heads of the men.[99]

Discussion

The discussion of the main battle always possesses, as its primary literary intent, the emotive and dramatic rendering of the battle. There is no sense at all that what we are seeing is any sort of "realistic" presentation. This literary intent—that is, the specific language and imagery used in describing the battle—is distinct from the narrative

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[97] The use of the term *fiʾa* is a clear reference to the Syrian soldiers, given the Ḥadīth concerning the death of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir.

[98] Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, *W.Ṣ.*, p. 475.

[99] Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, vol. 2, p. 178.

purpose—that is, the role that *laylat al-harīr* plays in the larger Ṣiffīn story. The description of *laylat al-harīr* must, as its primary purpose in the narrative, advance the story to a point that *forces* the Syrians' into such a desperate situation to make necessary the call for arbitration, which always immediately follows this battle.   Thus, the descriptions of the battle (when they appear at all) are always presented as an intensified version of the skirmishes, whether the battle is described as a large mass melee, as in Ibn Aʿtham, or if specific fights within the battle are highlighted for a great amount of time, as we shall see in the case of Ibn al-Athīr.

The death of the companion of the Prophet ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir is usually given a prominent place in the *laylat al-harīr* episode, although the exact time of that event is not always clearly designated, and, when it is, not always designated as occurring within the bounds of *laylāt al-harīr*, but its ubiquity in all the sources defines it as an event of importance.   Abū al-Yaqẓān ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir ibn ʿĀmir ibn Mālik was one of the earliest converts to Islam, and had fought at the battles of Badr, Uḥud, and the rest of the battles of the Prophet, as well as the battle of Yamāma under Abū Bakr, where he is said to have lost an ear.   Appointed as governor of Kūfa by ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, he had always been a strong supporter of ʿAlī's. His most important characteristic to the Islamic community at the time of the composition of these histories, however, was his closeness to the Prophet, his piety, and devotion to Islam—all of which represented a link to Islam's holiest times and period of remembered unity.   Despite the fact (or perhaps because of the fact) that he was already at an advanced age (certainly over ninety years old), the combat death of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir was clearly a traumatic event for the Muslim community. In fact, he could be seen, from a literary standpoint, as a place-holder for all

of the Companions of the Prophet who died at Ṣiffīn. His death, as well as that of the other Companions, underscores just how traumatic the battle was for the community, as it threatened to sever the community's living connection to the time of the Prophet.

Relative to what follows it, however, the battle, and everything preceding it, is of secondary importance to Islamic history. Up until this point, there has been (and, we shall see, will be) little disagreement across all the diverse sources before us. The situation has been black and white: Muʿāwiya cynically takes advantage of the death of a kinsman to advance his own political ambitions and refuses to pledge allegiance to his rightful commander; ʿAlī justifiably takes an army to return Syria to the Caliph's peace; the two sides meet, with ʿAlī's camp behaving honorably (for example, in distributing the water) despite the despicable behavior of its adversaries; ʿAlī had good men, and Muʿāwiya had supporters who were misguided at best and wicked at worst; and, though both camps fight fiercely, only ʿAlī's camp fights bravely. The cleverness of ʿAmr's ruse, which occurs at this very point, just as ʿAlī is on the verge of victory, lies in its perfect exploitation of the existing fissures within ʿAlī's camp—fissures which, because of the black and white nature of the narrative to this point, had heretofore lain dormant. ʿAmr's call to arbitration, and his underhanded manipulation of the arbitration process, would turn these fissures into cracks; these cracks would evolve into sects; and the unity of the Islamic community, whether real or imagined in historical memory, would be shattered forever. Given this extraordinarily important sequence of events, the tremendous consequences it would have (and continues to have) for the Islamic community today, and the differences in perspective on the battle that we will see across

the sources that will be examined in this study, the fact that these and subsequent sources share essentially the same vision of the events at Ṣiffīn to this point is remarkable.

The denoument begins with the Qurʾān.

The Call for Arbitration and the Appointment of Arbiters

Desperate for deliverance from crushing defeat, Muʿāwiya asks ʿAmr for his advice. ʿAmr comes up with the brilliant and devious plan to raise aloft the Qurʾān and call for arbitration based upon it. ʿAlī's army is split, with some wanting to keep fighting, and some wanting to end the bloodshed and accept the offer. Those who wish to accept the offer force their will on ʿAlī, and then force him to appoint Abū Mūsā as his arbiter. Muʿāwiya appoints ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ.

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim:

> 1. Tamīm ibn Hudhaym said: "When we saw the dawn after the night of clamor, suddenly, like banners among the ranks of the Syrians, from the center of the corps near to the position of Muʿāwiya, we saw what appeared to be copies of the Qurʾān tied to poles and lances. It was most of the *maṣāḥif* of that army. Their lances were completely tied with the Qurʾān, with three lances held aloft by each of ten units. Abū Jaʿfar and Abū al-Ṭufayl said that they faced ʿAlī with one hundred copies of the Qurʾān, and placed two hundred copies with each wing. All in all, there were five hundred copies of the Qurʾān. Abū Jaʿfar said that al-Ṭufayl ibn Ādam came to ʿAlī's cavalry, and Abū Shurayḥ al-Judhāmī came to the right flank, and Riqāʾ ibn al-Muʿammar came to the left, and then they cried, "O you Arabs! God, God for your women and daughters, for who will defend them from Byzantium and the people of Persia tomorrow if you die? God, God for your faith! This is the book of God between us." And ʿAlī said [to his army], "By God, you know they want nothing of the book! Let you [warriors] judge between us, for indeed you are the true

arbiters of the revealed truth!" But ʿAlī's companions were divided in their positions.[100]

2. The people of Syria turned and yelled out in the darkness of the night, "O you people of Iraq! Who will care for our children if you kill us all, and who will care for yours if we kill you? God, only God remains." The people of Syria changed their positions and raised the *maṣāḥif* on the heads of their lances and adorned them on their horses, and the [Iraqis] craved for that [ceasefire] to which they were called. They raised the copies of the great Damascus Mosque Qurʾān, carried by ten men, crying, "O you people of Iraq! The book of God between us!"[101]

3. The story (*qiṣṣa*) of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd: When the people of Syria raised the *maṣāḥif* aloft upon their lances, calling for the judgment of the Qurʾān, ʿAlī (may peace be upon him), said, "Servants of God! Truly, those who seek the judgment of the Qurʾān are right, but Muʿāwiya, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, Ibn Abī Muʿayṭ, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama, and Ibn Abī Sarḥ are no companions of the *dīn* nor of the Qurʾān. I know them better than you. I was their companion man and boy, and they were evil boys, and they are evil men. They may use the word "truth" [to advance their interests], but that which they wish by its use is error. By God, they did not raise them without knowing what is in it; it is a stratagem, a deception, a trick!"[102]

4. Those who became Khawārij thereafter went to ʿAlī with their swords upon their shoulders, called him by his name, but not "Commander of the Faithful," and said, "O ʿAlī, cause the people here to answer the Book of God when you are called to it, and if you do not we will kill you as we killed Ibn ʿAffān. By God, we will do this if you do not answer." ʿAlī said, "Woe unto you! I am the first one to call for obeisance to the Book of God, and the first to answer such a call. I am not free in my *dīn* to refuse a call to the Book of God. But I am fighting them, and our hands are guided by the wisdom of the Qurʾān. They have already disobeyed the command of God in this matter, rejected his unity, denied his Book. I have now told you that they intend to dupe you. They call you to deception." They said, "Call to al-Ashtar to come to you." Al-Ashtar was busily continuing the fight of *laylat al-ḥarīr*, earning highest honors against Muʿāwiya's army.[103]

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[100] Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, *W.Ṣ.,* p. 478.
[101] Ibid., p. 491.
[102] Ibid., p. 489.
[103] Ibid., p. 489-90.

4. Al-Ashʿath went to him and said, "Muʿāwiya, why have you raised these *maṣāḥif*?" He answered: "So that you and we together turn to what God commanded in His book. You will send a man from among you whom you find acceptable, and we will send a man from among us, and we will impose upon them that they act according to what is in the Book of God, not opposing it. Then we will follow what they agree upon." Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays said to him, "This is just," and then he want back to ʿAlī and told him what Muʿāwiya had said.

The people said, "We are pleased and accept." ʿAlī dispatched *qurrāʾ*[104] from the people of Iraq, and Muʿāwiya did the same from the people of Syria, and they met at Ṣiffīn between the two armies with the copies of the Qurʾān with them. They looked through it and studied it, and agreed that they would live as the Qurʾān stipulated that they live, and die as it stipulated that they die. Then each troop returned to his company, and the people said, "We will accept the judgment of the Qurʾān." The Syrians said, "We have agreed, and selected ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ," and al-Ashʿath and those who became Khawārij afterward said, "We are content with Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī." ʿAlī said: "You disobeyed me in the start of this business, do not disobey me now. I do not think I should grant power to Abū Mūsā." But al-Ashʿath, Zayd ibn Ḥuṣayn al-Ṭāʾī, and Misʿar ibn Fadakī insisted, "We do not find anyone else acceptable: What he warned us against we have fallen into [i.e., *fitna*]." ʿAlī said: "I do not consider him trustworthy. He separated from me and caused the people to abandon me. Then he fled from me until I guaranteed his safety after some months. But here is Ibn ʿAbbās; we will give him power in that matter." They replied, "To us there is no difference between you and Ibn ʿAbbās. We insist on someone who is equally distant from you and Muʿāwiya, no closer to one of you than he is to the other." ʿAlī said, "I will appoint al-Ashtar."

According to Abū Mikhnaf—Abū Janāb al Kalbī: Al-Ashʿath said, "Was it anybody but al-Ashtar who caused this conflagration in the land?"

According to Abū Mikhnaf—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Jundab—his father: Al-Ashʿath said, "Are we not already under the authority of al-

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[104] The exact meaning of the word *Qurrāʾ* is unclear. It has long been interpreted as "reciters of the Qurʾān" in western scholarship, but there are other possibilities as well. M.A. Shaban suggested that the term means "villagers" in *Islamic History A.D. 600-750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 50-111, and this is corroborated by G.H.A. Juynboll, "The Qurrāʾ in Early Islamic History," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, xvi (1973), 113-129. It is certainly odd, if the *Qurrāʾ* are indeed reciters of the Qurʾān, that they offer no comment on the validity of what is presented by the Syrian side, since presumably that is what they would have been sent by ʿAlī to do. Their role in the story is quite ambivalent, and their role in history is quite mysterious.

Ashtar?" ʿAlī said: "What do you mean to imply?" and al-Ashʿath answered, "[It is al-Ashtar's wish] that we should strike one another with swords until what you and he want comes to pass." ʿAlī said, "Do you then refuse to accept anybody but Abū Mūsā?" and then he replied, "Yes." ʿAlī said, "Then do what you want."

They sent to Abū Mūsā, who had withdrawn apart from the fighting and was in ʿUrḍ.[105]

Ibn Aʿtham:

1. Muʿāwiya said to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "Woe unto you, by God, O Abū ʿAbd Allāh! Where are the horses that I was to expect from you?" ʿAmr said, "What is it you want?" He said, "I want you to quash this fighting, or else the people of Syria will be exterminated! I indeed know that if this war becomes the day of our death, there will be nobody in all the land of Syria to carry our weapons!" ʿAmr said, "If that is what you wish, then order that the *maṣāḥif* be raised on the heads of the lances, then call them to it. If you do this, nobody will fight anybody else. There is my cavalry for you, and there is my stratagem, which I am still talking about to you [while you wait]. Make haste, raise the *maṣāḥif!*" When the people of Syria heard this, they said to each other, "ʿAmr is correct, this is a greater force than anyone has come up with ever before."

So Muʿāwiya ordered the *maṣāḥif* be raised on the heads of the lances, and the Syrians yelled, "O ʿAlī! O ʿAlī! Fear God, fear God, you and your companions and all who remain! This is the book of God between us!" Then they raised the *maṣāḥif*, as well as the Great *Maṣḥaf*, which is the *maṣḥaf* of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, and they affixed them to their lances and raised them all up and called out, "O people of Iraq! This is the book of God between us! God, God for those who remain!"[106]

2. At that point al-Ashʿath came to ʿAlī and said, "O Commander of the Faithful! Turn the people here and answer the book of God, for if you do not, by God I will never crack a whip, swing a sword, stab with a lance or let fly an arrow in your service ever again!" ʿAlī said, "Woe unto you, by God, for they have not raised these *maṣāḥif* up except for treachery and stratagem!" Al-Ashʿath said, "By God, we shall never refuse [the Qurʾān]. If you wish, permit me to go to Muʿāwiya and ask him why he

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[105] Ibid., p. 499. See Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, III, s.v.: Urḍ: A small village in the Syrian desert between Palmyra and Resafa in the Province of Aleppo. We come to understand that Abū Mūsā had withdrawn from the fighting out of his intense opposition to *fitna*.
[106] Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, vol. 2, p. 179.

has raised these *maṣāḥif.*" ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) said, "Very well, go."

Al-Ashʿath went forward until he was standing close to Muʿāwiya, and then called out, "O Muʿāwiya! Why have you raised these *maṣāḥif*?" He said, "We raised them so that you and we may agree upon them." So al-Ashʿath returned to ʿAlī and informed him of this.

Then a man from the Syrians came on a horse of his, with a copy of the Qurʾān which he had just opened, then stopped between the two armies and began to read from the Qurʾān. "Have you not regarded those who were given a portion of the Book, being called to the Book of God, that it might decide between them, and then a party of them turned away, swerving aside?"[107] He said, "When they are called to God and His Messenger that he may judge between them, lo, a party of them are swerving aside."[108] He continued, "If they are in the right, they will come to him submissively. What, is there sickness in their hearts, or are they in doubt or do they fear that God may be unjust towards them and His Messenger? Nay, but those—they are the evildoers. All that the believers say, when they are called to God and His Messenger, that he may judge between them, is that they say, 'We hear, and we obey;' those—they are the triumphant."[109]

The people in ʿAlī's army were stirred, and a group of them said, "We have tasted enough of this battle, and the loss of men!" and the rest of them said, "We shall fight today over what we fought yesterday, even if there are but a few of us left!"[110]

3. Then a group of the Qurʾān reciters from the people of Iraq met with a group of the *qurrāʾ* of the people of Syria between the two armies with the Qurʾān with them. They agreed to look through it and agreed to live as the Qurʾān commanded they live, and die as the Qurʾān commanded they die. The two sides agreed to appoint two arbiters, and commissioned them to look to nothing but the Qurʾān and the generally accepted *sunna.*

The Syrians said, "We appoint ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ."

Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, and those who afterwards became Khawārij, said, "We appoint Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿari, for he is the envoy of the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) to Yemen, a companion of Abū Bakr and a governor of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's." ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) said, "I am not pleased with Abū

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[107] Qurʾān, 3:23 (Arberry, trans.)
[108] Qurʾān, 24:48 (Arberry, trans.)
[109] Qurʾān, 24:49-51 (Arberry, trans.)
[110] Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ,* vol. 2, pp. 180-1.

Mūsā, and I shall not give him authority over this matter." Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, Zayd ibn Ḥuṣayn, Misʿar ibn Fadakī and ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Kuwwāʾ said, "We shall agree to none but him, for he has warned us of the battle in which we currently find ourselves." Then ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) said, "He is no supporter of mine. He split from me and tried to divide the people from me, then went away for months until I guaranteed his safety. But here is ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, and I shall appoint him as my arbiter." The group said, "You may not appoint Ibn ʿAbbās, for he is your cousin."

ʿAlī said, "Then I shall appoint al-Ashtar as my arbiter." Al-Ashʿath said, "Who was it who started this conflagration in the land other than al-Ashtar! God preserve us from his wisdom!" ʿAlī said, "What of his wisdom?" Al-Ashʿath said, "His wisdom is that the people keep hitting each other with swords until the situation comes to what you and he want."

Then al-Ashtar said to him, "You only say this because the Commander of the Faithful removed you as a commander because he did not think you were suitable for it." Al-Ashʿath said, "By God, I was not happy for having that command, nor sad for being removed from it."

Then ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him), said, "Woe unto you all! Muʿāwiya has chosen his most trusted advisor, whose opinion and perspective he believes in, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, for this matter. I need to appoint someone like him, or else it will go bad for me. Let me appoint ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās."

Al-Ashʿath, and those who were with him, said, "No, by God! You shall not ever appoint Muḍarīs over us, never until the last hour!"….Then ʿAlī said, "You will accept none buy Abū Mūsā?" They said, "Yes." He said, "Then do as you wish. You shall reap as you sow!"

Then al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays al-Tamīmī said, "O Commander of the Faithful! Abū Mūsā is from Yemen, and a relative of Muʿāwiya's! They have selected ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who is the sly fox of the Arabs. Appoint me as your arbiter, and ʿAmr will not be able to make a point but that I shall reject it as false, and he shall not reject anything I say as false but that I shall gainsay him. Pick anyone else, if not me; or, if you must send Abū Mūsā, then send me with him!" ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) said, "O Aḥnaf! This group has rejected all but Abū Mūsā; by God, this charge has come down to him."[111]

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[111] Ibid., pp. 193-5.

Discussion

This section concerns ʿAmr's stratagem regarding the raising of the copies of the Qurʾān on lances, to call for arbitration, the appointment of arbiters, and the setting down of the rules that will govern the arbitration. As in each of the previous sections, there is a general agreement on the way in which arbitration was suggested, ʿAlī's response, and the appointment of arbiters, as well as a story regarding the rendering of ʿAlī's title; it has perfect parallels with the story of Ḥudaybiyya, concerning the Prophet (ʿAlī's father-in-law) and a negotiator of Abū Sufyān (Muʿāwiya's father).

It all begins, of course, with ʿAmr's suggestion to raise the codices of the Qurʾān and call for arbitration, ostensibly as a way to end the bloodshed, but in reality a way to exploit the divisions within ʿAlī's camp. The trickery of the Syrian camp relies upon both the piety and the worldly concerns of the Iraqis. The call to arbitration based upon the Qurʾān is an appeal to their adversaries' religious fervor. However, the bulk of the exhortation to stop the fighting is placed in terms of worldly concerns; most specifically, who would care for the women and children of the dead, and, more dramatically, who would be left to defend *Dār al-Islām* should the Persians or Byzantines invade? It should here be mentioned that, in the account of al-Dīnawarī, al-Ashʿath is reported to have publicly expressed such a fear earlier.[112] After all, it was in no small part the enduring war that those two great empires had been fighting that left a power vacuum in the Fertile Crescent, laying it open to the Arab Muslims during the Muslim Conquest a mere two decades or so earlier; neither the Syrians nor the Iraqis could have been blind to the possibility that Muslim infighting would create a similar power vacuum and invite one of

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[112] See below, p. 135.

their powerful neighbors to attempt to reclaim what they had lost. Besides, Muʿāwiya had already reportedly made a pact with the Byzantines so that he could turn his attention to ʿAlī, but of course he kept this to himself. The Syrians exploited this situation to their advantage.

Perhaps the most fateful decision ʿAlī would make—or, more exactly, the most fateful decision ʿAlī would ever have imposed upon him—was the decision to appoint Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī as his arbiter. He at first wished to appoint Ibn ʿAbbās, who is rejected, however, as too close to ʿAlī (he was his first cousin). Ibn ʿAbbās is an interesting figure, as he appears in the Ṣiffīn story outside his customary role. ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib was the Prophet's paternal cousin, and well-known as the great ancestor of the ʿAbbasid caliphs. He is present at Ṣiffīn as ʿAlī's first choice as his representative, as well as in an advisory role to Abū Mūsā; in most of the accounts, he attempts to warn Abū Mūsā that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ means to deceive him. He also is a military commander, and distinguishes himself in a duel, usually with al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba. In addition to the dynasty of his descendants Ibn ʿAbbās founded on claims of familial closeness to Muḥammad, Ibn ʿAbbās was well known for his jurisprudence, grammar, philology, and exegesis, coming to be known as early Islam's single most authoritative *mufassir* (other than Muḥammad himself)—a surprising development, given his youth at the time of the Prophet's death. Herbert Berg shows that Ibn ʿAbbās' prominence in *tafsīr* "emerged, peaked, and began to decline congruently with the political and religious power of the ʿAbbasid caliphs."[113] He became a legendary figure used to certify ʿAbbasid legitimacy in religious discourse. His presence in ʿAlī's camp at

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[113] Herbert Berg, "Ibn ʿAbbās in ʿAbbasid-era *Tafsīr*," in James E. Montgomery, ed., *Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies* (Paris: Uitverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, 1994), p. 129.

Ṣiffīn is clearly an important one: not only is he one of ʿAlī's best commanders, but also the man ʿAlī first wishes to appoint as his negotiator. The image of ʿAlī doing everything in his power to appoint Ibn ʿAbbās as his negotiator (before Abū Mūsā is forced upon him) explicitly presents ʿAlī's endorsement of Ibn ʿAbbās, and thus calls to mind the fact that the ʿAbbasid ascension of 132/750 began with the spread of ʿAlid propaganda in Khurāsān, and then shifted its focus to confer legitimacy on the descendants of Ibn ʿAbbās.[114]

His second choice, al-Malik al-Ashtar, is even more forcibly rejected by the soon-to-be Khawārij than was Ibn ʿAbbās; al-Ashtar was, after all, the most hawkish of ʿAlī's supporters. He was also mentioned as the killer of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, and thus would most certainly not be acceptable to Muʿāwiya or his camp. When Abū Mūsā is foisted upon him, it is because of the very factors that make him unpalatable to ʿAlī. First of all, he had originally opposed ʿAlī, and had nevertheless been forced to join his cause in Kūfa. Second among the reasons that he was unpalatable to ʿAlī as an arbiter was the fact that, despite joining up, he had maintained his opinion that the main problem facing the community was not Muʿāwiya's refusal to acknowledge ʿAlī's imamate nor ʿAlī's refusal to execute or hand over ʿUthmān's assassins, but rather *fitna* itself, which confused the community and left its salvation in question. As a result, he had remained completely aloof from the fighting.

According to the growing faction within ʿAlī's camp that wanted nothing more to do with the bloodshed, this made him the perfect choice because he was being appointed to end the *fitna*, and he had avoided *fitna* at all costs. The trouble for ʿAlī was that he

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[114] See Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners from the East: The Establishment of the ʿAbbāsid State* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983).

knew that Muʿāwiya would be sending the highly partisan ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ as his representative; the identity of the leader of the Islamic community would be in the hands of one wily man who was hostile to ʿAlī and a partisan of his arch-nemesis, and one stubborn but gullible man whose support of him was lukewarm at best.

In this section, it seems clear that Ibn Aʿtham drew his text from the same tradents as did Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, most likely Abū Mikhnaf. The conversation between ʿAmr and Abū Mūsā follows the same pattern; particularly familiar is the discussion in which al-Ashʿath ibn Qays and a group of his companions demand that ʿAlī appoint Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī as his arbiter. What is fascinating and unique in Ibn Aʿtham's account is the appearance of the Syrian soldier who stands before the army and cites the Qurʾān passages applicable to the situation. The fact that he is a *qāṣṣ,* a storyteller, also comes out in his compelling description of ʿAmr's suggestion to raise the Qurʾān as a diversion, presenting the stratagem as a kind of "cavalry" force that ʿAmr had held in reserve, and an idea that (somewhat shamefully) finds support even among the common Syrian soldiers, whose plight in the battle is generally ignored, but who here are implicitly made complicit in this use of the Qurʾān for deceitful purposes.

Negotiation, Ruling and Reneging

The ground rules for the arbitration are set, with some disagreement over ʿAlī's title, Commander of the Faithful. The arbiters meet, argue the points, and fail to come to an agreement immediately. Abū Mūsā suggests deposing both men, and electing a third party, a suggestion which ʿAmr accepts. When they go to tell the people of their

decision, Abū Mūsā speaks first and deposes ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya both, as was agreed; ʿAmr, however, deposes only ʿAlī, and confirms Muʿāwiya as caliph. A scuffle breaks out.

Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim:

1. ʿUmar ibn Saʿd wrote, "This is the decision of ʿAlī, *Amīr al-Muʾminīn* (Commander of the Faithful)." But Muʿāwiya said, "Wretched man, if I thought he was the Commander of the Faithful, would I fight him?" ʿAmr said, "Write his name and the name of his father. He is your commander; he is not ours!" Al-Aḥnaf said, "Do not erase the name, nor relinquish your commandership of the faithful; if you erase it, I fear it will never return to you. Do not erase it, even if the people keep killing each other." Then al-Ashʿath ibn Qays said, "Erase the name." Then ʿAlī said, "There is no God but God, God most great! A *sunna* upon a *sunna*! God allowed me to be there at the day of Ḥudaybiyya, when I wrote the letter for the Messenger of God, may God's prayers be upon him: 'This is what Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, God's prayers be upon him, and Suhayl ibn ʿAmr have determined;' but Suhayl said, "I will not answer any letter in which he is referred to as the Messenger of God; if I thought he was the Messenger of God, I would not fight him….Instead, if you write, 'Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh,' I will answer it." And Muḥammad said to me, "O Alī, I am the Messenger of God, and I am also Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh, and writing to them from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh does not nullify my status as God's Messenger. So write, 'Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh.'"[115]

2. Abū Mūsā went to ʿAmr and said, "O ʿAmr, do you have a solution to this problem that will be for the good of the community and the well-being of the people? Let us appoint ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as our commander, he who did not enter into a bit of this *fitna* nor of this division. Let ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr come close and hear these words." Then ʿAmr said, "And what do you think about appointing Muʿāwiya?' But Abū Mūsā refused.

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Hishām, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn [al-Aswad] ibn ʿAbd Yaghūth, Abū al-Jahm ibn Ḥudhayfa al-ʿAdawī, and al-Mughīra ibn

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[115] Ibid., p. 508

Shaʿba witnessed ʿAmr saying, "Do you not know that ʿUthmān was killed unjustly?" [Abū Mūsā] said, "On the contrary, I do know." [ʿAmr] said, "They have witnessed [your answer]. So what prevents you, O Abū Mūsā, from accepting Muʿāwiya, the kin of ʿUthmān, whose position within the Quraysh is what you have just said? And if you are afraid that the people will say that he made Muʿāwiya his *walī* when he had no precedence within Islam, you can say, 'I have discovered that he is the man legally responsible for ʿUthmān, the wronged Caliph, and the claimant of his blood. ʿUthmān, who was an excellent administrator and an excellent commander, the brother of Umm Ḥabība, Mother of the Faithful and wife of the Prophet (God's prayers be upon him), and among the first to be the Prophet's companion." Then [ʿAmr] hinted that [Abū Mūsā] should hold power, and said, "If he was in power, he would honor you greatly, such as none before had ever done." Then Abū Mūsā said, "Fear God, O ʿAmr! As for what you say concerning the honor of Muʿāwiya, truly this matter is not about the honor brought to him by his relations. If it was about honor, the most just of the people in this affair among Muʿāwiya's supporters is Abraha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ, for he is the favorite candidate of the pious and virtuous. However, if I were to award the maximum amount of honor for the Quraysh, I would give it to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. And as for your argument that Muʿāwiya is the kin of ʿUthmān and that the leadership should be his, I will not follow Muʿāwiya, and neither will the Muhājirūn. And as for your claim to his power, if anything comes to me from his power, by Allāh, I would shun it lest I be corrupt in the eyes of Allāh. However, if you wish, we could observe the *sunna* of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb [i.e., by appointing a *shūrā*]." Then ʿAmr said, "If you wish to give the *bayʿa* to Ibn ʿUmar, then what prevents you from my son, when you know his piety and righteousness?" [Abū Mūsā] said, "Truly, your son is a just man, but you have soiled him by immersing him in this *fitna!*"[116]

3. Naṣr—ʿUmar ibn Saʿd—Muḥammd ibn Isḥāq—Ibn ʿUmar: Abū Mūsā said to ʿAmr, "If you wish, we could appoint this matter to a good man, the son of a good man, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar." ʿAmr said, "This matter is best given to a man of the world, and ʿAbd Allāh is not that." Abū Mūsā was heedless. Ibn al-Zubayr said to Ibn ʿUmar, "Go to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and bribe him." ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar said, "No, by God, I will not bribe him for anything, ever."[117]

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[116] Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, *W.Ṣ.*, p. 541.
[117] Ibid., p. 542.

4. ʿUmar [ibn Saʿd]—Abū Zuhayr al-ʿAbsī—al-Naṣr ibn Ṣāliḥ: I was with Shurayḥ ibn Hānī on campaign in Sijistān, when he related to me that ʿAlī had urged him to speak to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. He said to him: "Say to ʿAmr that you met him [i.e., me], that ʿAlī said to you: 'Truly the best of God's creation is he who works for the truth and loves it, even if it diminishes him, and the furthest creature from God is he who works for deception, and loves it, even if it increases him. By God, O ʿAmr, if you know where the truth lies, why would you continue in your ignorance? Is it [just] because you have been granted some trifling desire that you would become the enemy of God and his friends? By God, that which you have been given shall be taken from you, and you will be neither an adversary to the faithless, nor a helper to the unjust. As for me, I know that the day on which you repent will be the day of your death, and you shall wish that you were not shown to be an enemy of the Muslims, and that you had not accepted bribes for your wisdom.'"[118]

5. ʿUmar ibn Saʿd said: Abū Janāb al-Kalāʿibī related to me that ʿAmr and Abū Mūsā were meeting at Dūmat al-Jandal. ʿAmr approached ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays in conversation and said: "Truly, you were a companion of the Prophet of Allāh (God's prayers upon him) before I was, and you are greater than I. You speak first, and then I will speak." Then ʿAmr continued to flatter Abū Mūsā in this same way—by placing Abū Mūsā before himself in everything. This deluded Abū Mūsā, who began by deposing ʿAlī. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays said: "They have considered their matters and they have agreed. ʿAmr wanted Muʿāwiya, but has been rejected, and he wanted his [own] son, but he has been rejected. And Abū Mūsā wanted ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, but ʿAmr has rejected him." He said: "Now tell me, O Abū Mūsā, what is your opinion?" Abū Mūsā said: "My opinion? I reject both of these men, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya. So we shall create a council among the Muslims, who will choose for themselves what they want, and whom they love!" Then ʿAmr said to him: "You have seen the opinion." And ʿAmr said: "O Abū Mūsā, truly he is not one of the people of ʿIrāq, as far as the people of Syria trust you, for you were an enemy of ʿUthmān and are hated for this, and you have admitted the position of Muʿāwiya in the Quraysh and his nobility in ʿAbd Manāf, and he is the son of Hind and the son of Abū Sufyān, would you not agree?" He said, "I see very well. As for the trust of the people of Syria in me, how would that be if I had approached them with ʿAlī? And as for my

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[118] Ibid., 542-3.

enmity with ʿUthmān, if only I had seen his victory! And as for the hatred of the company for me, truly God detests *fitna*. And as for Muʿāwiya, he is not nobler than ʿAlī….”

And ʿAmr took advantage of the opportunity and said: “O Abū Mūsā, what is your opinion?” He said: “My opinion is that I shall depose both these men, and then the people will choose for themselves whom they love.” And he went forward before the gathered people, and Abū Mūsā spoke, thanked God and praised him, and said: “Truly, my opinion and the opinion of ʿAmr are in accord on the matter that has been brought to us, to do right by God in choosing the right commander for this people.” ʿAmr said: “Correct!” Then he said, “O Abū Mūsā, please continue speaking.” Then Abū Mūsā went forward to speak, and Ibn ʿAbbās called to him, and he said: “Woe unto you, for truly I think he has just deceived you, for if the two of you had agreed on a matter, you should let him go up [in front of the people] before you, and speak on this matter, and then you should speak after him; for truly, ʿAmr is a treacherous man, and I do not believe that he will agree with what has been between you, and if you go first before the people he will contradict you.”

But Abū Mūsā was a gullible man, so he said: “O you, truly we have come to agreement.” And he went first, and praised God and extolled him, and then he said, “O you people, we have looked into the matter concerning this nation, without bribery, with the intention of clarifying and straightening out this muddled affair. And my opinion and the opinion of my friend ʿAmr agree, namely the deposing of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya both, that we shall confront this affair in the creation of a *shūrā* among the Muslims, and they shall entrust their affairs to he whom they love. And truly, I have deposed ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, so take charge of your affairs and appoint him who has the opinion of the people!” Then he stepped aside and sat down.

Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ got up from his place, praised Allāh and extolled him, and said: “Truly, this one has said what you have just heard, and deposed his master. I, too, depose his master, just as he has deposed him. But I confirm my master, Muʿāwiya, with the role of the Caliph. For truly, he is the *walī* of ʿUthmān and the claimant of his blood, and the most deserving of people for the position.” Abū Mūsā said to him, “God will not grant success to what you have done! You have acted treacherously and sinned. You will be made to act like a dog who lolls his tongue in thirst!”[119] He said: And ʿAmr said: “You are made to act like a

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[119] Qurʾān, 7:176.

donkey that carries books of scripture!"[120]   And Shurayḥ ibn Hāniʾ attacked ʿAmr for his deception and struck him with a whip, and Shurayḥ attacked a son of ʿAmr and hit him with a whip, and the people got up and held them back from each other, and after that Shurayḥ said: "The only thing I regret is that I hit him with a whip and not a sword!"[121]

Ibn Aʿtham:

1. The people, having agreed to stop fighting, met at the midpoint between the two armies and called for a scribe. ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Abī Rāfiʿ, a *mawla* of the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) came forward. He was a scribe of ʿAlī's.

ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) said, "Write, 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, this is what has been agreed upon by Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān;'" then Muʿāwiya said, "If you were the Commander of the Faithful, as you claim, then how could I be fighting you?" Then ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him), said, "*Allāhu Akbar*! I was with the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) on the day of Ḥudaybiyya, when the idolators from Mecca rejected him, and then they agreed to talk peace. I was called to act as a scribe, and I said, 'What shall I write, O Messenger of God?' He said, 'This is what has been agreed upon by Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, and the people of Mecca,' and then this one's father, Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, said, 'O Muḥammad! If I agreed that you were the Messenger of God, why would I fight you? Write on your page your name and the name of your father.' I [always] wrote as the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) commanded I write, and at that time he said to me, 'O ʿAlī! If you ever have a day like this, remember that I wrote the names of a father and a son.' And here, now, I write my name so for Muʿāwiya as the Prophet (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) wrote his for Abū Sufyān." Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said, "God forbid! We are compared with nonbelievers, but we are believers!"[122]

2. ʿAmr advanced until he came to Abū Mūsā and said to him, "Abū Mūsā! I know that the people of Iraq are not as strong as the people of Syria in demanding revenge for ʿUthmān, and you know the position of

[120] Qurʾān, 62:5.
[121] Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, *W.Ṣ.*, pp. 544-546.
[122] Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, vol. 2, pp. 196-8.

Muʿāwiya and his place of honor in the Banū Umayya, yet you still deny him!" Abū Mūsā said, "As for ʿUthmān, if I had been there the day of his killing, I would have helped him. But as for Muʿāwiya, he is not in a higher position in the Banū Umayya than is ʿAlī in the Banū Hāshim." ʿAmr said, "You are correct, Abū Mūsā, but the people know that you are not held in any higher trust among the people of Iraq than I am among the people of Syria, nor more trusted of ʿAlī than I of Muʿāwiya. The truth is that these matters are simply not comparable. Now, if you were to say something to the effect of, 'Muʿāwiya is one of the *ṭulaqāʾ*, I answer that it was his father, not he, who was from that gang. If you say that ʿAlī harbors the killers of ʿUthmān in his party, and that they helped him at the battle of the Camel, that would also be correct. How is this for you, as a solution: You depose your commander, ʿAlī, and I shall depose my commander, Muʿāwiya, and we put this matter in the hands of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. For here is a man who has abstained from the fighting, and lifted neither his hand nor his tongue in these wars." Abū Mūsā said, "God be merciful unto you, you have spoken wisely! I say yes." ʿAmr said, "When do you wish to make this public?" Abū Mūsā said, "Today. This hour if you wish. Or, perhaps tomorrow, if you wish, for tomorrow is Tuesday, and that is a blessed day." Then ʿAmr went away.

The next day, he came to Abū Mūsā with a group of witnesses, whose names have already been mentioned. ʿAmr said, "Abū Mūsā! By God, whom do you think is more righteous in this matter? Those who die, or those who betray?" Abū Mūsā said, "Of course, those who die." And ʿAmr said, "So what do you say of ʿUthmān? Was he killed as an evildoer or was he wronged?" Abū Mūsā said, "Of course, wronged."

He said, "So what do you say about his killers? Should they be killed, or no?" Abū Mūsā said, "Of course, they should be killed." ʿAmr said, "Who should kill them?" He said, ʿUthmān's *walī*, for God, Great and Mighty, has said, "Whosoever is slain unjustly, We have appointed to his *walī* authority."[123] ʿAmr said, "And do you not know that Muʿāwiya is one of ʿUthmān's next-of-kin?" He said, "Yes, he is among the *walī*s of ʿUthmān." ʿAmr said, "O you people! Bear witness to the speech of Abū Mūsā!" Abū Mūsā said, "Yes, bear witness! Bear witness to what I said, that Muʿāwiya is one of ʿUthmān's *walī*s. Come, ʿAmr! Depose your master, as we decided yesterday." ʿAmr said, "God forbid! I, get up before you, you who preceeded me in the faith and in the Ḥijra. This is

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[123] Qurʾān, 17:33 (Arberry, trans.)

impossible! You get up, and say what you wish, and I will go up only after you.”

Abū Mūsā went up when the people had gathered. He praised God and extolled him, and then said, “O you people! What is good for the group is good for all the people, and what is evil for the group is evil for all the people. You all know of the war to which we must not return. I have decided that my opinion is that I shall depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya both, and we shall place the charge of this matter of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, for he is a man who has not debased himself by raising either his hand or his tongue in these wars! I have hereby deposed ʿAlī from the caliphate, as I remove my ring from my finger! *Salaam.*”

Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ got up, praised God and extolled him, and said, “O you people! This is ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, emissary of the Messenger of God (may God’s prayers and peace be upon him), governor of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and the arbiter appointed by the people of Iraq. He has deposed his master ʿAlī from the caliphate, as he removed his ring from his finger. As for me, I confirm Muʿāwiya in the caliphate, as I place my ring upon my finger.” Then he stepped down.

Abū Mūsā said, “God will not grant success to what you have done! It was about you that God most high was speaking when he said, “You are like the dog who lolls his tongue in thirst when he comes, and lolls his tongue in thirst when he goes!”[124]

Discussion

The delivery of the arbiters’ decision is probably the most famous part of the Ṣiffīn story. ʿAlī’s fears about Abū Mūsā as his representative prove well-founded. Apparently looking for a way to end the strife at all costs, regardless of the rights of his patron, Abū Mūsā, with only a minimal effort faithfully to represent ʿAlī’s cause, eagerly suggests his deposition and the deposition of Muʿāwiya, and the appointment of a council (*shūrā*), such as the one that had elected ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān upon the death of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. The latter stipulation—the deposition of Muʿāwiya—was a meaningless one,

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[124] Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ,* vol. 2, pp. 210-1; Qurʾān, 7:176.

as Muʿāwiya had held no power outside of Syria before; indeed, the argument that Muʿāwiya was a *ṭalīq,* one of the sons of the Meccans who converted to Islam at the last moment when the Prophet was about to conquer the city to whom the office of the caliph was forbidden, had previously been stated by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim. The effect was that Abū Mūsā gave his opponent a bargaining chip that would otherwise should not have existed. Coupled with the earlier decision, by ʿAlī himself, to allow his name to be rendered as "ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib," rather than "Commander of the Faithful," this caused ʿAlī's prestige and position to fall to a level equal to that of Muʿāwiya, despite the fact that he, not Muʿāwiya, had been winning the battle, and rather decisively at that. His prestige falls further below that of Muʿāwiya when Abū Mūsā deposes him in front of the gathered armies, and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ publicly confirms Muʿāwiya as his caliph. We see in this section the episode concerning the removal of ʿAlī's title (*amīr al-muʾminīn*) and its use in the letter which sets down the rules of the arbitration. This episode is foreshadowed by the explicit statement in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* that those when those who would become Khawārij came to ʿAlī in support of the idea of arbitration they "called him by his name, but not 'Commander of the Faithful,'"[125] or *amīr al-muʾminīn.* The title is first attested in reference to ʿUmar, who apparently found the title *khālifa khālifa rasūl Allāh* too onerous.[126] In the Sunnī view, it came to be synonymous with the office of the imamate, and has even been adopted by some modern kings; in the Shīʿī view, it is reserved for the imams, alone. The effect of this story is twofold; first of all, it explicitly places ʿAlī in the same literary role at Ṣiffīn that the Prophet Muḥammad had played during the day of Ḥudaybiyya, which underscores both his merit to lead the community

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[125] See above, p. 61.
[126] See Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 4-23.

and his eagerness to bring the dispute to as bloodless a conclusion as possible, and elso explicitly legitimizes ʿAlī's decision as one based upon the *sunna*, as he remarks, "A *sunna* upon a *sunna*;" but the protestations of al-Aḥnaf serve to underscore that this eagerness to avoid strife in the community is a hindrance to his continued imamate, and thus foreshadows, in literary terms, the outcome of the arbitration.   In these early accounts, the title as applied to ʿAlī is rejected by Muʿāwiya himself; in later version of the story, the rejection is attributed to Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. It is interesting to note that here, and in all the sources that relate this particular episode, that it is al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays al-Tamīmī—one of the Banū Tamīm, like Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim himself—who provides the prescient voice of wisdom regarding the removal of the title *Amīr al-Muʾminīn.*

Ibn Aʿtham, once again, provides a very detailed account, and one with some slight but significant differences from that of Naṣr. Regarding ʿAlī's title, Commander of the Faithful, and its omission from the cease-fire agreement, both men suggest that it was Muʿāwiya himself, rather than ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who will get credit for this moment in later accounts, who objects to its inclusion. This allows for the irresistible comparison between the behavior of Muʿāwiya at Ṣiffīn and the behavior of his father, Abū Sufyān (one of the key adversaries of the Prophet Muḥammad at the time of his war against Mecca) at Ḥudaybiyya. Both men, incidentally, condense the blame for such moments upon Muʿāwiya, which simplifies the Syrian side and uses Muʿāwiya as an emblem of the Syrian faction at Ṣiffīn and the Umayyad dynasty in general. It is in part this type of simplification that encourages a reaction more sympathetic to Muʿāwiya later on. Furthermore, just as he did with the appointment of Abū Mūsā and the Iraqi decision to

accept arbitration based on the Qurʾān, Ibn Aʿtham allows many members of ʿAlī's camp to have their say on whether or not the title should be included. Most surprisingly, the solution that ʿAmr and Abū Mūsā come to is not that the matter be put to the people, to decide whom they like; rather, ʿAmr uses the neutral ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as bait to lure Abū Mūsā in. In most of the other accounts, it is Abū Mūsā who suggests ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, only to be parried and riposted by ʿAmr's suggestion of his own son, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr. In Naṣr's account, and indeed in every subsequent account, it is Abū Mūsā who brings Ibn ʿUmar into the discussion, and he even includes a brief section wherein Ibn al-Zubayr counsels Ibn ʿUmar to bribe ʿAmr to support him, a suggestion which Ibn ʿUmar indignantly refuses. Finally, Ibn Aʿtham has Abū Mūsā admit that ʿUthmān's *walī* has the right to seek revenge for his assassination, and acknowledges the applicable *sūra;* however, when ʿAmr promotes the notion that Muʿāwiya would be ʿUthmān's *walī,* he does so by asserting that he is "one of" ʿUthmān's next-of-kin, and Abū Mūsā is compelled (reluctantly, according to the tone of the conversation), to admit that this is indeed true. Here it is as if Abū Mūsā realizes he has been trapped by a literalist reading of the Qurʾān, and is forced to concede the point. In some later accounts, such as in *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* of al-Dīnawarī, Abū Mūsā will argue this notion; in others, such as *Murūj al-Dhahab* of al-Masʿūdī, he will almost enthusiastically affirm the point that Muʿāwiya should have rights in this matter based upon the concept of *walāya.* Ibn Aʿtham allows Abū Mūsā to take a middle road; that is, to be compelled to accept that Muʿāwiya's potential rights as a *walī* may in fact be stipulated by the Qurʾān, and, having agreed to base the arbitration on the Qurʾān and nothing else, he has no choice but to let the point pass.

Conclusions

There is clearly significant agreement between Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim in his *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and Ibn Aʿtham in his section on Ṣiffīn in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. Despite some differences in a few of the details of the story, we are presented here with two early, and roughly contemporary, visions of the Ṣiffīn story that clearly rely upon the same sources (most especially Abū Mikhnaf, ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, ʿAwāna ibn al-Ḥakam, and Sayf ibn ʿUmar) and have very close to the same perspective; namely, that ʿAlī was a legitimate leader who was cheated of his reign by a combination of fickle supporters and conniving enemies.

The two authors are distinct in terms of their style, as Naṣr employs *isnād*s and *akhbār* in a standard way, while Ibn Aʿtham, despite his obvious reliance on *akhbār* as his main source, constructs a single, flowing narrative that has more in common with works written a century after his time than with his contemporaries. The fact that Naṣr's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* became the vulgate of the Ṣiffīn story is evident from its prevalence in the account of al-Ṭabarī, which ultimately became the main source for all histories subsequent to it. The existence of an alternate version, even one that is in such agreement with *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* as is *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, means that Naṣr's version was not the only take on what happened at Ṣiffīn; however, his is the only version that was employed by subsequent historians.

Why might this have happened? There is, after all, a clear overlap in both the sources that were used by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and Ibn Aʿtham, as well as an evident agreement in their support for ʿAlid claims. The most likely possibility is that Ibn

Aʿtham wrote in a way that would make his story less attractive to the *akhbārī* historians who are examined in chapter II. For the *akhbārīs*, scholarly conventions were very important; these were absent in *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, as Ibn Aʿtham's account of Ṣiffīn was written as a storyteller would tell it, not, presumably, as a scholar would faithfully and responsibly report it. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, on the other hand, would have been immediately recognized as somebody who used the conventions they expected, such as the *khabar* and the *isnād*, and to the *akhbārīs* these were immediate and evident markers of authenticity and scholarly credibility. This credibility would have made him seem more trustworthy to the *akhbārīs*. It was their choice that not only allowed Naṣr's work to proliferate, but also consigned Ibn Aʿtham's to obscurity. When the *muʾarrikhī*s wrote their histories, despite the fact that they had much more in common stylistically with Ibn Aʿtham, they made use of Naṣr's recycled material in the *akhbārī* accounts; they did not bother to "rediscover" Ibn Aʿtham. Thus the survival of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and the disappearance of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* as a source for later histories is a result of the scholarly preferences and writing style of the next generation of historical writers.

In a way, this means that there was only one functional version of the Ṣiffīn story from the ninth century, with Ibn Aʿtham's account being ignored. The implication of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*'s acceptance as the vulgate text for the Ṣiffīn story is that, despite the fact that we have so many different accounts of the Ṣiffīn story, none of them actually can corroborate what happened it Ṣiffīn. They simply reiterate the story in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* until the time of al-Ṭabarī, whose repetition of Naṣr's words (for the most part) is picked up and repeated by almost every subsequent historian. The fact that there is thus only one "official" version of Ṣiffīn means that, through the course of Islamic historiography, we

possess a story, not an independantly verifiable event. It is what happens to the commentary surrounding that story and the way it is told (but not really the events themselves) that this study traces.

Chapter II

The Battle of Ṣiffīn in *Akhbārī*-Style Historical Writing

Historiographical Perspective

Having established the essential version of the Ṣiffīn narrative in the introduction and the fact that Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is the vulgate of the Ṣiffīn story in the previous chapter, we may now move to the *akhbārī* historians of the battle, namely al-Dīnawarī, al-Yaʿqūbī, and al-Ṭabarī. As far as these surviving *akhbārī*-style historians go, their works tend to share a number of important characteristics. As exemplified by *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* the method of delivering information was through the use of the *akhbār,* a recounting of an event or chain events which "is transmitted serially and orally, eventually finding its place in a written collection…self-contained and independent stories, which are attributed to earlier authorities."[127] Robinson draws a distinction between *akhbārī*s—those who work in a style primarily concerned with the relation of past events—and *muʾarrikhī*s—those who are concerned with the nature of history. Documents characterized by *akhbār* (singular: *khabar*) tended to be episodic in nature, oftentimes relating the same event or sequence of events multiple times with different chains of transmittance or marginally different accounts. The difficulty in searching these documents for the theological or political perspectives of the authors, therefore, is threefold; first of all, the fact that collections of *akhbār* are generally so early, and in many cases survive only in redacted form, casts some doubt upon their authenticity. For

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[127] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography,* p. 16.

instance, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* survives primarily in quotations in the works of al-Dīnawarī, al-Ṭabarī, and, in a few cases, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, and it is only modern scholarship that has reconstructed it from them and has now presented it in unified form.[128]

Robinson divides Islamic historiography into three phases, the first of which he dates from around 610 to about 730. In this stage, the needs of the nascent Islamic Empire to administer its newfound territories generated a culture of documentation, and this culture led to the setting down, in writing, of documents of an historical nature, which survive only in the literature of later periods. Most of the documents we possess from that period are not in their original form, but extant only in the form of quotations in later literary sources; thus, Robinson argues, they "are spurious in that they misrepresent such originals as there were, but they are authentic representations of the (changing) social values that conditioned this process of reworking."[129] This paucity of demonstrably authentic sources obviously becomes less of a problem as time goes on, as more and more authentic original texts survive. Second of all, even if we could unreservedly accept the authenticity of these early documents, we would still be confronted with the fact that the *akhbārī* style means that they, too, are redactions of earlier accounts, often orally transmitted over the course of (in our study of the battle of Ṣiffīn, at least) two hundred years. Finally, the *akhbārī* style also means that very little, if any at all, of the content written by the *akhbārī* historians was their original work; we are thus forced, for lack of alternatives, to try to capture the historians' perspectives based upon which tradents they choose to trust, what *akhbār* they choose to include, the order

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[128] Naṣr ibn Muzāhim al-Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* (Qum: Manshūrāt Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-ʿUẓmá al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, 1302 [1962 or 1963]).

[129] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 23.

in which they include them, and what *akhbār* they choose to exclude.[130] Furthermore, as

Michael Cook points out, "the rules of the game allow the compiler a freedom of wording

in reproducing his source which may be considerable, and do not oblige him either to

quote in full or to indicate his omissions….Moreover, the conventions of transmission

require that the compiler quote men, not books; whether the authority in question had in

fact written on the subject, or is merely a source of oral information, is not usually

apparent from the way in which the compiler refers to him."[131] Since we do not possess a

"master list" of all the *akhbār* concerning Ṣiffīn, nor shall we ever, we are unable to

determine what specifically has been excluded, as there is no way to know the full extent

of what accounts have been lost to history. We are left only with what the surviving

historians choose to include, and even that requires of the modern historian an excessive,

and potentially dangerous, amount of inference, given that we have no way of knowing

how the material they present came to them or how they might have changed it, unless

they are kind enough to note that information in their work. Looking for clues in the

accounts of other historians is largely fruitless at this early stage, as the historians

examined in this chapter—al-Dīnawarī, al-Yaʿqūbī, and al-Ṭabarī—all offer world-views

and perspectives on the battle that are demonstrably sympathetic to the ʿAlid cause, if not

to Shīʿism itself, and, in many cases, clearly draw from Naṣr's vulgate of Ṣiffīn.

   Robinson argues that by the year 830, early in the ʿAbbasid period, a recognizable

body of historiographical literature had developed in forms such as biography,

prosopography, and chronography, which would "remain recognizable throughout the

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[130] Richard Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 99.

[131] Michael Cook, *Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 61. See also Osti, "Tailors of Stories," esp. pp. 285-7.

classical period."[132]   The early ʿAbbasid period itself "is characterized by a tension between an ever-expanding corpus of *akhbār* material, much of which had apparently been put in writing only recently, and the construction of narrative frameworks engineered to contain and order it."[133]   This is a process about whose development we know very little.   It is unclear to what extent the historians drew upon written material vis-à-vis oral sources, and to what extent they were in the business of imposing order upon the disparate accounts.   The historians' procedure of compiling information for their works likely involved some combination of both.   Robinson points out, quite relevantly to this study, that the earliest monographs on specific battles (his example is the Battle of the Camel, but his point also applies quite well to Ṣiffīn, which occurred very shortly thereafter and involved many of the same key players) indicate that such works were "presumably composed largely for political and sectarian purposes."[134] Those political and sectarian purposes, he argues, were dominated by ʿAbbasid concerns, as the ʿAbbasids faced lingering opposition from their disaffected Shīʿī supporters and remnants of the Umayyad regime, and "patronizing history thus held out to the Abbasids the prospect of establishing their cultural credentials and legitimizing the violence that had brought them to power." [135]

Since it is in the ʿAbbasid milieu that the surviving *akhbārī* historians were working, it is no surprise to find that sources more sympathetic to the Umayyads would not appear on the scene for some centuries.   It would be in such later works, particularly the works of Syrians looking to rehabilitate Umayyad Syrian history to conform to a

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[132] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 24.
[133] Ibid., pp. 24-5.
[134] Ibid., p. 25.
[135] Ibid., p. 26.

more proper Sunnī orthodox perspective, that perspectives on the battle begin truly to diverge from their predecessors, including the *akhbārī* texts explored in this chapter. These important early works thus provide a basis for the more opinionated, argumentative, and narrative accounts of later historians, which will be examined in subsequent chapters. This chapter will demonstrate that the early works themselves, however, are strikingly uniform in their perspective. Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads, the accounts state both implicitly and explicitly, were power-hungry, conniving, disingenuous, and sinful. At this early stage, in this style of writing, and with a homogenous corpus of sources sympathetic to ʿAlī, the distinctions come only in the details and in the strength of the vitriol.

Regretfully, many of the *akhbārī*-style accounts of Ṣiffīn are now lost.[136] Fuat Sezgin's magnum opus, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums,* lists a number of works under the title "Kitāb Ṣiffīn," which we unfortunately possess only in the form of later quotations, if at all. He mentions a *Kitāb Ṣiffīn* of Abū Hudhayfa Isḥāq ibn Bishr ibn Muḥammad al-Bukhārī (d. 206/821), referenced in the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm; however, quotations from this work are extant only from the author's other works, which are not explored here.[137] Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Dayzīl al-Kisāʾī (d. 281/894) wrote a *Kitāb Ṣiffīn,* fragments of which are related in the works of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd[138] and Ibn Maʿṣūm,[139] as well as in Ibn Diḥya (d. 633/1235),[140] who quotes at length from

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[136] There does exist an anonymous *Akhbār Ṣiffīn* of unknown date and provenance. This *Akhbār Ṣiffīn* was edited as a PhD dissertation by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Ṣāliḥ al-Helabi, University of St. Andrews, 1974. Hinds describes this work in "The Banners and Battle Cries at Ṣiffīn (657 AD)," *al-Abḥāth* (American University of Beirut), 24 (1971), pp. 3-42.

[137] Fuat Sezgin, *Geschicte des arabischen Schrifttums, Band 1* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 293-4.

[138] See Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha* (1964). Ibn Dayzīl is also sometimes called Ibn Dīzīl. See *GAS* I, p. 321.

[139] Ibid., 321

him in his monograph *Iʿlam al-Naṣr al-Mubīn fī al-Mufāḍala bayn Ahlay Ṣiffīn.* Ibn Dayzīl also employed quotations from both al-Wāqidī's (d. 207/823)[141] *Kitāb Ṣiffīn* and that of Abū Mikhnaf, though Sezgin argues that this was probably based more upon his Iraqi tribal loyalties than on any theological bent.[142] Abū al-Qāsim al-Mundhīr ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mundhīr ibn Saʿīd al-Qābūsī (d. 4th/10th century), also composed a *Kitāb Ṣiffīn,* which may have been among the sources for Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's small section on the battle of Ṣiffīn in his *Kitāb Maqātil al-Ṭalibīyyīn.*[143] It should be emphasized that the surviving quotations from these works are extremely fragmentary and scattered—this is nothing like the situation with Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, whose entire *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* (or at least, probably something close to it) was able to be reconstructed from its surviving quotations.

Jābir ibn Yazīd ibn al-Ḥārith al-Juʿfī (d. c. 128/746) was mentioned by the Imāmī scholar al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058) as having composed, among other works, a *Kitāb Ṣiffīn.*[144] He is heavily quoted in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, but most of the quotations are not direct, but rather come via ʿAmr ibn Shimr. Jābir's increasingly radical Shīʿī perspective caused his reliability to be questioned by Sunni scholars like Abū Ḥanīfa (who accused him of having a *ḥadīth* for every legal question), and ultimately caused his exclusion from the *ḥadīth* collections of Bukhārī and Muslim. He was a major source for several Imāmī traditionists, including Ibn Shimr, whom Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim considered to be an authoritative transmitter. However, it is unclear to what extent his words survived the

[140] In addition to that given in Brockelmann, GAL I, 310-2, S I, 544-5, see the study by M. Ghāzī, *Ibn Diḥya fī al-Muṭrib*, in RIEM, i (1953), 161-74, Sp. tr., ibid, 172-90,
[141] For more on al-Wāqidī, see Brockelmann, *GAL* I, 141-2; Sezgin, *GAS* I, 294-7; Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, pp. 37-40.
[142] Ursula Sezgin, *Abū Miḥnaf.*
[143] Abū al-Farāj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn* (Sayyid Ahmad Saqar, ed.) (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1982).
[144] Sezgin, *GAS* I, p. 307.

transmission by ʿAmr ibn Shimr; the Imāmī scholar Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. c. 459/1066)[145] accused Ibn Shimr of making additions to al-Juʿfī's works.[146] Both Jābir al-Juʿfī and ʿAmr ibn Shimr were considered by Sunnīs, and even some Shīʿīs, to be somewhat weak transmitters, given their fervent Shīʿism. In all, Chase Robinson points out that fourteen separate monographs were composed on the Battle of Ṣiffīn in the century between 750 and 850, and another seven were composed by the year 950;[147] al-Helabi adds four to this number, citing twenty-five individual works on Ṣiffīn. Besides those works already mentioned, these include the lost works of Abān ibn Taghlib al-Bakrī (d. 141/758), Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/809),[148] al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), Abū ʿUbayda Muʿmar ibn al-Muthannā (d. 208/823), al-Madāʾinī (d. 225/839), Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849),[149] Ismāʿīl ibn ʿĪsā al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 232/857), Muḥammad ibn Zakariya al-Ghalābī (d. 298/910),[150] Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Thaqafī (d. 283/896),[151] Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam al-Shaybānī (d. 199.815), ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Yaḥya al-Jallūdī (d. 322/944), and the anonymous *Akhbār Ṣiffīn* that is the focus of al-Helabi's dissertation.[152] He

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[145] For more on al-Ṭūsī, see the introduction by Ṭihrānī to al-Ṭūsī's *Tibyān* (Mashhad, 1970); R. Burschvig, *Les uṣūl al-fiqh imāmites a leaur stade ancien,* in *Le shiisme imamate*, Colloque de Strasbourg (Paris, 1970); M. Ramyar, *Al-Sheikh al-Ṭūsī: His Life and Works* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1971, unpublished); H. Löschner, *Die dogmatischen Grundlagen des schiʿitischen Rechts,* (Cologne, 1971), index, s.n.; M.J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd* (Beirut, 1978), index, s.n.; al-Khaṭīb al-aghdādī, *Taʾrikh Baghdād*, ii, pp. 184-217.

[146] Wilferd Madelung, "ḎJĀBIR al- ḎJUʿFĪ , Abū ʿAbd Allāh or Abū Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. al-Ḥāriṯh." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 09 June 2009 http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:3678/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-8481. (Print Version: Volume II, page 360, column 1).

[147] Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 34.

[148] For more on this Ibn al-Kalbī, see Yāqūt, *Irshad,* ii, pp. 187-8, 219, 504; I. Goldziher, *Muḥammaden Sudies,* I, pp. 185-7.

[149] See Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist,* p. 229; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād,* x, pp. 66-71; Brockelmann, *GAL* I, p. 215.

[150] Al-Ghalābī was one of the authorities most often quoted by Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/947), a prolific author, collector of poetry, and often quoted authority for reports on caliphs and poets.

[151] See Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 279; Yāqūt, *Irshād* I, pp. 294-5; Brocklmann, *GAL* I, p. 225; Sezgin, *GAS* I, p. 321.

[152] Al-Helabi, *A Critical Edition of Akhbār Ṣiffīn,* pp. 11-33.

singles out Ibn al-Muthannā as an author who agreed with the Khārijī position. This proliferation of Ṣiffīn texts is clear evidence of the the importance of the story to the formation of sectarian identities. Sezgin also identifies an *Akhbar Ṣiffīn* by Ibn ʿUthmān al-Kalbī, who copied material from al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī.[153]

The Historical Treatment of Ṣiffīn

Given the tremendously important sequence of events, beginning with the assassination of ʿUthmān and ending with the slaughtering of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, for which the battle of Ṣiffīn provides a climax, there should be little surprise that Ṣiffīn became fodder for theologically influenced historical accounts or historical arguments.[154] This chapter will examine the key episodes of the battle through the lens of the most important *akhbārī* Arabic historians. These Arabic historians were responsible scholars, according to the academic conventions of their times. This means that the fact that they cite their sources only with irregularity, and they, like historians of every age, have a theological, political, or historical predisposition to present the facts they have received one way or another, is perfectly normal.[155] In fact, even in the works of later, more opinionated writers, there is almost no disagreement over the course of the battle itself, but rather only over the meanings of certain key events.

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[153] *GAS* I, p. 314. See s.v. Al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī (d. 206 or 207/821 or 822) in *GAL* I, p. 213. See also Stefan Leder, *Das Korpus al-Haiṯam ibn ʿAdī (st. 207/822): Herkunft, Überlieferung, Gestalt früher Texte der aḫbār Literatur* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klosterman, 1988).

[154] See Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, esp. pp. 18-20.

[155] See Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 25-31.

Aḥmad ibn Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī (d. ca. 895) was an historian of Persian extraction. Very little about his life has been handed down. There is a short notice in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm[156] and a few additional anecdotes about his life related by Yāqūt in *Muʿajam al-Udabāʾ*.[157] Almost all of his works are now lost; he composed works on Arabic philology, Indian arithmetic and algebra, and astronomical geography. He also composed the *Kitāb al-Nabāt,* the main focus of which was the taxonomic nomenclature of faunae and the recording of all traditions pertinent thereto.[158] His *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl,* the only work of his that has come down to us in full, contains a discussion of some of the most dramatic episodes in Islamic history, including the battles of Qādisiyya, Ṣiffīn, and Nahrawān. One difficulty in engaging with al-Dīnawarī is his omission of *isnāds*.[159] However, it is clear that Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim was his main source of information on Ṣiffīn. According to Petersen, al-Dīnawarī "attempts to combine the moderate Shīʿism's veneration for ʿAlī with soundly orthodox views."[160] Although *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* does not contain either *isnād*s or multiple versions of the same episodes, it is classified here as an *akhbārī* account because of its obvious indebdtedness (often, though, as we shall see, not always, word-for-word) to *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn.* In fact, much of the modern version of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* was reconstructed based upon *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl.* He relies heavily, perhaps even exclusively, on *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* for his account of the battle, but, unlike al-

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[156] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist,* p. 78.

[157] Yāqūt, *Irshād* 1, pp. 123-7.

[158] The 1988 German translation of this book (Harrassowitz edition) has a biography of al-Dīnawarī; however, it does little more than confirm the paucity of information we possess about him. See Thomas Bauer, ed., *Das Pflanzenbuch des Abū Ḥanīfa ad-Dīnarī* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988), pp. 6-16.

[159] Bernard Lewis, "al-Dīnawarī , Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad b. Dāwūd." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 08 February 2009 http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:3678/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-1868 (Print Version: Volume I, page 124, column 2).

[160] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, p. 168.

Ṭabarī, who also relied heavily on *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* his approach was to re-work rather than simply extract Nasr's text. As such, he introduced a few subtle changes. Some of these appear to be of no importance, aside from matters of style, such as the decision to omit *isnād*s and construct a more or less long-form narrative of the events at Ṣiffīn. Others, however, provide subtle shifts in meaning, such as his different justification for Abū Mūsā's tongue-in-cheek suggestion of Abrāha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ as a candidate.[161] Given that al-Dīnawarī seems to have lifted much of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* for his discussion of the battle and surrounding events, and that much of the remainder of his account is characterized by *akhbār,* as the title implies, he is categorized as an *akhbārī* despite the absence of most of the stylistic markers of *akhbārī* historical writing from his Ṣiffīn section.

Al-Dīnawarī's focus, however, is mostly on Biblical, Persian, and pre-Islamic Arabic history, and the section of the work that touches upon Islamic history is mostly concerned with Persian affairs. In fact, the style of *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* is indebted to the "half-legendary, half historical narratives of Iran's kings," and is consequently "imbued with a political ethos and sense of historical process that [is signifantly indebted to] the Sassanian tradition."[162] It also shows echoes of that tradition in the century before the court-centered histories that began to be written in Arabic and Persian in the late tenth and eleventh centuries.[163]

Aḥmad ibn Abī Yaʿqūb ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 897) was a contemporary of al-Dīnawarī, and like al-Dīnawarī, very little is known of his personal life. He was born in

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[161] See below, p. 140.

[162] R. Stephen Humphreys, "Qurʾanic Myth and Narrative Structure," p. 274.

[163] The critical edition of al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl used here was published in Leiden by E.J. Brill, and edited by Vladimir Guirgass.

Baghdad, and spent most of his life there, but also seems to have traveled to Armenia, Khurāsān, India Morocco, and Egypt. He claims an ancestor (probably a grandfather) named Wāḍiḥ al-Akhbārī, who was a *mawla* of the ʿAbbasid family during the reign of al-Manṣūr, and who is referred to as a Shīʿī;[164] this has, in part, caused modern scholars quickly to categorize al-Yaʿqūbī as a Shīʿī historian, a claim which has garnered some fair scrutiny which will be examined shortly. Al-Yaʿqūbī's historiographical importance is beyond doubt; as one of the oldest essentially complete historical texts in Arabic still extant, his *Taʾrīkh* provides a wealth of information on a variety of topics.[165] This is in large part due to the author's "travels, administrative experience, and close association with the ʿAbbasid family."[166] Petersen criticizes him in that "his work has on the whole not freed itself from the primitive argumentation and view of the slightly earlier Shiite tradition," and for failing to live up to al-Dīnawarī's standard of literary excellence. Petersen also criticizes al-Yaʿqūbī's reshaping of Naṣr's text for its overzealous attempt to portray Muʿāwiya as villainously as possible. According to Petersen, this tendency ultimately undermines the narrative, since al-Yaʿqūbī insinuates that "Muʿāwiya wished for the caliph [Uthmān's] death in order to become 'heir to the vengeance' or usurp the power."[167] On the subject of al-Yaʿqūbī's theological bent, Rosenthal agrees, asserting that his evident Shīʿism shows itself in "the preference shown for Šǐʿah versions of the events of the first century of the hijrah [including Ṣiffīn] and in the biographical notices devoted to the Twelver imams which stress their contributions to wisdom."[168]

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[164] Elton L. Daniel, "Al-Yaʿqūbī and Shiʿism Reconsidered," in James E. Montgomery, ed., *Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies, Cambridge, 6-10 July 2002* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2004), p. 219.

[165] The critical edition used here was published by Brill in 1883 and edited by M.T. Houtsma.

[166] Ibid., p. 211.

[167] Ibid., p. 171.

[168] Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography (2nd edition)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. 134.

However, recently, the Shīʿī character of al-Yaʿqūbī's work has been called into question.   Elton Daniel argues that just because al-Yaʿqūbī was himself a Shīʿī does not necessarily mean that the contents of his history reflect Shīʿī dogma.   Many of the greatest of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars of Arab historiogrphy, including Goldziher, Brockelmann, Hitti, Gibb, Cahen, Rosenthal, Duri, Humphries, Donner, and Madelung consider al-Yaʿqūbi's Shīʿism evident, though they largely emphasize his reliability "in spite of" his Shīʿism;[169] others, including Richter, Nocht, Khalidi, and Crone point out that, despite the presence of what are clearly Shīʿī perspectives, al-Yaʿqūbī's history "as a whole was not essentially different from the Sunnī historical tradition."[170] Crone puts it most pithily: "Yaʿqūbī gives us nothing like the Shīʿite experience of Islamic history, merely the same body of tradition as the Sunnī Ṭabarī with curses in appropriate places."[171]   His sources, though unnamed, are not "difficult to ascertain"—he draws mostly from Abū Mikhnaf, sometimes through the intermediate link of Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī[172]—his sources, moreover, are not disproportionately skewed towards Shīʾī works and authors."[173] Daniel argues there is nothing in any autobiographical or biographical information about him to show that he was a Shīʿī. Whatever his personal beliefs may have been—Daniel's article calls for further study—it is clear from reading the text that his preference for ʿAlī was quite strong, and his loathing of Muʿāwiya was evident. In other words, although one cannot take his work and ascribe to it the notion that it represents a doctrinally Shīʿī history *per*

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[169] For a brief survey of western scholarship's quick labeling of al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh* as a Shīʿī work, see Ibid., p. 221-213.

[170] Ibid., p. 222. See also Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Survey* (L. I. Conrad, trans.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 9.

[171] Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horseback* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 11.

[172] Petersen, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya p. 169.

[173] W. G. Millward, "Al-Yaʿqūbī's Sources and the Question of Shīʿa Partiality," in *Abr-Nahrayn* 12 (1971-72), pp. 47-75.

se, it can be safely asserted that a Shīʿī contemporary of al-Yaʿqūbī would find nothing in his tone or rendering of the story particularly objectionable. As has been argued here, no novel event appeared in any of the histories examined in this study that did not first appear in Naṣr ibn Muzāhim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* including the vehemently Shīʿī text *Uyūn al-Akhbār* of ʿImād al-Dīn Idrīs al-Qurashī's (794/1392-872/1468).[174] Although Idrīs lived significantly later than al-Yaʿqūbī, it may reasonably be assumed that he would have known if the Shīʿī historical heritage had a different take on the events at Ṣiffīn, and included that information in *Uyūn al-Akhbār.* Given the pro-ʿAlid nature of all the sources, there is no reason to assume, even if al-Yaʿqūbī were a fervent, self-proclaimed Shīʿī who set out to write a specifically Shīʿī sacred history (which he did not), that his perspective on the flow of events at Ṣiffīn would have been significantly different.

Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) was born in Āmul, Ṭabaristān during the reign of the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim.[175] Unlike many other Muslim annalists, al-Ṭabarī included no autobiographical details in any of his works, and most of what is known of both his life and his lost works comes from later biographers.[176] He was educated first in al-Rayy before moving to Baghdad at the age of sixteen. He went with the apparent intention of studying with Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,[177] but the latter died shortly before al-Ṭabarī arrived. He continued his education in Baṣra and Kūfa, and then in Palestine and Egypt. His educational goal seemed to be to collect as many famous teachers as possible;

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[174] See Appendix I, below.

[175] See *GAS* I, pp. 323-328; *GAL* I, pp. 148-9.

[176] Chase Robinson, "Al-Tabari," in Michael Cooperson and Shawkat M. Toorawa, eds., *Arabic Literary Culture, 500-925* (Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2005), p. 334.

[177] Franz Rosenthal, "The Life and Works of al-Ṭabarī," in *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume 1* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 19. Rosenthal points out that this story may have been invented to defuse later Ḥanbalī animosity towards al-Ṭabarī.

his teachers tended to be authorities whom he cited to establish authenticity in his work.[178] He returned to Baghdad when his education was complete.

In Baghdad, al-Ṭabarī did not accept a position with the government or the judiciary, as might be expected for a man of his skills and stature, but rather chose to devote himself entirely to his intellectual pursuits,[179] and seems to have enjoyed a private income from his estate in Ṭabaristan. The primary focus of his output was jurisprudence, although, like many of his teachers, contemporaries and students, he was an expert in a wide range of topics, including *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr,* medicine, poetry, and, naturally, history. As a citizen of Baghdad during an era of securely centralized ʿAbbasid rule, he lived and wrote in a time and place where Shīʿism was seen as a potential subversive threat, and was accused of Shīʿism by Ḥanbalī opponents. Despite his obvious admiration for the character of ʿAlī—an admiration that was shared by many Sunnīs, both before him and after him[180]—his perspective was not really a Shīʿī one, notwithstanding claims to the contrary by his Ḥanbalī opponents, "who were to stir up the Baghdād mob against al-Ṭabarī on more than one occasion."[181] On the contrary, al-Ṭabarī probably held mainstream Sunnī beliefs,[182] and wrote with an avowed Shāfiʿism in the early part of his career before his independent views caused him and his students be referred to as a separate *madhhab*, the "Jarīrī" *madhhab*. In fact, despite how posterity recalls him, al-Ṭabarī almost certainly considered himself a *ḥadīth* scholar and a jurist before an

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[178] Ibid., pp. 18-31.

[179] Ibid., p. 36. See EI[2], III, 824, s. v. Ibn Khāḳān (3), for a story in which al-Ṭabarī angrily rebukes his friends and students for encouraging him to accept a position with the *maẓālim* court, a body that dealt with cases outside the competence of the qāḍīs of the sharīʿa jurisdiction.

[180] Robinson, "Al-Tabari," p. 335.

[181] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, p. 148..

[182] Yāqūt al-Rūmī, *Irshād al Arīb ilā maʿrifat al-Adīb (Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ.)* D.S. Margoliouth, ed. (Leiden and London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series 6, 1907-1927) p. 453 f.

historian or an exegete. He is remembered by Ibn al-Nadīm as a jurist,[183] and by al-Masʿūdī as the author of the *Taʾrīkh,* though he identifies al-Ṭabarī expressly as "the jurist of his day, the ascetic of his age, where the sciences of the world's jurists and Hadith scholars were mastered."[184] He was remembered this way until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whereupon his reputation as an historian overshadowed his reputation as a jurist. This is due to the fact that, regrettably, his juridical work survives only in part, while his historical and exegetical work survives in full.

Ḥanbalī hostility towards al-Ṭabarī was based largely on the publication of his book *Ikhtilāf ʿulamāʾ al-amṣār fī aḥkām sharāʾiʿ al-Islām*, "The disagreements of the scholars in the major garrison towns with respect to the laws of the Muslim religion," which disregarded Ibn Ḥanbal; the only reference to him is an indirect one.[185] Al-Ṭabarī seems to have considered Ibn Ḥanbal a *ḥadīth* scholar rather than a jurist, and also claimed that he had not seen anyone transmitting any of Ibn Ḥanbal's legal opinions authoritatively, a clear slight against contemporary Ḥanbalīs.[186] Al-Ṭabarī and his followers had other disagreements with the Ḥanbalīs, including the proper understanding of certain Qurʾānic passages, as well as deep disagreements about the "relative merits of rationalism and Hadith-based learning."[187] This eventually led to an incident where Ḥanbalīs stoned al-Ṭabarī's residence and had to be removed by force.

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[183] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist,* pp. 563-5.

[184] Robinson, "Al-Tabari," p. 337.

[185] See Joseph Schacht, "Introduction," in Schacht, ed., *Ikhtilāf ʿulamāʾ al-amṣār fī aḥkām sharāʾiʿ al-Islām* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1933), p. XV.

[186] Rosenthal, "The Life and Works of al-Ṭabarī," p. 70. See *Irshād*, VI, 436, ll. 5 f.

[187] Robinson, "Al-Tabari," p.338.

To say that al-Ṭabarī was prolific would be a great understatement.[188] Besides his history, his most famous work was *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān,* his famous *Tafsīr,* or Qurʾānic commentary. Interestingly, he also composed a work called *Tabṣīr ulī al-nuhā wa-maʿālim al-hudā,* apparently a treatise addressed to his hometown, warning them against the erroneous doctrines of the Muʿtazilīs and Khawārij.[189]

Al-Ṭabarī's great history, *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk,*[190] is an historical account which quickly grew to enjoy "an almost canonical validity,"[191] and, in time, became "the first port of call for virtually all Muslim annalists of the classical period."[192] It is among the most extensive and detailed works of Islamic history ever composed, preserving numerous citations from sources that would otherwise be lost, including most of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn.* Since most of what we possess of the original *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* text are those passages excerpted from al-Ṭabarī, his direct indebtedness to *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is not in need of any demonstration. The focus here will instead be upon those new elements that al-Ṭabarī adds to Naṣr's account. Al-Ṭabarī relied on a wide spectrum of written sources which were available to him, including the two other books examined in this chapter, al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* and al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh.* He expressed his own views in it "principally through selecting, redacting, and arranging reports," as opposed to his methodology in his legal, theological, and exegetical work, in

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[188] For an alphabetized list and discussion of al-Ṭabarī's known and suspected works, see Ibid., pp. 80-134; see also Robinson, "Al-Tabari," p. 335.

[189] Ibid., p. 335.

[190] The field is indebted Ehsan Yarshater, who was the general editor, and the team of translators who edited the forty volume English translation of *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk,* based upon the collated text that was the fruit of the efforts spearheaded by M. J. de Goeje and his colleagues, printed by E. J. Brill in Leiden.

[191] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya,* p. 148.

[192] Robinson, "Al-Tabari," p.341.

which he frequently states his positions outright, clearly and directly.[193] He was not as fastidious about *isnād*s in *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* as he was in his other works, and satisfied himself with incomplete *isnād*s, relying (in the sections relevant to this study) upon eighth- and ninth-century transmitters such as Abū Mikhnaf, Sayf ibn ʿUmar, and al-Madāʾinī.[194] The *isnāds*, interestingly, became increasingly infrequent over the course of the work.

Unlike the other historians examined in this chapter, al-Ṭabarī organized his historical opus annalistically. Petersen writes:

> "Year by year and event by event he builds up his exposition by means of—often several—parallel or co-ordinate traditions, normally supplemented with comments of his own; he lays down categorically how each event is to be placed and interpreted. This is one reason why Ṭabarī gives his reader, immediately and overwhelmingly, the impression of final authority."[195]

Unlike al-Dīnawarī and al-Yaʿqūbī, but like Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (whose work, it must be remembered, exists only as recorded in al-Ṭabarī), al-Ṭabarī does include *isnāds* in his retelling. Regarding his use of the tradents, Petersen explains,

> "Ṭabarī follows the conservative traditional technique, and he does it fairly loyally; even his occasional tendentious abridgements will hardly reveal any actual falsification. The difficulties do not appear until we are to explain his peculiar choice of sources, and especially why he in long passages prefers a corrupt source like Sayf b. ʿUmar to the pure ones, Abū Mikhnaf, ʿAwāna and others, which he knows and frequently employs. It applies generally that Ṭabarī's depiction of the revolution against ʿUthmān and the of the first year of ʿAlī's caliphate follows Sayf, and that his discussion on the preparations for the showdown between the Caliph and

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[193] Ibid., p. 338.
[194] Ibid., p. 341.
[195] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya,* p. 150.

Muʿāwiya entirely follows Abū Mikhnaf, merely now and then interrupted by other sources."[196]

Without endorsing Petersen's description of the Sayf ibn ʿUmar as "corrupt,"[197] his point is further muted by the fact that so much of al-Ṭabarī's narration of the story of Ṣiffīn follows closely that of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, though Naṣr makes use of Sayf in the run-up to the battle, which, as Petersen points out, al-Ṭabarī does not. While al-Ṭabarī is the most important source for medieval Arab scholarship on the entirety of early Islamic history, it was Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's account, however second-hand, that was to become the most dominant and have the most staying power in all subsequent premodern historiography. What al-Ṭabarī adds to Naṣr's account in his retelling of Ṣiffīn is a later "look back" to the seventh century from a ninth and tenth century angle. He also writes from a pious and scholarly vantage point, a perspective that employs later ideas to "seek to extract tidy legal theories from messy past *Realpolitik*,"[198] with an apparent larger goal, Robinson argues, of "serving an emerging orthodoxy."[199] He cites mainly from Abū Mikhnaf;[200] however, as Sezgin points out, the *isnād* and accounts are virtually identical to Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, who also cited from Abū Mikhnaf through the intermediary of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd (and even when Abū Mikhnaf was not mentioned, his account and ʿUmar were often identical, as well). Al-Ṭabarī follows the Abū Mikhnaf version of the story until the raising of the *maṣāḥif*, at which time he abandons it and refocuses the section, utilizing *akhbār* that present the story from the perspective of

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[196] Ibid., p. 150.
[197] For a rehabilitation of the reliability of Sayf ibn ʿUmar, see Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Sayf ibn ʿUmar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship," in *Der Islam*, 1990.
[198] Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 15.
[199] Robinson, "Al-Tabari," p. 342.
[200] See Boaz Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), esp. pp. 209-31.

Muʿāwiya and his camp, apparently to emphasize the ironic reversal of fortune implicit in Muʿāwiya's victory.[201]

The Journey to Ṣiffīn and the Rallying of Support

ʿAlī dispatches Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī to Muʿāwiya, against the better judgment of al-Ashtar. Emissaries are exchanged. Muʿāwiya wins the support of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. The key arguments of both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya are made clear.[202]

Al-Dīnawarī:

> 1. ʿAlī wrote to Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī, who was a governor of ʿUthmān in al-Jabal along with Zaḥr ibn Qays al-Juʿfī, calling him to pledge allegiance to him, so he did. He took the pledge of allegiance to ʿAlī, and traveled until he arrived in Kūfa. He wrote to Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays similarly. Al-Ashʿath had been residing in Adharbayjān for the length of the reign of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, and his rule was one of the things that made the people dislike ʿUthmān, since he was ʿUthmān's *walī* and related to him by marriage, in view of the marriage of the daughter of al-Ashʿath to his son. It is said that al-Ashʿath was the one who won over the soldiers of Adharbayjān, as he had influence, good will and *ijtihād*. [ʿAlī's] letter to him was in the care of Ziyād ibn Marḥab, and he pledged allegiance to ʿAlī and he traveled until he came to him in Kūfa, and ʿAlī made to send Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh to Muʿāwiya, calling him to enter obedience and allegiance or to face war. Then Al-Ashtar said, "Send someone else, for I trust not his adulation," but he did not heed al-Ashtar's warning, so Jarīr traveled to Muʿāwiya with ʿAlī's letter. He came to Muʿāwiya and found him, with the leaders of the Syrian army with him. He delivered ʿAlī's message to Muʿāwiya, and said, "This is ʿAlī's letter to you and to these soldiers of Syria, inviting you to enter into his obedience. The Ḥaramayn, the Egyptians, the Ḥijāzīs, have all done so; so has Yemen, Baḥrayn, ʿUmān, Yamāma, Egypt, Persia, al-Jabal and Khurāsān. Only this country of yours remains." A slave girl brought the letter [to Muʿāwiya], and Muʿāwiya opened ʿAlī's letter and read it: "In

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[201] See Ibid., p. 231.

[202] For the originals in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* see above, pp. 36-9.

the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful, from the servant of God ʿAlī, Commander of the Faithful, to Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān. Now to our subject, you and those Muslims better than you have been required to pledge allegiance to me. I am in Medina, and you are in Syria; those who pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān (may God be pleased with them) have now pledged allegiance to me. It was neither for those present to choose, nor for those absent to oppose. On the contrary, it is now the time for the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār and every Muslim man to name an imam. This was approved by God [whose approval is tantamount to a commandment], and if someone ignores God's commandment to him, it is incumbent upon the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār to unite in denouncing that man concerning his unwillingness to accede to God's will, even unto the point of fighting him and prosecuting him for going against the believers. God determines who is *walī,* and he determines who burns in hell and whose fate is foul. So enter into that which the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār have entered into, and love the things that those better than you have loved…. And as for that which you wish [i.e., the extradition of ʿUthmān's attackers], it is the vain and peevish hope of a breastfed infant." Then Muʿāwiya gathered the nobles of his house and consulted them on the matter, and his brother ʿUtba ibn Abī Sufyān said, "Seek the help of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ in this matter of yours." [ʿAmr] was managing an estate of his in the territory of Palestine, and had remained aloof in the *fitna*. So Muʿāwiya wrote to ʿAmr, asking him about what had happened in the matter of ʿAlī with Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr and ʿĀʾisha, Mother of the Faithful, "What [news] has come to you? For Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh has just come to us demanding our allegiance to ʿAlī, so I devote myself entirely to you. So come to me and give me your opinion during this period of peace [before the outbreak of war]." So ʿAmr arrived with his two sons, ʿAbd Allāh and Muḥammad, and they came before Muʿāwiya. ʿAmr understood Muʿāwiya's need of him, and Muʿāwiya said to him, "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, I have had three problems these last three days." And he said, "And what are they?" He said, "As for the first of them, Muḥammad ibn Ḥudhayfa escaped from incarceration and fled towards Egypt and Yemen with some of his companions. He is one of our worst enemies. As for the second, the Byzantine Emperor has gathered his armies to march against us and make war against us over Syria. As for the third, Jarīr came as an emissary of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, demanding our allegiance, and if we refuse he threatens us with war." ʿAmr said, "As for Ibn Ḥudhayfa, what is the harm for you if he escaped from your prison with his companions? Send some horses in pursuit. If you catch him, you catch him; and if not, there

is no harm to you. As for the Byzantine Emperor, write to him and tell him that you will answer him with all your might, and tell him to rein in his armies and demand that he do so quickly, and tell him to be satisfied with your forgiveness. As for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, truly the Muslims do not consider you two equals." Muʿāwiya said, "He is complicit in the murder ʿUthmān, in the appearance of *fitna*, and in the division of the community." ʿAmr said, "Even if that were true, you do not have either his precedence in Islam (*sābiqatihi*) or his close relation (to the Prophet), but I will help your faction if you give me what I want." He said, "Name your price." ʿAmr said, "Make me your governor of Egypt for as long as you rule." Muʿāwiya hesitated and said, "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, if I wanted to deceive you, I would have deceived you." ʿAmr said, "How is my kind deceived?" Muʿāwiya said to him, "Come here….O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, indeed you know that Egypt is like Iraq." ʿAmr said, "Except in that it will be mine if you have the world, and you will have the world if you defeat ʿAlī, and yet you hesitate." ʿAmr went away for a walk, and ʿUtba said to Muʿāwiya, "Indeed you must purchase ʿAmr with the price of Egypt. Without his advice, you remain inferior, and you shall not sway Syria." [When ʿAmr returned] Muʿāwiya said to him, "Stay with us tonight."[203]

2. Muʿāwiya sought ʿAmr, and he gave him what he asked. A letter of agreement was written up between them, and then Muʿāwiya asked for ʿAmr's advice. He said, "What is your opinion?" ʿAmr said, "Truly with this demand for allegiance, the opinion of the people of Iraq has come to you regarding who is the best [imam] for the people. I do not think that you should pledge the allegiance of the people of Syria to this Caliph [that is, ʿAlī], even though taking the lead in this [defiance] is risky if you have not secured the support of the notables and ascertained the direction of their sympathies. It is certain that ʿAlī was complicit in the murder of ʿUthmān, and I know that the leader of the people of Syria is Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Simṭ al-Kindī. If you want to advance your interests, then summon him to you, and then settle a number of your people on his way, all informing him that ʿAlī killed ʿUthmān…Tell him to keep these words in his heart and never to divulge a thing." Then [ʿAmr] called Yazīd ibn Asad, Busr ibn Abī Artāh, Sufyān ibn ʿAmr, Mukhāriq ibn al-Ḥurth, Ḥamza ibn Mālik and Ḥābis ibn Saʿīd, among others, all of whom were [Muʿāwiya's] loyal people who were known to be acquainted with Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Simṭ, and he positioned them for [Shuraḥbīl] along his way. Then he wrote to him

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[203] Aḥmad ibn Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī, *Al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1888), p. 167-68.

[blank in original], and each from this series of men took a position along his road, and each whispered to him that ʿAlī was complicit in the murder of ʿUthmān, and he heard the story so much that his heart was saturated with the notion of ʿAlī's complicity. When Shuraḥbīl approached Damascus, Muʿāwiya ordered the notables of Syria to meet him, and when they met him, they saw that he was in a state of frenzy over the matter, and whenever any one of them was alone with him, they reiterated this fact [that ʿAlī had killed ʿUthmān]. This continued until Shuraḥbīl came unto Muʿāwiya, at which point he was in a state of fury. He said, "The people insist that Ibn Abī Ṭālib killed ʿUthmān." Thus [through this whispering campaign to poison Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Simṭ against ʿAlī] did Muʿāwiya win the Syrian nobles to his cause.[204]

3. [ʿAlī wrote to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ]: The world is a distraction from other pursuits. He who gains a portion of it becomes so eager to preserve his share that he becomes even more attached to it, nor does he stop at what he gained but keeps hoping for what lies ahead, which he cannot reach. Alas in the end he shall be parted from all that he gathered. Truly the joyous one is he who learns a lesson from the example of others. Do not destroy your merits by going along with Muʿāwiya and his *bāṭil* [vain deeds, fraud or blasphemy], for he is ignorant of the righteous and has chosen the erroneous.[205]

Al-Yaʿqūbī:

1. ʿAlī left Baṣra headed for Kūfā, and arrived at Kūfā in Rajab of the year 36. Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh was in Hamadhān and ʿAlī discharged him, and he said to ʿAlī, "Dispatch me towards Muʿāwiya, for my tribe esteems those who are with him. But I will gather them in to be obedient to you!" Then al-Ashtar said to him, "O Commander of the Faithful, do not send him, for truly they think alike!" Then ʿAlī said, "Enough of that, let him go. It may be that his council is indicative of his faithfulness, and if he was only trying to flatter me, then the sin is upon him."….Then Jarīr came to Muʿāwiya while he was sitting with the people around him, and he handed him ʿAlī's letter. He read it, then Jarīr stood up and said, "O people of Syria! Truly Muʿāwiya is someone who is useful to neither the few nor the many. In Baṣra, there was just a massacre, a tribulation such as which has not been seen, which threatens the survival of Islam. Fear

[204] Ibid., pp. 160-70.
[205] Ibid., p. 174, translated by Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics,* pp. 224-5.

God, O people of Syria! And choose well between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya. Look to yourselves." Not one of them looked to themselves. Then he fell silent, and Muʿāwiya held his tongue, and he did not speak. Then Muʿāwiya said, "Hold your tongue, and calm down, O Jarīr."[206]

2. Later that night, Muʿāwiya summoned ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ to him, and wrote to him, "Now to our topic, which is the affair that has transpired between ʿAlī and Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr and ʿĀʾisha which you have already heard. Marwān has already brought word to us about how the people of Baṣra have abandoned us, and ʿAlī has sent Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh demanding allegiance. I put myself entirely in your hands until you come to me, so come with the blessings of God most high." When he had finished reading the letter to him, he called his two sons, Muḥammad and ʿAbd Allāh, and asked for their advice. ʿAbd Allāh said to him, "O Shaykh! Truly the Messenger of God died, and he was pleased with you; so, too, did Abū Bakr and ʿUmar die, pleased with you. Truly, if you wish to give your *dīn* to someone for advancement in this world, give it to Muʿāwiya and you will both lie down in hellfire." Then he said to Muḥammad, "What do you think?" He said, "This matter is happening one way or another. Be a leader in it before you are a henchman."[207]

3. Muʿāwiya said [to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ], "Extend your hand and pledge your allegiance to me!" He said, "No, by the eternal God, I will not give you my *dīn* until I have taken something from your possessions." Muʿāwiya said to him, "Egypt is your incentive." Then Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam got angry and said, "Why did you not ask my advice?" Muʿāwiya said, "Shut up, and you may be asked your opinion." Then Muʿāwiya said to [ʿAmr], "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh! Stay here tonight, and let us discuss how [ʿAlī] may lose the people."[208]

Al-Ṭabarī:

1. Then, when ʿAlī was looking for a messenger to send to Muʿāwiyah, Jarīr b. ʿAbdallāh said, "Send me, for he likes me. When I get to him I will call him to acknowledge your authority." Al-Ashtar said to ʿAlī, however: "Don't send him! By Allāh! I suspect he's inclined toward Muʿāwiyah." "Let him go," replied ʿAlī, "and we shall see what he brings

[206] Aḥmad ibn Abī Yaʿqūb ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh* (Lugduni Batavorum: E.J. Brill, 1883), p. 183.
[207] Ibid., p. 183-4.
[208] Ibid., p.186.

back to us." So he sent him and wrote a letter for him to take. In it he informed Muʿāwiyah of the agreement of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār to give allegiance to ʿAlī."[209]

2. "Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr and Muḥammad b. ʿAwn were sent to al-Kūfah, and the people went to Abū Mūsā to ask his advice about joining up. "As for the hereafter you should stay put, but as for the here and now you should join up [i.e., to join ʿAlī's advancing army]. It's up to you!" When the two Muḥammads heard about these words of Abū Mūsā, they dissociated themselves from him and criticized him severely. "By Allāh! Allegiance to ʿUthmān is still binding on me and binding upon your companion who sent you. If we are required to fight, then before we do so, every single one of the killers of ʿUthmān, wherever he may be, would have to be killed."[210]

3. "[Abū Mūsā said]: This *fitnah* is blind and deaf. It is trampling on its halter. The sleeper in it is better off than the sitter. The sitter in it is better off than the stander. The stander in it is better off than the walker. The walker in it is better off than the runner. The runner in it is better off than the rider. It is a *fitnah* that rips [the community] apart like a stomach ulcer. It has come at you from the place where you were safe and leaves the wise man bewildered like someone without experience. We, the congregation of the Companions of Muḥammad, are better able to understand the *fitnah*—when it approaches it confuses and when it retreats it discloses."[211]

Discussion

It is quite clear from a close reading of each of these texts that Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim is the basis for each man's account. The excerpts presented above are meant only to reinforce this point. Al-Dīnawarī's indebtedness to him is clear; even al-Yaʿqūbī

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[209] Adrian Brockett, trans. *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk)*, *vol. 16: The Community Divided* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 196.
[210] Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* 16, p. 81.
[211] Ibid., p. 94.

obviously uses the very same sources as Naṣr, even if his account is, by its wider breadth of focus, necessarily abbreviated. Al-Ṭabarī, it should be remembered, is the location in which the bulk of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* survives, and as such the majority of this section in his *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* is identical to *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* as we now have it; thus, the excerpts presented here, from the translations by Brockett and Hawting, only represent some telling moments that do not also appear in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn.*

It is instructive to note that, in this case, the journey of the two parties to the site of the battle is given the least amount of treatment in the work of al-Yaʿqūbī, but it is given short shrift by all the other authors.. Given his disdain for any opponents of ʿAlī, which will become evident in later episodes, this brevity is somewhat surprising, as ʿAlī's "whistle-stop tour" of western Iraq could have easily been employed by later historians to put words into his mouth. Naṣr certainly uses it in this way; however, it is usually to rebuke one man or another. Why, then, do the other authors fail to include this information, or adapt it?

One possible reason for the general disappearance of the accounts of ʿAlī's journey from Kūfa to Ṣiffīn in the later *akhbārī* sources is a simple matter of the scope of the works. Al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* is a work that is of roughly equivalent length to *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, but its scope extends far beyond the battle itself, from the Creation through to the reign of the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (reigned 217/833--226/842), who died fifty years before al-Dīnawarī. However, al-Yaʿqūbī devotes a mere few pages to Ṣiffīn, and al-Ṭabarī, even while being one of the main sources from which *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* was reconstructed, and whose work certainly is of a scope that could potentially include that information, focuses his attention elsewhere. This brings us to the second point as to

why ʿAlī's journey to Ṣiffīn, his rebuking of many of those whom he encountered, his dispatch of Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh to Muʿāwiya's camp, and the subsequent correspondence between the two contenders, is largely absent from these sources. The focus of all the works, including *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* (despite the bulk of the treatment of this section therein) remains not on these preliminaries, nor, indeed, even on the battle itself, but rather the call for arbitration, the arbitration itself, and the outcome of the arbitration. The fact is that the arbitration is, quite simply, of greatest importance in terms of the lasting effects it had on the development of disunity within Islam. No serious disagreements erupted over the results of the Battle of the Camel, just before Ṣiffīn; ʿAlī's treatment of ʿĀʾisha, while a matter of some controversy, is a far less contentious piece of the incipient Islamic story than the way the battle concluded and the effect that conclusion had upon ʿAlī's reign and the institution of the caliphate itself.

Since the journey to the battle is of less importance to Islamic history, historiography, and politics than are the battle and arbitration, it stands to reason that when it is presented, it serves at least a literary purpose. In *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* a fair amount of time is spent as ʿAlī wends his way towards battle, allowing legendary and hagiographic features to creep into the account, particularly those episodes that are on the authority of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd (which, in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, is most of them). In a *khabar* of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd's, upon seeing a funeral procession near al-Nukhayla near Kūfa, al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī mentions it as the burial place of the Prophet Hūd, and ʿAlī corrects him, informing him that the grave belonged to Yahūdā ibn Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm, Jacob's son. ʿUmar ibn Saʿd is making the point (and Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim including the point) that the tribes of Israel (for whom Yahūdā is a generic term) had segregated themselves from

God's original revelation to Abraham, and had become apostates, thus suggesting the same about Muʿāwiya and his Syrian supporters. Later, a Christian monk in Balīkh presents ʿAlī with a book of Jesus, in which Muḥammad's mission is prophesied, and in which a man (implying ʿAlī) will pass at the Euphrates, representing the true cause, whose supporters will join him in assurance of paradise.[212] These encounters aside, this section also introduces the reader to some of the key characters who will play a role, or, to the more erudite reader, elaborates upon their characters and presages the roles that each will end up playing in the battle of Ṣiffīn. These characters were discussed in depth in the previous chapter.

It is in this section, as Petersen points out, that al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* best demonstrates its heavy debt to Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* although there are some elements of the story in which al-Dīnawarī answers, rather than repeats or rewords, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's account.[213] Petersen believes that al-Dīnawarī's point of view and purpose was to take "the legality of ʿAlī's election as his foundation, and his object is to prove that the Caliph had a clear right to fight down the three rebellious movements, first and foremost that of Muʿāwiya, by military means, seeing that they are without legal justification and breaking down the unity of Islam which the caliph represents."[214] He also denies "the Syrian governor's action its tinge of legality."[215] These aspects of al-Dīnawarī's writing will become evident as the story progresses. His inclusion of the letter to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, composed before ʿAmr cast his lot with Muʿāwiya, underscores

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[212] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, p. 104.
[213] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, p. 161.
[214] Ibid., p. 167.
[215] Ibid., p. 167.

both his perspective on the legality of Muʿāwiya's enterprise at Ṣiffīn and slowly advances ʿAmr's position towards the forefront of the story.

The character of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ is thus slowly given a greater role in the early part of the Ṣiffīn story. Both al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Dīnawarī include the story from *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, told slightly differently, of ʿAmr's demand for a worldly reward in return for his political allegiance—an allegiance which, these early historians argue, is tantamount to his *bayʿa* as well as his spiritual devotion. In al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, ʿAmr himself demands Egypt as his price; in al-Yaʿqūbi's account, he demands "something from [Muʿāwiya's] possessions," and is offered Egypt by Muʿāwiya. ʿAmr is presented in the least flattering terms; numerous references are made to his lack of righteousness and his concern with this world over the next, including in the second section from al-Yaʿqūbī,[216] in which his son ʿAbd Allāh suggests that casting his lot with Muʿāwiya would give him worldly gain for an eternity of hellfire. Given the pro-ʿAlid bias that the sources reveal, it is not surprising to see the very Islam of ʿAlī's opponents questioned; as will be established, a believer does not, must not, trade his *dīn* for his *dunyā,* regardless of what conventions may or may not have existed in terms of the *bayʿa* at the time of Ṣiffīn.[217] It is clear from the often indignant tone of the texts that ʿAmr's demand for a lavish reciprocal gesture (rather than, it may be assumed, a gesture of war booty and the like, which, as Marsham argued, were standard expectations of the *bayʿa*) was already reproachable by the time those texts were written. It is this perspective, not incidentally, that later gives rise to a rather large body of local Syrian histories, especially Ibn al-Athīr's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab,* and Ibn Kathīr's *Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya,* a

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[216] See above, pp. 112.
[217] See above, pp. 42-44.

world chronicle with Syrian regional biases, whose presentation of the battle of Ṣiffīn seems designed almost solely to challenge a point that a contemporary of theirs was making that Muʿāwiya's camp were *kuffār* and no longer Muslims (see chapters IV and V). This accusation is suggested most strenuously here about ʿAmr and Muʿāwiya themselves.

One of the more interesting statements from ʿAmr during this episode occurs in the account of al-Yaʿqūbī: "No, by the eternal God, I will not give you my *dīn* until I have taken something from your possessions." *Dīn*, in this case, refers to affiliating with Muʿāwiya, and not just in a temporal sense; by accepting Muʿāwiya's *dīn*, ʿAmr would accept Muʿāwiya "as the true imam and his party as the saving community."[218] ʿAmr's son ʿAbd Allāh had also used the term in al-Yaʿqūbī's account of his attempt to dissuade his father from attaching his eternal reward to the hellbound Muʿāwiya. As Crone points out, *dīn* in this case does not refer to the "religion" of Muʿāwiya, which is Islam and not at all different from that of ʿAlī, but the use of the term is pregnant with significance regarding ʿAmr's eternal fate. The emergence of *fitna* was troubling for the soul of the first century Muslim, as one look at the character of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī will attest; besides the expected distaste for civil strife they surely had, there was an added religious component to the choice now confronting them. Crone writes,

> "One could not be a member of the Muslim community without declaring allegiance to its leader….The Prophet is credited with the statement that 'he who dies without an imam dies a pagan death.' Nobody could achieve salvation without an imam…for there was no community without such a leader, or in other words [because it was the *community* that would be saved, rather than the individual] there was no vehicle of salvation."[219]

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[218] Crone, *God's Rule*, p.26.
[219] Ibid., p. 22.

ʿAmr's demand of a lavish worldly incentive for offering his immortal soul, therefore, is especially telling about the greed (and potentially, the damning lack of faith) of his character. Al-Ashʿath, Jarīr, and ʿAmr all make the worldly choice (with the former two switching their choice once it becomes clear which way the wind was blowing), while al-Ashtar makes the "right" choice where his salvation is concerned. Abū Mūsā only wishes to avoid *fitna*, because he believes *fitna* is the gravest sin and thus declines to be involved—a foreshadowing of his character's willingness to abandon the cause of his client at the arbitration for the sake of what he perceives to be the greater good of ending the *fitna*.

Abū Mūsā's character is relatively simple; he is presented as profoundly opposed to all forms of *fitna,* and uses his status as a companion of the Prophet to advance his position to the Kūfans whom he governs. The third section from al-Ṭabarī presented above is a speech that more than adequately describes his position: that the less part one takes in *fitna*, the better for his eternal soul.

Of course, it is another Companion of the Prophet, the venerable ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, who heckles Abū Mūsā and goads him into supporting ʿAlī, in al-Ṭabarī's version. But like Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh and al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, and despite his apparent conscientious objection to *fitna* in all its forms, his main motivation for joining ʿAlī's march to Ṣiffīn seems to be for reasons of personal expediency; he faced the loss of his governorship of Kūfa as punishment for his continued neutrality. As shall become manifest, one should not confuse his enlistment to the cause with his unwavering support of it (nor, indeed, should such a supposition be made for most of ʿAlī's apparent supporters). The story of Abū Mūsā's reluctant decision to support ʿAlī does not appear

in either al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh* or in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn;* in the former, its absence is likely the result of the quick pace of al-Yaʿqūbī's narration, and in the latter, since it is generally presented as part of the story of the Battle of the Camel rather than the Battle of Ṣiffīn, it is outside the scope of the work.

Furthermore, the term *walī* appears in this section a number of times, and it is used in the first instance above in a different sense than it is usually used in the larger part of the Ṣiffīn story. In this case, al-Dīnawarī's use of the term refers to al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, who is called ʿUthmān's "*walī*" over Adharbayjān. This means only that al-Ashʿath was a governor; however, it is instructive because Muʿāwiya, too, was a governor—of Syria, in his case—of ʿUthmān's appointing. Al-Dīnawarī's Abū Mūsā even argues this point later in *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, pointing out that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ's use of the term *walī,* in the sense of "next-of-kin," to apply to Muʿāwiya is an incorrect interpretation, since that title and its accompanying rights should go to ʿUthmān's son, ʿAmr ibn ʿUthmān. This reference is, somehow, the only occasion in any of the works explored in this study in which Abū Mūsā specifically challenges ʿAmr's application of the term to Muʿāwiya, even though ʿAmr was clearly exploiting the fact that Muʿāwiya was Uthmān's *walī* in the same sense that al-Ashʿath ibn Qays was—both were governors over Islamic territory who had been appointed by ʿUthmān. Al-Dīnawarī's use of the term *walī* in these two senses purposefully underscores its ambiguity, and it is this very ambiguity that ʿAmr exploited in order to have a better bargaining position.

The Battle by the Water

ʿAlī and his men arrive at the Euphrates to find Muʿāwiya's men blocking their access to the drinking water. After diplomatic efforts to secure drinking water for his men fail, ʿAlī authorizes them to fight for the water. A battle ensues, and ʿAlī's men are victorious. After they achieve control of the water supply, ʿAlī allows both armies to drink. [220]

Al-Dīnawarī:

1. Al-Walīd said [to Muʿāwiya]: "Deny them the water, just as they denied it to ʿUthmān, the Commander of the Faithful. Kill them while they are thirsty, God damn them!" Muʿāwiya said to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "What is your opinion?" He said, "I think that if you vacate the position and release the water, the people will not thirst, even if you are well-watered." ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Sarḥ, who was a brother of ʿUthmān's, said, "Deny them the water until nightfall, for they shall wither to a point of crisis, and their withering will be their defeat." Then Saʿṣaʿa said to Muʿāwiya, "What's your opinion?" Muʿāwiya said, "Go back to them and tell them my opinion." Ṣaʿṣaʿa made his way to ʿAlī, so it was that the people of Iraq passed that day and that night with no water.[221]

2. Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays said: "O Commander of the Faithful, shall they keep us from the water while you are with us, and we have our swords? Give me the command of the charge, and by God I will return [with the water secure] or die trying [to secure it]!" Al-Ashtar was passing by on his horse, and ʿAlī said to him, "What is your opinion on this?" Then, when [Muʿāwiya's commander] Abū al-Aʿwar began to charge and to fight, al-Ashtar and al-Ashʿath met them, and the two of them expelled Abū al-Aʿwar and his companions back to the road, and [the river] fell into their hands. Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to Muʿāwiya, "Do you think that their group will today deny you the water, the way you denied it to them yesterday?" Muʿāwiya said, "Enough of what passed! What do you think ʿAlī will do?" He replied, "I think that he shall not withhold from you what you withheld from him, for he gave you water at another time." The people laid down their arms, and one after the other gathered around, and ʿAlī ordered his men not to prevent the Syrians from getting water.[222]

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[220] For the originals in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* see above, pp. 49-50.
[221] Al-Dinawārī, *Al-Akhbār,* p. 179-80.
[222] Ibid., p. 180.

Al-Yaʿqūbī:

> Then ʿAlī crossed to the southeast of the Euphrates until he came to Ṣiffīn, but Muʿāwiya had beaten him to the water and encompassed it with his camp. When ʿAlī and his companions arrived, they could not reach the water, so the people sought to gain access from Muʿāwiya, saying, "Do not kill the people while they are thirsty! There are slaves, mothers and laborers among them." Muʿāwiya refused them, saying, "May God not give me water to drink, nor give Abū Sufyān a thing to drink from the basin of the Prophet of God, if ever they drink from this place." Then ʿAlī, Al-Ashtar and al-Ashʿath charged on horseback, with al-Ashʿath ibn Qays on a stallion. Muʿāwiya's cavalry was commanded by Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī, and ʿAlī's companions battled him until the horses' hooves were in the Euphrates, and they conquered the drinking place. ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Ḥārith, the brother of al-Ashtar, was at the spot, and when ʿAlī conquered the drinking place, Muʿāwiya's companions said, "Truly, we have no sustenance, for ʿAlī has taken the water!" Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to Muʿāwiya, "ʿAlī will not usurp from you and your companions what you usurped from him and his." Then ʿAlī released the water. That was in Dhū al-Ḥijja of the year 36. [223]

Al-Ṭabarī:

> 1. According to Abū Mikhnaf—Yūsuf b. Yazīd—ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAwf b. al-Aḥmar: When we reached Muʿāwiyah and the Syrians at Ṣiffīn, we found that they had chosen an even, wide, and spacious position. They had seized the watering place, and it was in their possession. Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī had lined up horsemen and foot soldiers by it, and he had placed the archers in front of his men. He had formed a row with spears and shields, and helmets on their heads, and they had resolved not to let us reach the water.
>
> In alarm we went to the Commander of the Faithful and told him about that, and he summoned Ṣaʿṣaʿah b. Ṣūḥān. He told him, "Go to Muʿāwiyah and say this: 'We have come to you like this but are reluctant to fight you before exhorting you by all possible means. But you have advanced your horsemen and foot soldiers against us and have attacked us before we attacked you. You began the fighting against us while we considered that we should hold back from fighting you until we had appealed to you and put before you our arguments. And this is another

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[223] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh,* pp. 187-8.

thing that you have done—you have barred our men from the water, and they will not stop fighting unless they have drunk. So send your men to allow mine access to the water and hold off from fighting until we consider our dispute and what we have come for and what you have come for. But, if you prefer that we should give up what we came for and leave the men to fight at the water, so that only the victors drink, we will do so.ʼʼʼ[224]

2. By God, the next thing we knew, Muʿāwiyah was sending troops of horsemen to Abū al-Aʿwar to stop our men from getting to the water. ʿAlī sent us against them, and we fired arrows and thrust with spears and then gave blows with the swords. We were granted victory over them, and the water came into our hands. We said, ʻBy God we will not allow them to drink from it,ʼ but ʿAlī sent to us, saying, ʻTake what water you need and return to your camp. Leave them alone, for God has given you victory over them because of their evil and oppression.ʼ[225]

Discussion

The decision to bar ʿAlī and his men from the water is attributed, interestingly, to different men in each account; al-Dīnawarī suggests that it was al-Walīd ibn ʿUqbā, who is excoriated elsewhere by Sālim ibn Dhakwān, the Ibāḍī writer of the epistle that bears his name,[226] for murder, drinking wine, squatting on well-watered Bedouin pasture land, excluding the Bedouins from holy war, nepotism and even the killing of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir,[227] and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Sarḥ, ʿUthmānʼs brother, who both suggested to Muʿāwiya the tactic of maintaining a monopoly on the drinking water. Al-Walīd ibn ʿUqbā also appears in the history of Ibn al-Athīr as the man who duels ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās (and "insults" the sons of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalab in the process), and is known as a

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[224] G.R. Hawting, trans., Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Rusūl waʾl-Mulūk* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), volume 17, p. 14-15. Arabic edition, pp. 3268-9.
[225] Ibid., p. 16. Arabic edition, p. 3269.
[226] See below, Appendix I, pp. 310-315.
[227] Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmerman, *The Epistle of Salim ibn Dhakwan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 80-88.

strong ʿUthmānī, as is ʿUthmān's brother, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Sarḥ. Their closeness to ʿUthmān naturally explains their enmity towards the members of ʿAlī's camp, all of whom they hold culpable for his death. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's and al-Dīnawarī's attribution of the idea to Muʿāwiya's men is contrasted by al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Ṭabarī's attribution of it to Muʿāwiya himself. When the idea comes from Muʿāwiya or ʿAmr (or even, in some of the later accounts, from Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī, Muʿāwiya's commander), barring ʿAlī and his men from the water is a much more cynical and conniving act than the one suggested by the angry demand made by al-Walīd and Ibn Abī Sarḥ. Note, for example, that in al-Dīnawarī's account, the idea is attributed to these relative unknowns, whose appearance in the story is scanty and whose importance to the outcome is negligible. The effects of these changes are not as readily apparent as the potential causes; the earlier historians presumably had readers who were more familiar with some of the more obscure figures, like Ibn Abī Sarḥ and al-Walīd, whom time and literary choice would ultimately efface.

Another distinction in al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh* is the disappearance of the story of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ counseling Muʿāwiya to release the water to avoid an immediate life-and-death conflict between the two camps over the issue of the water. The account appears in the other three histories examined in this chapter (the selection from al-Ṭabarī is not included here, but it is the source for our current version of the corresponding section of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, so it is, naturally, identical to that section presented in chapter I), but al-Yaʿqūbī omits that story. He includes, along with the rest of them, ʿAmr's consolation to Muʿāwiya, once the battle has been lost, that ʿAlī will not keep the water from him. Although the omission of ʿAmr's advice to Muʿāwiya to fight over an issue

that is more ambivalently viewed by ʿAlī's men than is the need for water is most likely a result of the brevity of his section on Ṣiffīn, it is interesting to note that in most subsequent histories, the scene in which ʿAmr gives Muʿāwiya this advice will also be omitted. Since ʿAmr is the conniving advisor of Muʿāwiya's whose stratagem will ultimately bring ʿAlī down, this omission is significant in that there is thus no personage to attach it to, thus implicating Muʿāwiya as if by default. This implication-by-default is the same literary method employed by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and Ibn Aʿtham both, when they gave Muʿāwiya the responsibility for objecting to the use of the term "Commander of the Faithful" in drafting the ground rules for the arbitration, as discussed in the last chapter. In this way, in the earliest accounts of Ṣiffīn, Muʿāwiya is the focus of the blame, ultimately responsible for the entire Syrian camp; this oversimplification of Muʿāwiya's culpability and motivations is part of what encourages a softening of his image in later works, written at a time when the ʿAbbasid regime was not so strong, and the needs of its *daʿwa* less influential on the writing of history. Furthermore, al-Yaʿqūbī relates Muʿāwiya's statement, "May God not give me water to drink, nor give Abū Sufyān a thing to drink from the basin of the Prophet of God, if ever they drink from this place."[228] Al-Yaʿqūbī's choice of oaths to place into Muʿāwiya's mouth is not accidental; he is referencing the well-known actions of the Prophet Muḥammad at the battle of Badr (2/624), when the Prophet seized the wells at Badr and, as a result of his controlling of the drinking supply, achieved a major victory against the Meccans, led at the time by his father, Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb. It is quite ironic that Muʿāwiya would reference a battle in which his father was the main enemy of the Prophet, and al-Yaʿqūbī is pointing his readers' attention to that irony.

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[228] See above, p. 122.

Descriptions of the Armies and Early Skirmishes

The armies are described in terms of soldiers, their positioning in the ranks, and the identities of their commanders. Violent hostilities begin in earnest in the form of single-combat duels. [229]

Al-Dīnawārī:

> 1. Abū al-Dardāʾ and Abū Umāma al-Bāhilī came to Muʿāwiya and said, "For what reason do you fight ʿAlī? He has the right of this matter." He answered, "I am fighting him over ʿUthmān's blood." They replied, "What, did he kill him?" He said, "He sheltered those who killed him, and refused to turn those who killed him over to us, and I was the first to pledge allegiance to him from the people of Syria." The two of them made their way to ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) and told him of this.
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> Suddenly, about twenty thousand men stood aside from ʿAlī and yelled, "We all killed ʿUthmān!"[230]
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> 2. ʿAlī placed ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir in charge of the cavalry; over the infantry, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Budayl ibn Warqāʾ al-Khuzāʿī; he honored Hāshim ibn ʿUtba al-Mirqāl with the great banner. He placed al-Ashʿath ibn Qays over the right flank, and ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-ʿAbbās with the left flank. Over the right infantry, Sulaymān ibn Ṣurd; over the left, al-Ḥārith ibn Murra al-ʿAbdī. He placed the Muḍarī tribesmen in the center, the tribesmen of Rabīʿa on the right, and the tribesmen of Yaman on the left...[231]
>
> 3. Muʿāwiya placed ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ in charge of the cavalry, and over the infantry Muslim ibn ʿUqba, God damn him. Over the right flank, he placed ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and over the left flank, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama. He honored ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Khālid with the great banner. He placed al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays over the

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[229] For the originals in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* see above, pp. 56-7.
[230] Al-Dinawārī, *Al-Akhbār,* p. 181.
[231] Ibid., p. 182.

Damascenes, Dhū al-Kalāʿ over the people of Ḥimṣ, and Zufar ibn al-Ḥārith over the people of Qinnasrīn. Sufyān ibn ʿAmr was placed over the Jordanians, and Maslama ibn Khālid over the Palestinians...[232]

Al-Yaʿqūbī:

At Ṣiffīn, ʿAlī had seventy veterans of Badr, 700 of those who had sworn their allegiance to him under the tree, and 400 from the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār. Muʿāwiya, however, did not have any of the Anṣār except for al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr and Maslama ibn Mukhallad.[233]

Al-Ṭabarī:

ʿAlī sent out al-Ashtar over the Kūfan cavalary and Sahl b. Ḥunayf over the Baṣran; he put ʿAmmār b. Yāsir over the Kūfan infantry and Qays b. Saʿd over the Baṣran; Hāshim b. ʿUtbah carried ʿAlī's banner, and Misʿar b. Fadakī al-Tamīmī led the Baṣran *qurrāʾ*. The Kūfans rallied to ʿAbdallāh b. Budayl and ʿAmmār b. Yāsir.

Muʿāwiyah sent Dhū al-Kalāʿ al-Ḥimyarī out over his right wing and Ḥabīb b. Maslamah al-Fihrī over his left. At the time of his advance from Damascus, Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī, who was in command of the horsemen of Damascus, had charge of the vanguard, while ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ commanded the Syrian horsemen generally. Muslim b. ʿUqbah al-Murrī led the infantry of Damascus, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays the infantry as a whole. Some of the Syrians gave the oath of allegiance to Muʿāwiyah to the death and bound their legs together with turbans (to prevent flight). Those who did so made up five rows. The Syrians who went out to fight formed ten rows, while the men of Iraq went out to fight in eleven.

On the first day of Ṣiffīn, when the men went out and fought, al-Ashtar commanded those of the Kūfans who took part and Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah commanded the Syrians. That was a Wednesday. A fierce battle took place most of the day, and then both sides fell back, with honors even [that is, with neither side having achieved clear victory over the other].[234]

Discussion

[232] Ibid., p. 183.
[233] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 188.
[234] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Rusūl waʾl-Mulūk,* vol. 17, p. 30-1. Arabic edition, pp. 3283-4.

The previous chapter, in the discussion of this episode of the Ṣiffīn story, made the point that the narratives translated above are devoted to a list of names of the men who witnessed the battle. These lists, ubiquitious in Islamic historical writing, have the potential to be important and informative, especially if there is disagreement among them. For the most part these lists are written for the descendants of those listed; differences can offer important insight. In this case, however, although there are some slight variations, in terms of this study, they seem to have had no real lasting relevance, as the lists of names were quickly dropped in subsequent accounts. In general, however, these lists are important because they record for posterity the identities of men in positions of privilege or honor during the holy times of Islam's birth and expansion, and this has a social purpose at the time of the composition of the work in which the lists appear. Having one's ancestors listed in a history book as *ashrāf*, Muhājirūn or Anṣār, participants at important events like Ṣiffīn, and so forth, bolsters the social status of the contemporary descendant.[235] Al-Yaʿqūbī mentions two of the Anṣār who were in Muʿāwiya's camp, Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr and Maslama ibn Mukhallad, who were known to be hostile to ʿAlī out of loyalty to ʿUthmān. The former has the distinction, according to some of the sources, of being the individual who brought the bloodstained shirt of the slain Caliph and the severed fingers of his wife, Nāʿila, to Muʿāwiya, who displayed them in the main Damascus mosque. Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr remained a loyal civil servant under the Umayyads, but would eventually fall out of favor when he allowed Muslim ibn ʿAqīl to stir up pro-Ḥusayn sentiment in Kūfa, over which Nuʿmān had been appointed

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[235] This process is described in Chase Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

governor. His later declaration of support for ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr sealed his fate, and he was killed by the regime. The latter, Maslama ibn Mukhallad, was a key advisor to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and would succeed him (according to some sources) as governor of Egypt. As opposed to most of the other accounts, which neglect to mention Muʿāwiya's limited support among the Anṣār, al-Yaʿqūbī's inclusion of these (mere) two Anṣārī supporters of Muʿāwiya—both of whom were disfavored by posterity—emphasizes ʿAlī's rightness by demonstrating that even Muʿāwiya's support from notables was blemished. These two are the exceptions that proved the rule: ʿAlī enjoyed the support, the histories tell us, of Islam's most distinguished men.

Al-Dīnawarī, in *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, mentions a story among all his lists, translated above. Asked why he is fighting ʿAlī, Muʿāwiya repeats his charge that ʿAlī is harboring the killers of his kinsman ʿUthmān, and is thus responsible for his death until he delivers them up to the Syrians for justice. The Iraqis, upon hearing this ultimatum, all cry out at once, claiming to have killed ʿUthmān. This unity in the Iraqi camp is surprising, given that it was the fractures within it, rather than the divide between them and the Syrians (who are still universally being treated as the antagonists) that ultimately became key within emergence of sectarianism in Islam. Perhaps al-Dīnawarī wishes to suggest that it is not the divisions within ʿAlī's camp that were the key factors in the development of the sects, but rather they were united in common cause until they were torn apart by trickery. On the other hand, it is more likely that al-Dīnawarī considered the killing of ʿUthmān to be an act of moral ambiguity, and this endorsement of it showed that some of ʿAlī's followers were unhelpfully partisan or, at least, unified against Muʿāwiya but not necessarily for ʿAlī. However, al-Dīnawarī's general perspective

should be borne in mind. He even adds a curse, "God damn him," to his mention of Muslim ibn ʿUqba, Muʿāwiya's infantry commander and future administrator of the Kharāj in Palestine. He is much reviled for his later slaughter of Anṣār and Muhājirūn rebels at Ḥarra, an event which "anti-Umayyad legend has much exaggerated."[236] In this context, it is not necessarily unexpected to see al-Dīnawarī play up the unity of ʿAlī's camp, and thus the righteousness of his cause, and juxtapose it against the peevish villainy of Muʿāwiya and his camp and cause.

Al-Yaʿqūbī mentions that ʿAlī had received the *bayʿa* from Muhājirūn and Anṣār "under a tree." This is a clear and unambiguous reference to the Qurʾān, *sūra* 48 (al-Fatḥ), *aya* 10, which reads, "Verily, whoever makes a pledge to you, in truth makes a pledge to God: the hand of God is above their hands. Whoever betrays in truth betrays his own soul and whoever fulfills what he has covenanted with God, He will grant him a great reward" and *aya* 18, which reads, "Certainly, God was pleased with the believers whent they gave their *bayʿa* to you [Muḥammad] under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, and rewarded them with a nearby victory."[237] Al-Yaʿqūbī is using the opportunity presented by a reference to the *bayʿa* given to ʿAlī to draw a clear comparison between ʿAlī and the Prophet, as suggested by El-Hibri.[238]

Laylat al-Ḥarīr—"The Night of Clamor"

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[236] H. Lammens, "Muslim b. ʿUḳba." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 06 August 2009
<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:3678/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-5599>
[237] Qurʾān, 48:10 and 48:18. See also Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy,* p. 49-52.
[238] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History,* pp. 211-216.

There is a great battle. [239]

Al-Dīnawarī:

> 1. The people fought each other from morning to night. That day many of the most knowledgeable [aʿlam], and most noble, of the Arabs were killed. When the people stopped fighting they removed their dead and buried them all that day. ʿAlī got up the evening of that day and said, "O you people! Leave your ranks and fight your enemies!" Their eyesight dimmed, the sounds dropped, fewer words were spoken. They invoked the name of God many times. They fought, died, and their souls left them. [240]

> 2. All of the people came together and battled until their spears shattered and swords snapped. Then they bit with their mouths and flung earth, and then they yelled, "O Community of Arabs, who will care for the women and the children?"…Even ʿAlī, may God be pleased with him, fought amongst the people and struck with his sword until he turned aside, and left, covered in as much blood as his sword was. [241]

> 3. They killed each other until their spears shattered, and their swords snapped, and the earth was shrouded in gloom until at last the sun dawned, and those who remained looked at each other in the clear light that ended the night. That was *laylat al-harīr*, the night of clamor. [242]

Al-Yaʿqūbī:

> 1. The intentions of ʿAlī's companions at the battle were correct. ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir got up, and yelled out at the soldiers, and then a great mass of them came to him, and then he said, "By God, even if they attack us with such ferocity so as to bring us to the plam leaves of Hajar, we will know that we hold the truth, and they are in error!" Then he said, "Lo! Who wants to go to paradise?" Then the mass followed him in an attack around Muʿāwiya's tent. There was a great brawl, and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir was killed. That night, the war became fierce, and the people cried, "A companion of the Prophet of God has been killed!" As the Prophet said, "The rebel band will slay ʿAmmār." [243]

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[239] For the originals in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* see above, p. 64.
[240] Al-Dinawārī, *Al-Akhbār,* p. 193.
[241] Ibid., p. 195.
[242] Ibid., p. 201.
[243] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 188.

2. ʿAlī's companions advanced and gained a great victory against Muʿāwiya's companions, until they cleaved to him. Then Muʿāwiya called for his mare to mount it, but ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to him, "Where are you going?" He said, "You see what has befallen us. What do you suggest?" He said, "We have nothing but one ruse left."[244]

Al-Ṭabarī:

1. And I saw ʿAmmār [ibn Yāsir] at Ṣiffīn when he was saying, "Bring me my final sustenance in this world," and he was brought a drink of diluted milk in a shallow bowl with a red rim….ʿAmmār said, "Today I will meet the loved ones—Muhammad and his party. By God, even if they strike us so as to bring us to the palm leaves of Hajar, we will know that we hold to the truth and they to falsehood." And he began to say, "Death is beneath the spears and paradise beneath the flashing swords."[245]

2. The men fought for the whole of that night until morning—that was the "night of howling"—until lances were broken, the stock of arrows exhausted, and the men had resorted to swords. ʿAlī moved between his right and left wings, ordering every squadron of the *qurrāʾ* to advance on those adjacent to them. He kept that up, leading the men until, when morning came, the entire battlefield was behind his back. Al-Ashtar commanded the right wing and Ibn ʿAbbās the left. ʿAlī was in the center, and the men were fighting on every side. It was Friday.

Al-Ashtar started to move forward with the right wing, fighting with them. He had been in charge of them on Thursday evening and night until dawn appeared, and he kept saying to his men, "Go forward the length of this spear," advancing with them toward the Syrians. When they had carried out his order he would say, "Go forward the length of this bow." When they had carried out his order he would command them again in a similar manner until most of them had run out of courage. When al-Ashtar saw that he said, "I pray to God lest you suckle from sheep from now on." [i.e., he is calling their courage into question]. Then he called for his horse and left his banner with Ḥayyān b. Hawdhah al-Nakhaʿī, while he went around among the squadrons, saying "Who will purchase his life from God and fight with al-Ashtar unil he is victorious or

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[244] Ibid., p. 188.
[245] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, vol. 17, p. 65. Arabic edition, pp.3317-18.

joins God?" And no man of those who had gone out to join him and Ḥayyān b. Hawdhah withdrew.[246]

Discussion

The death of the Companion of the Prophet, ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, is once again given a place of great importance in the story, and is placed here in the context of *laylat al-harīr*. Since he symbolizes the loss of the community's connection to the time of the Prophet, his death is portrayed as an especially traumatic event. Al-Yaʿqūbī references a famous prophecy of the Prophet, in which he condemns to hell the "rebel band" (*al-fiʾa al-bāghiya*) which will kill ʿAmmār—a *ḥadīth* which directly implies the wrongness of the Syrians at Ṣiffīn, and one which later Syrian historians seeking to rehabilitate the Umayyad image would be forced to answer.[247] This is after al-Yaʿqūbī has made the point, in the last section, that Muʿāwiya enjoyed the support of only two of the Anṣār, and mentions no others of the important companions of the Prophet in his camp.

The descriptions of this main battle are, of course, another opportunity to juxtapose the bravery of ʿAlī and his men against the cowardice of the other side. Al-Yaʿqūbī, by a fair measure the most eager to characterize Muʿāwiya as a power-hungry and self-serving coward, even suggests that the Syrian governor was on the verge of abandoning his men to their deaths while he escaped on a mule when ʿAmr conjured his ruse. ʿAlī himself, of course, is presented as leading the charge, for his part.

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[246] Ibid., p. 77. Arabic edition, pp. 3327-8.

[247] *ʿAmmār taqtuluhu al-fiʾa al-bāghiya.* See A.J. Wensinck, *Concordance Et Indices De LA Tradition Musulmane: Les Six Livres, Le Musnad D'Al-Darimi, Le Muwatta'De Malik, Le Musnad De Ahmad Ibn Hanbal,* vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1936), p. 204. According to Wensinck this *ḥadīth* appears in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and the collections of Muslim and al-Tirmidhī.

ʿAlī's evident heroism is quite obviously an attempt to further advance the pro-ʿAlid perspectives of the writers. It is quite striking when juxtaposed to the cynicism and sneakiness of his Umayyad opponents.

The Call for Arbitration and the Appointment of Arbiters

Desperate for deliverance from crushing defeat, Muʿāwiya asks ʿAmr for his advice. ʿAmr comes up with the brilliant and devious plan to raise aloft the Qurʾān and call for arbitration based upon it. ʿAlī's army is split, with some wanting to keep fighting, and some wanting to end the bloodshed and accept the offer. Those who wish to accept the offer force their will on ʿAlī, and then force him to appoint Abū Mūsā as his arbiter. Muʿāwiya appoints ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. [248]

Al-Dīnawarī:

> 1. The news [of the progression of the battle] reached Muʿāwiya and he said to ʿAmr, "What is your opinion?" ʿAmr said, "I have come up with an idea this day, that regardless of whether they accept it or deny it, it will increase their division." Muʿāwiya said, "What is it?" ʿAmr said, "Call them to the book of God, that this matter be settled by arbitration between you and them. In this way you will attain your pressing need [to stop the fighting]." Muʿāwiya knew that that ʿAmr's view of the situation was clear and correct, and al-Ashʿath ibn Qays said to his tribe while they were listening to him, "You have all seen what a deadly war this has been the past day, and by God if it continues to tomorrow it will be the ruin of the Arabs and the useless destruction of honorable men.'" Witnesses had brought al-Ashʿath's words to Muʿāwiya, and he said, "Al-Ashʿath is correct, for tomorrow Byzantium will be at the border of Syria, and the armies of Persia will be at the borders of Iraq."[249]

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[248] For the originals in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* see above, pp. 68-71.
[249] Al-Dinawārī, *Al-Akhbār,* p. 201.

2. They tied the *maṣāḥif* to the ends of their poles, and decided that the first one that they would use would be the *maṣḥaf* of the Great Damascus Mosque. They tied the *maṣāḥif* to five lances, carried by five men, and then tied all of the regular *maṣāḥif* that they had with them. They gathered in the darkness, and when the Iraqis were able to see the Syrians, they had already gathered them together, so that they resembled banners. They could not tell what it was until the morning came, when the first light shone and they looked and lo! it was the *maṣāḥif* of the Qurʾān. Then al-Faḍl ibn Adham stood opposite their center, Shurayḥ al-Judhāmī opposite their right flank, and Warqāʾ ibn al-Muʿammar opposite their left, and they cried, "O community of Arabs! The enemies of Islam will threaten, and you will have been killed! This is the book of God between us and between you!" ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) said, "They want nothing with the book but to try a deception" (*mā al-kitāb turīdūn walākin al-makr tuḥāwilūn*)."[250]

3. Those who later became Khawārij were the most forceful of those who demanded that ʿAlī submit to the judgment by the book.[251]

Al-Yaʿqūbī:

[ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ] said, "We have nothing but one ruse left. Raise the copies of the Qurʾān, call them to arbitration based on what is in the book! Beg them and you will divide them, and undermine their vigor." Muʿāwiya commanded, "Do as you say!" So they raised the pages, and called them to arbitration based on what was in them. They said, "We call you to the book of God!" ʿAlī said, "It is a ruse! They are no companions of the Qurʾān." Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays al-Kindi objected, as Muʿāwiya had won his favor, having written to him, and called him to himself. Then he said, "The people call for the truth!" Then ʿAlī retorted, "On the contrary, they are deceiving you, and they want to distract you from them!" Al-Ashʿath said, "By God, if we do not agree, I am leaving you!" The Yamānīs were with al-Ashʿath, who said, "By God, let us agree to what they call us to, or else we will deliver them your cadaver!" Then Al-Ashtar and al-Ashʿath began to fight over these incredible words, until the point that there was almost a war between them, and ʿAlī feared for the unity of his company. When he saw what the situation was, he answered the call to arbitration, and ʿAlī said, "I think that I should appoint ʿAbd

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[250] Ibid., p. 202.
[251] Ibid., p. 204.

Allāh ibn ʿAbbās as my arbiter," but al-Ashʿath protested, "Muʿāwiya is going to send ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, so do not appoint a Muḍarī over us, but appoint Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿārī, who had taken no part whatsoever in the war." ʿAlī said, "Abū Mūsā is an enemy, one who has abandoned me and the people in Kūfa, and who forbade them to go out with me." They replied, "We will not consent to anyone else."[252]

Al-Ṭabarī:

1. When ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ saw that the position of the Iraqis had strengthened and was afraid that it would lead to destruction, he said to Muʿāwiya, "What if I put something to you that can only increase our unity and their division?" "All right," said Muʿāwiya. ʿAmr said, "We will raise the *maṣāḥif* and say, 'their contents are to be authoritative in [or: adjudicate] our dispute (*mā fīhā ḥukm baynanā wa-baynakum*).' Even if some of them refuse to accept it, you will find that some of them will say, 'Indeed, yes, we must accept,' and there will be a division between them. If, on the other hand, they say, 'Yes, indeed, we accept what is in it,' then we will have disburdened ourselves of this fighting and this warfare until an appointed time or a later occasion." So they raised the *maṣāḥif* on lances and said: "This is the Book of God between us and you. Who will protect the frontier districts of Syria if they all perish, and who those of the Iraqis if they all perish?" When the men saw that the *maṣāḥif* had been raised, they said, "We respond to the book of God, and we turn in repentance to it.""[253]

2. Al-Ashʿath went to him and said, "Muʿāwiyah, why have you raised these *maṣāḥif*?" He answered: "So that you and we together turn to what God commanded in His book. You will send a man from among you whom you find acceptable, and we will send a man from among us, and we will impose upon them that they act according to what is in the Book of God, not opposing it. Then we will follow what they agree upon." Al-Ashʿath b. Qays said to him, "This is just," and then he want back to ʿAlī and told him what Muʿāwiyah had said.

Our men said, "We are pleased and accept." The Syrians said, "We have chosen ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ," and al-Ashʿath and those who became Khawārij afterward said, "We are content with Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī." ʿAlī said: "You disobeyed me in the start of this business, do not disobey

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[252] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 188-190.
[253] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Rusūl waʾl-Mulūk* volume 17, p. 78. Arabic edition, p. 3329,

me now. I do not think I should grant power to Abū Mūsā." But al-Ashʿath, Zayd b. Ḥuṣayn al-Ṭāʾī, and Misʿar b. Fadakī insisted, "We do not find anyone else acceptable: What he warned us against we have fallen into [i.e., *fitna*]." ʿAlī said: "I do not consider him trustworthy. He separated from me and caused the people to abandon me. Then he fled from me until I granted him security after some months. But here is Ibn ʿAbbās; we will give him power in that matter." They replied, "It would not make any difference for us whether it was you or Ibn ʿAbbās. We insist on someone who is equally distant from you and Muʿāwiyah, no closer to one of you than he is to the other." ʿAlī said, "I will appoint al-Ashtar."

According to Abū Mikhnaf—Abū Janāb al Kalbī: Al-Ashʿath said, "Was it anybody but al-Ashtar who caused this conflagration in the land?"

According to Abū Mikhnaf—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Jundab—his father: Al-Ashʿath said, "Are we not already under the authority of al-Ashtar?" ʿAlī said: "What is that?" and al-Ashʿath answered, "That we should strike one another with swords until what you and he want comes to pass." ʿAlī said, "Do you then refuse to accept anybody but Abū Mūsā?" and the men replied, "Yes." ʿAlī said, "Then do what you want." They sent to Abū Mūsā, who had withdrawn apart from the fighting and was in ʿUrḍ.[254]

Discussion

We see here some elaboration of Naṣr's account. We discover that the Yamanis were eager to accept arbitration,[255] as was al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, who, it seems from the various accounts, may have been seduced by Muʿāwiya to his cause; Hinds points out that it was al-Ashʿath who "publicly expressed fears" of Persian and Byzantine attack, and that Muʿāwiya, upon becoming aware of this, ordered the attachment of the *maṣāḥif*

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[254] Ibid., p. 82-3. Arabic edition, pp. 3332-3334. For "ʿUrḍ," see above, n. 84.

[255] The Yamanis were key supporters of the Umayyad regime, particularly the Marwānids. It may be that they are retroactively being criticized for their support. See Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates (Second Edition)*, esp. pp. 99 ff.

to the lances.[256] Al-Dīnawarī also points out that those who later became Khawārij were
"the most forceful" of those who demanded that ʿAlī acquiesce to the demand for
arbitration, thus setting the stage for their hypocrisy and foolishness to be highlighted
later on. Hinds suggests that ʿAlī's following "included many groups which preferred not
to fight;"[257] the largest contigents were his supporters, primarily from among the Anṣār,
Abū Mūsā and the Kūfans, and the Yamanīs. ʿAlī had some staunch support from among
the Kūfans, such as al-Ashtar, but most of them were lukewarm supporters, and only
supported ʿAlī out of expediency.[258] ʿAlī, of course, immediately recognizes the ruse for
what it is in each of the different accounts, even composing an impromptu poem in *al-
Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* of al-Dīnawarī. All three *akhbārī* historians are cognizant of ʿAmr's
explicit awareness of the divisions within ʿAlī's camp, and his desire to exploit those
divisions. Al-Dīnawarī has ʿAmr mention that, whether they accept or deny the request
for arbitration, it will increase their division; al-Yaʿqūbī has him cry out his idea in
desperation, exhorting Muʿāwiya to beg for arbitration, an act which will "divide them
and undermine their vigor;" and al-Ṭabarī adds (via Naṣr) that it will increase the unity of
Muʿāwiya's camp.

There are some developments in the account of al-Ṭabarī, who for the first time
looks at matters from the Syrian perspective. There is, as Shoshan points out, a certain
amount of irony implicit in the way the Syrians avoid destruction; the way the word *ḥukm*
is used directly references ʿAlī's call for arbitration based on the Qurʾān at the Battle of
the Camel (which was not accepted), as well as his challenge to duel Muʿāwiya in single

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[256] Martin Hinds, "The Siffin Arbitration Agreement," *Journal of Semitic Studies,* Vol. 17 (January-
December, 1972), p. 93.

[257] Ibid., p. 93.

[258] Martin Hinds, "Kūfan Political Alignments and their Background in the Mid-Seventh Century A.D.,"
IJMES 2 (1971), pp. 361ff.

combat, despite the fact that his forces were overwhelming the Syrians, which ʿAlī puts in terms of allowing God to make his judgment (*ḥukm*) between the two of them. Shoshan argues that ʿAlī does not come out of this engagement looking very good, as the invocation of the idea of *ḥukm* at that moment is idiosyncratic, at best. He states, "Much ambiguity surrounds the crucial *ḥukm* issue….[There is an] irony underlying Ṭabarī's Ṣiffīn story in its account of human failure to enlist—not to say manipulate—'God's judgment.' Not even ʿAlī, the pious hero (certainly in Abū Mikhnaf's eyes, most likely also in Ṭabarī's), is able to implement what he had in mind when claiming to 'entrust God with the decision.' In the oucome of Ṣiffīn, God's judgment, no doubt, is manifest, but in a form that none of ht ehistorical participants, perhaps not even the modern reader, could expect."[259]

Once again, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is the basis for each of the subsequent accounts, including a number of stories that will be revisited in later works.

Negotiation, Ruling and Reneging

The ground rules for the arbitration are set, with some disagreement over ʿAlī's title, Commander of the Faithful. The arbiters meet, argue the points, and fail to come to an agreement immediately. Abū Mūsā suggests deposing both men, and electing a third party, a suggestion which ʿAmr accepts. When they go to tell the people of their decision, Abū Mūsā speaks first and deposes ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya both, as was agreed; ʿAmr, however, deposes only ʿAlī, and confirms Muʿāwiya as caliph. A scuffle breaks out. [260]

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[259] Shoshan, *The Poetics of Islamic Historiography*, p. 231.
[260] For the originals in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* see above, pp. 79-82.

Al-Dīnawarī:

1. The Iraqis and the Syrians met, and began to write, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is the decision of ʿAlī, *amīr al-muʾminīn* (Commander of the Faithful)." But Muʿāwiya said, "Wretched man, if I thought he was the Commander of the Faithful, would I fight him?" ʿAmr said, "Write his name and the name of his father." Al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays said, "Do not erase the name, nor relinquish your commandership of the faithful; if you erase it, I fear it will never return to you. Do not compromise with them on this matter!" ʿAlī said, "Allāhu Akbar! A *sunna* upon a *sunna!* Indeed God allowed me to witness this," meaning the negotiation on the day of Ḥudaybiyya. "The Quraysh prevented the writing of Muḥammad *rasūl Allāh* (the Messenger of God), and the Prophet said to the writer, 'Write Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh,' and so he wrote down, 'This is what has been agreed upon by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān and their parties.'"[261]

2. The two men met to exchange their points of view on the arbitration. Abū Mūsā said, "O ʿAmr, do you know what would be in the best interests of the people and the mercy of God?" ʿAmr said, "What is that?" He said, "We put ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar in power. For he did not take part in any of these wars." ʿAmr said to him, "And what do you think about Muʿāwiya?" Abū Mūsā said, "What right does Muʿāwiya have to any of these matters?" ʿAmr said, "Do you not believe that ʿUthmān was killed unjustly?" He said, "On the contrary, I do." He said, "And Muʿāwiya is the *walī* of ʿUthmān, and his position in the Quraysh is as you know. And if the people say that he has no right to rule in this matter and that he has no precedence within Islam, you have an answer for that. You will say that 'I have found him to be the *walī* of ʿUthmān, and God most high said (in the Qurʾān), 'He who is killed unjustly, you shall give his *walī* power.'[262] Moreover, he is the brother of Umm Ḥabība, the wife of the Prophet, and one of his companions." Abū Mūsā said, "Fear God, O ʿAmr! As for what you say concerning the honor of Muʿawiya, truly this matter is not about the honor brought to him by his relations. If it was about nobility, the most just of the people in this affair among Muʿāwiya's supporters is Abraha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ, for he is descended from the successive Kings of Yemen who ruled the east and the west. Furthermore, what honor has Muʿāwiya when compared to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib? And as

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[261] Ibid., p. 207.
[262] Qurʾān, 17:33.

for what you say, that Muʿāwiya is the kin of ʿUthmān, his closest relation is his son, ʿAmr ibn ʿUthmān. However, if you yield to my request, we could observe the *sunna* of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb [by appointing a *shūra*] or revive his memory by appointing his son ʿAbd Allāh." ʿAmr said, "So what would prevent you from my son ʿAbd Allāh, when you know his righteousness?" Abū Mūsā said, "Indeed, your son is a righteous man, but you have soiled him by immersing him in these battles."[263]

3. ʿAmr said, "What is your opinion?" Abū Mūsā said, "My opinion is that that we should depose both men, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, then we will appoint a *shūrā* among the Muslims, who will choose for themselves whom they love." ʿAmr said, "I find that idea pleasing. It is the view that has the best interests of the people at heart." Then Ibn ʿAbbās came to Abū Mūsā and said, "Woe unto you, O Abū Mūsā, for ʿAmr means to deceive you! If you two have agreed on something, let him go before you to talk, then you talk after him. ʿAmr is a sneaky man, and I doubt that if he gave you satisfaction in private, he will keep his word; he will disagree with you before the people." Abū Mūsā said, "We have agreed on a thing, and neither of us has anymore disagreement with any other, God willing." They then went before the people, meeting at the Mosque, and Abū Mūsā said to ʿAmr, "Go on up to the stage, and speak." ʿAmr said, "I would not go before you, for you are more virtuous than I, and came to Islam before I did." So Abū Mūsā climbed onto the stage, praised God and extolled him, then said, "O you people! We have looked into the problem plaguing this community, and we have looked to God for our answer. And we have determined that the best solution is to depose both these men, ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, and to establish a *shūrā* so that the people may choose for themselves whom they want, who holds the opinion of the people. I hereby depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, and charge you all with your own affairs, that you appoint over you whom you wish!" Then he went down, and ʿAmr went up, praised God and extolled him, and then he said, "You have all heard what this man just said, and how he deposed his master. As for me, I also depose his master, just as he has. But I confirm my master, Muʿāwiya, for he is the *walī* of ʿUthmān, the Commander of the Faithful, the claimant of his blood, and the most righteous of people in his position." And Abū Mūsā said to him, "You deceiver! God will not grant success to you, for you have lied and deceived! Truly your kind is like the dog who lolls his tongue out in thirst, whether he runs or is left alone!"

[263] Al-Dinawārī, *Al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, p. 212-13.

ʿAmr said, "And you are like the donkey that carries books of scripture!"[264]

Al-Yaʿqūbī:

1. So ʿAlī appointed Abū Mūsā, in full knowledge of his enmity and the deceit that was between them, and Muʿāwiya appointed ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and they wrote two letters detailing their cases. ʿAlī's was composed by his scribe ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Rāfiʿ, and the letter from Muʿāwiya was written by his scribe ʿUmayr ibn ʿAbbād al-Kinānī. They quarreled over ʿAlī's opening, and his naming of himself as Commander of the Faithful. Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī said, "We will not give preference to ʿAlī," and ʿAlī's companions replied, "And we will not change his name and we will write nothing except '*amīr al-muʿminīn*,' Commander of the Faithful." The argued about that fiercely until the point that they scuffled. Then al-Ashʿath said, "Erase the name!" Al-Ashtar said to him, "By God, O one-eyed Cyclops, you make me want to occupy my sword with you! I have already slain an entire nation of people more wicked than you! Verily, I know that you strive for nothing other than *fitna*, and you do not deal with anything but this world and love it over the next." While they were disagreeing, ʿAlī said, "Allāhu Akbar! The Prophet of God himself wrote on the Day of Ḥudaybiyya to Suhayl ibn ʿAmr, 'This is what the Messenger of God has compromised,' and Suhayl said, 'If we were of the opinion that you were the Messenger of God, we would not fight you.' So the Messenger of God erased his name with his own hand, and commanded me and wrote, 'From Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh,' and he said, 'Truly my name and my father's name do not remove my Prophethood. Thus did the Prophets write to their detractors. And truly my name and my father's name do not detract from my authority.'" So he commanded them to write, "From ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib," and they wrote the brief on the agreement that the two parties would consent to what would be found in the book of God. In the two letters, they stipulated that the arbiters would make their decisions based upon what was in the book of God, from the beginning to the end, and nothing else, and that they should not deviate from that, and they swore the greatest of oaths and contracts, and they began to look through the book of God from beginning to end. [265]

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[264] Ibid., p. 213-14. Qurʾān, 7:176 and Qurʾān, 62:5.
[265] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 188-190.

2. Then ʿAmr and Abū Mūsā came to the stage, and when ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās saw him, he went to ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays, and he approached Abū Mūsā, and said, "ʿAmr has separated from you; let him go before you, for he intends to betray you." He said, "No, we have agreed on the matter," and he climbed the stage and deposed ʿAlī. Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ took the stage and said, "I confirm Muʿāwiya as I confirm this ring is on my hand." Then Abū Mūsā screamed at him, "You have betrayed me, you hypocrite! You are like the dog that runs with its tongue lolling out in fatigue!" ʿAmr said, "And you are like the donkey that carries books of scripture!"[266]

3. [Hishām] Ibn al-Kalbī—ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Ḥuṣayn ibn Suwayd—"I was walking with Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī on the banks of the Euphrates, and at that time he was a governor of ʿUmar's, and he related to me, saying, 'Truly the Banū Isrāʾīl continued their strife, throwing rock after rock, until they appointed two fools to arbitrate, who were more foolish than their followers." I said, "And if you had been one of the two arbiters, O Abū Mūsā?" He said, "In that case, God would leave me no point of ascent to the heavens, and no refuge on the earth, if I were he."[267]

Al-Ṭabarī:

1. They wrote, "In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate. This is what ʿAlī the Commander of the Faithful has determined." But ʿAmr said, "Just write his name and that of his father, for he is your commander but not ours." Al-Aḥnaf said to ʿAlī, "Do not efface the title of Commander of the Faithful, for I fear that if you erase it the office will never revert to you. Do not erase it, even though the people kill one another." ʿAlī refused [to make the erasure] for much of the day, but then al-Ashʿath b. Qays said, "Erase this name, for God has removed it." So it was erased, and ʿAlī said, "God is most great! A precedent following a precedent and an example following an example! I was writing in the presence of the Messenger of God on the day of al-Ḥudaybiyyah when they said, 'You are not the Messenger of God, and we will not lend credence to that—just write your name and that of you father,' and he wrote it." ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ said, "God preserve us from this comparison—that we should be compared to infidels although we are believers!" ʿAlī said: "Ibn al-Nābigha, when were you not a friend to the wicked and an enemy to the Muslims? Do you resemble anybody but your mother who

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[266] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 190
[267] Ibid., pp.190-191.

brought you forth?" ʿAmr stood and said, "You and I will never sit together again." ʿAlī said, "I hope that God cleanses my circle of you and the likes of you." And the document was written.[268]

2. When the arbitrators met and debated, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ said, "Abū Mūsā, I think that the first part of the truth we should determine is to decide in favor of those who fulfill their undertakings according to their fulfillment and against those who are perfidious according to their perfidy." Abū Mūsā said, "What do you mean?" and ʿAmr said, "Do you not know that Muʿāwiyah and the Syrians have fulfilled their undertakings and come at the time and to the place upon which we pledged them?" "Indeed yes," said Abū Mūsā. ʿAmr told him to write that down, and he did so. ʿAmr said, "Abū Mūsā, do you accept that we should name a man who will have authority over the affairs of this community? Give me a name, and, if I can accept your suggestion, I undertake to do so; otherwise, you must accept mine." Abū Mūsā said, "I suggest ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar." [Ibn ʿUmar was one of those who had "gone apart" (iʿtazala).] ʿAmr replied, "I suggest Muʿāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān." Their meeting ended in mutual vilification.[269]

3. The two arbitrators met and ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ said, "Abū Mūsā, do you not know that ʿUthmān was killed unjustly?" He replied, "I testify to that." ʿAmr said, "Do you not know that Muʿāwiyah and the family of Muʿāwiyah are his closest kin?" He answered, "Yes, indeed." ʿAmr continued: "God has said, "Whoever is killed unjustly, we have given authority to his next-of-kin, but do not let him go to excess in killing; he will be helped."[270] So why do you refrain from supporting Muʿāwiyah, the next of kin of ʿUthmān, Abū Mūsā? (The status of) his family in Quraysh is as you know. If you are afraid that the people will say, "Abū Mūsā has given power to Muʿāwiyah, but he is not one of the early Muslims," you will have an argument in response to that. You will say, "I have found him to be the next-of-kin of ʿUthmān, the unjustly killed caliph, and the seeker of revenge for his blood, and I have found him adept in government and in managing things. He is the brother of Umm Ḥabībah, the wife of the Prophet, and he was a Companion to the Prophet, one of the group of Companions." Then ʿAmr hinted to Abū Mūsā that he

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[268] Ibid., p. 84. Arabic edition, pp. 3334-5.
[269] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, vol. 17, p. 91-92. Arabic edition, p. 3342.
[270] Qurʾān, 17:33.

would obtain a position of authority and said, "If Muʿāwiyah rules, he will bestow on you honors such as no caliph has ever granted."

Abū Mūsā answered: "ʿAmr, fear God. Regarding what you have said about the nobility of Muʿāwiyah, it is not on the basis of nobility that those who are right for it [those who deserve it] are given power. If it were on the basis of nobility, then the rule would belong to the family of Abrahah b. al-Ṣabbāḥ. Rather it is something only for the people of religion and merit. Moreover, if I were to give it to the best of Quraysh in nobility, I would give it to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. And as for what you said about Muʿāwiyah as the one responsible for taking vengeance for the blood of ʿUthmān, and that therefore I should accord the rule to him, I will not give Muʿāwiyah power in it and abandon (the rights of) the first Muhājirūn. And concering your hinting at a position of authority for me, by God, even if all of Muʿāwiyah's authority devolved on me, I would not give him power, and I am not to be bribed in (a matter concerning) the authority of God. But if you wish we will revive the name of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb."[271]

4. Abū Mūsā considered the matter in hand and what they had come together for, and ʿAmr wanted him to declare in favor of Muʿāwiyah, but he refused. ʿAmr then wanted him to declare in favor of his son, but again he refused. Abū Mūsā tried to get ʿAmr to declare in favor of ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar, but he refused. ʿAmr then said to Abū Mūsā, "Tell me what you think." He answered, "I think we should depose these two men and make the matter consultative between the Muslims, who will choose for themselves whomever they like." ʿAmr said to him, "I agree." They went toward the people who were gathered together. ʿAmr said, "Abū Mūsā, tell them that we have a meeting of minds and an agreement." Abū Mūsā spoke and said, "I and ʿAmr have agreed on something by which we hope God will bring about peace to this community." ʿAmr said, "You have spoken the truth and kept your word, Abū Mūsā, go ahead and speak."

Abū Mūsā went forward to speak, but Ibn ʿAbbās said to him: "Woe to you, by God, I suspect that he has tricked you. If you have both agreed on something, let him go first and speak about that thing before you, and then you speak after him. ʿAmr is a treacherous man and I am not sure that he has given you satisfaction when it was just the two of you, but when you stand among the people he will oppose you." But Abū Mūsā was heedless and said, "We have agreed."

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[271] Ibid., 105-7. Arabic edition, pp. 3354-3356.

Abū Mūsā went forward, praised God and extolled Him, and then said, "People, we have considered the affairs of this community and we do not think that there is anything that will be more beneficial for it or more conducive to resolving its difficulties than that upon which ʿAmr and I have agreed. That is, that we should depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah and that this community should confront the issue and appoint over themselves from among themselves whomever it is that they want. I have accepted the deposition of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah, and now you confront the issue and give power over you to whomever you think is fitting for this matter."

He then stood aside and ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ took his place. He praised God and extolled Him, then said, "This fellow has spoken as you have heard and declared the deposition of the one whom he represents. Similarly, I declare that he is deposed and I confirm my support for my candidate Muʿāwiyah. He is the next-of-kin of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and the one who seeks vengeance for his blood. Of all the people, he has the most right to take his place."

Abū Mūsā said, "What are you doing, may God foil you? You have acted treacherously and unrighteously. You 'are like the dog which, if you attack it, it lolls out its tongue, or, if you leave it alone, it still lolls out its tongue.'"[272] ʿAmr responded, "And you 'are like the donkey which carries writings.'"[273] Shurayḥ b. Hāniʾ attacked ʿAmr, lashing at his head with a whip, and a son of ʿAmr assailed Shurayḥ, striking him with a whip. Everyone got up and separated the two of them, and subsequently Shurayḥ used to say, "There is nothing I regret more than my striking at ʿAmr with a whip. If only I had struck at him with a sword and let fate bring him what it would!" The Syrians sought Abū Mūsā, but he mounted his camel and retired to Mecca.[274]

Discussion

Among the *akhbārī*-style accounts, it is only in the account of al-Ṭabarī that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ recognizes (in a meta-literary way) the comparison of Muʿāwiya and his men to the Meccan Qurashī infidels led by Abū Sufyān. This episode also serves as a

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[272] Qurʾān, 7:176.
[273] Qurʾān, 62:5.
[274] Ibid., p. 108-10. Arabic edition, pp. 3358-60.

platform to demonize one of ʿAlī's formerly loyal men, al-Ashʿath (or "he with the disheveled hair," the nickname for Abū Muḥammad Maʿdīkarib ibn Qays al-Kindī), the pace of whose turnaround from staunch supporter to fifth-column saboteur is, on the one hand, nothing short of startling. On the other hand, he was known for some degree of expediency, having been among those who became apostates upon the death of Muḥammad, but who came back to Islam when he married the sister of Abū Bakr.[275] He lost an eye at the battle of the Yarmūk—thus al-Ashtar's curse of him as a "one-eyed Cyclops" in the history of al-Yaʿqūbī—but his sudden support of the idea of negotiation, a support so strong that he threatens to kill ʿAlī if he refuses, earned him the further nickname *ʿUrf al-Nār*, a South Arabian term for "traitor."[276] It was a family tradition, apparently, as his grandson ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ashʿath, would rebel against the governor al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, the hard-headed Umayyad governor of Iraq. Of course, the erasure of the title on the document foreshadows ʿAlī's loss of the title itself. Interestingly, regarding the erasure of ʿAlī's title, only al-Dīnawarī attributes the Syrian objection to its inclusion to Muʿāwiya; al-Yaʿqūbī attributes it to Abū al-Aʿwar, and al-Ṭabarī attributes it to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, to whom it is always attributed thereafter. The consistent attribution of the idea to ʿAmr is because of al-Ṭabarī's pervasiveness as a source for the later historians.

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[275] In fact, al-Ṭabarī relates a story (I, 2139-40) in which Abū Bakr expresses his three main regrets at the time of his death, one of which is sparing al-Ashʿath ibn Qays when he was brought to him as a prisoner during the *Ridda* Wars. Abū Bakr is reported to have said, "I wish that on the day I was brought al-Ashʿath ibn Qays as a prisoner I had cut off his head, for I imagine that he does not see any evil but that he helps it along." El-Hibri postulates that this regret hints at Abū Bakr's foreknowledge of al-Ashʿath's undermining of ʿAlī's leadership at Ṣiffīn. For a more detailed discussion on this point, see Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs*, pp. 72-76.

[276] H. Reckendorf, "al- Ashʿath , Abū Muḥammad Maʿdīkarib b. Ḳays b. Maʿdīkarib." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 09 July 2009 <http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:3678/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-0782>

One of the more interesting aspects of this section is the discussion between Abū Mūsā and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ regarding the right to rule. The discussion appears in the account of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, and is repeated by al-Dīnawarī, and al-Ṭabarī; it is conspicuous by its absence in al-Yaʿqūbī. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's words are matched almost to the letter by al-Dīnawarī, who clearly was quoting from him and making only minor adjustments. In al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* we see Abū Mūsā's clear preference for those who did not take part in the wars, by his reaction to two men named ʿAbd Allāh: he suggests the appointment of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who had not taken part, and rejects ʿAmr's son, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who was "soiled" by his participation in the battles. From a literary standpoint, Abū Mūsā's unwillingness to divide the community further underscores the righteousness of ʿAlī's cause; by emphasizing his desire for an end to the *fitna*, and the wrongness of *fitna*, ʿAlī is implicitly juxtaposed to the bellicose and partisan Muʿāwiya. However, with some enemies, the authors seem to suggest, what is ethically and morally right is not what is best, and Abū Mūsā had always been opposed to *fitna*, to a fault. The naïve adherence to his own ethics leads to Abū Mūsā's failure as an arbiter, and ultimately, ʿAlī's fall from power and eventual assassination.

It is interesting to note the different arguments each man, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Abū Mūsā, advances in order to advocate his own cause. ʿAmr's argument does not develop from one retelling to the next, but remains substantively identical, even if the words change and he develops his argument more eloquently. He maintains that Muʿāwiya: 1) has a right, as a next-of-kin, to avenge the assassination of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, which Abū Mūsā agrees was unjustified; 2) has a family which has a high

position within the tribe of Quryash; 3) is an excellent politician and a skilled leader (though this point does not appear in al-Dīnawarī); and, 4) he is the brother-in-law of the Prophet and one of his companions. In al-Dīnawarī's telling, as well as that of al-Ṭabarī, ʿAmr supports his claim that Muʿāwiya has a right to blood revenge by citing, and creatively exploiting a usefully ambiguous word from a verse in the Qurʾān. Abū Mūsā's response is similar in each account, but with some subtle, and very telling differences. He responds first to the claim that Muʿāwiya heads an important branch of the Quraysh; indignant in tone, as ʿAmr had just tried to bribe him, he declares that if the decision for a ruler came down only to the honor brought by position, the rule should go to Abraha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ, but for different reasons. In Naṣr's account, it is because he is "the choice of the pious and virtuous;" in al-Dīnawarī, it is because he is descended from the *jāhilī* kings of Yemen. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that Abraha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ is not due the right to rule based on his nobility; al-Ṭabarī had an evident disdain for the notion, long debated within Islam, that merit was based upon ancestry rather than individual accomplishment.[277] Abraha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ is absent entirely in the history of al-Yaʿqūbī. According to al-Ṭabarī, it was this Abraha who refused to escape from Muʿāwiya's prison in the story related by al-Dīnawarī about Abū Hudhayfa, translated above. He was, according to Madelung, "the senior member of the Himyarite royal family emigrating from the Yemen."[278] His grandfather, also named Abraha, had been a folkloric figure to the early Arabs. The point al-Dīnawarī is having Abū Mūsā try to make is that if claims to rulership were based solely on noble descent, then Abraha would be the imam—He was

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[277] Rosenthal, "The Life and Works of al-Ṭabarī," p. 13.
[278] Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 154, citing Hamdānī, *Iklīl*, II, 158-60. See also Louise Marlowe, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

certainly of noble stock, but any reasonable Muslim could see, Abū Mūsā is arguing, that as a son of pagan tyrants, he was obviously completely unacceptable. Abū Mūsā makes the argument to demonstrate the untenability of the premise that Muʿāwiya's nobility qualified him for the imamate. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's explanation of the invocation of the name of Abraha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ--namely, that he is the choice of the pious and virtuous— is indeed curious. However, at this point, Abū Mūsā advances (at last) the name ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, suggesting that he, too, was using Abraha (a supporter of Muʿāwiya's) only as a counterpoint. But he only does so for a moment, and then moves on quickly to suggest a replacement—ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who (naturally) had taken no part in the *fitna* and had the appropriate lineage and tribal identity.   ʿAmr rejects him, suggesting his own son ʿAbd Allāh in his place, or, alternatively, brazenly suggesting Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān—and it is then Abū Mūsā who suggests the deposing of ʿAlī and the election of a new leader.

This leads to the most famous part of the story; as such, there is very little distinction among the different retellings. Abū Mūsā, flattered by ʿAmr, foolishly speaks first and deposes ʿAlī, and ʿAmr agrees to the deposing of ʿAlī and appoints Muʿāwiya. He lacked the authority to do so, of course, but that fact was irrelevant. Muʿāwiya had gained an unmeasurable amount of prestige, and ʿAlī had lost the same amount, in a situation where he had been, according to the authors, in the right, on the victorious side, and deserving of confirmation.

One ahistorical utterance works its way into the account of al-Yaʿqūbī, in which he discusses a battle fought by the Banū Isrāʾīl, the Jews, which has clear and unequivocal comparisons to Ṣiffīn, including the appointment of two arbiters to settle the

dispute. These arbiters are described as fools by al-Yaʿqūbī's Abū Mūsā, who insists that, had he been one of those arbiters, God would leave him "no point of ascent to the heavens." There are two ahistorical aspects of this *khabar*. The first looks to the past and to the anonymous battle, with such clear parallels to Ṣiffīn, fought by the Banū Isrāʾīl on some indeterminate date. As is the case with references to Ḥudaybiyya, and the comparison of the erasure of the Prophet's title with the erasure of ʿAlī's title at Ṣiffīn, the historians general, and in this case al-Yaʿqūbī specifically, look to the past for reference to the events they are describing. The second ahistorical aspect looks to the future. In this account, Abū Mūsā condemns as "fools" the arbitrators who, evidently, either failed to resolve the conflict in question or resolved it in an unjust or inadequate way. The inclusion of this *khabar* at this point in the narrative foreshadows the end of the Ṣiffīn story and uses Abū Mūsā's pontification on this matter to incriminate him.

Conclusions

One of the most striking aspects of the variant historical accounts of the Battle of Ṣiffīn is, despite the variations discussed above, the relative sameness of the accounts. The obvious distaste for Muʿāwiya is not evidence of Shīʿī sympathy or belief, especially given attitudes towards the Umayyads (and pro-ʿAlid sentiment in general) in the ʿAbbasid milieu in which even the earliest of these historians, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, was writing. Given the fact that Ṣiffīn is such an important turning point in the history of Islamic sect formation and Islam in general, why would there be such general agreement in the writing of historians whose religious and political views were varied?

Each account is, in fact, quite argumentative; they are all simply argumentative from the same side, and deferential to prevailing ʿAbbasid-era tastes. One army of the two in the battle, it should be borne in mind, was composed entirely of Umayyads and their supporters. It is a matter of great misfortune that no full Umayyad-era history of Ṣiffīn (or history in general, for that matter) is extant. One imagines that it would have much to say in disputing accounts of the battle by the water, of the plotting and calculating machinations of Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and of the relative cowardice of the Syrian camp in comparison with the bravura of ʿAlī and the Iraqis. It might also have reconsidered the righteousness of ʿAlī's cause; after all, it was not an unreasonable suspicion that he was complicit in ʿUthmān's murder, and he was certainly sheltering his assassins. One of the heroes of the accounts presented here, al-Ashtar, was, in some of the sources, named as the man who struck the killing blow on ʿUthmān, and in an Umayyad history would likely be presented as a killer, a brute, and a thug, much as ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ is presented as a "sly fox," rather than a loyal and brave warrior who supports his candidate to the last—a description which, with the substitution of "negotiator" for "warrior," could also easily be applied to ʿAmr.

Lacking such a history, however, we are forced to rely upon what we have, and, as we shall see, that is not insignificant; beyond the occasional story in al-Ṭabarī related on the authority of the tradent ʿAwāna ibn al-Ḥakam, who presented a view more sympathetic to the Umayyads than did his contemporaries (none of these stories are given in al-Ṭabarī's presentation of the key moments of Ṣiffīn), the later local Syrian histories of Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and Ibn Kathīr do indeed provide accounts that are somewhat pro-Umayyad, or at least sympathetic to the Umayyads, albeit in a post-

ʿAbbasid context. The *akhbārī* historians examined in this chapter, as well as Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, clearly delighted in kicking the dead Umayyad horse; however, they also had a theological perspective. All their careful hand-wringing about the qualifications for the imamate can only be understood as addressing later concerns about political and sectarian legitimacy contemporary to the *akhbārīs*. It is also a way of bolstering ʿAlid claims. Al-Dīnawarī, in *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl,* is the only one to point out that the most forceful of those who demanded ʿAlī accept arbitration later became Khawārij (a point which becomes commonplace in accounts of Ṣiffīn), but all of the historians name the names of those who did so, and those who insisted on Abū Mūsā as arbiter, and they would have been generally known to the reader as those who became Khawārij, anyway. Unless one wishes to accept the notion that Khawārij were all, in fact, hypocrites, this is doubtful a true historical picture; more likely, their vision of Islam and separation from the main *umma* on the matter of the leadership of the community was an easy target for later writers seeking to draw broad moral distinctions. The Khārijī perspective on the imam was that he was not distinguished from the rest of the community by anything other than superior merit; this is in stark contrast to the early Sunnī view that legitimacy derived from *faḍl, sābiqa,* and acclamation, and of course the dynastic aspect the Sunnī concept of legitimacy assumed under the ʿAbbasids, as well as to developing proto-Shīʿī perspectives regarding the imam and his relation to ʿAlī.[279] This perspective also meant that the imam could be reproved or removed if he did not obey God's law or no longer possessed superior merit.[280] Crone argues that the Khārijī perspective on the imamate probably held appeal to early Muslims, as it "preserved communal participation in

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[279] See Crone, *God's Rule*, pp. 55 ff.
[280] See Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmerman, *The Epistle of Salim ibn Dhakwan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. p. 346.

decision making," but lost its appeal in the early ʿAbbasid period as Muslim society became more complex.[281] Their perspective on this and other matters, including the famous slogan *lā ḥukma illā lillāh*—"there is no judgment but God's, alone"—contributed to their ostracization from the rest of Muslim society. They were roundly criticized in contemporary sources, like the *akhbār* of Abū Mikhnaf and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd; they remained implacable enemies of the Umayyads; their doctrines made them the target of ridicule by Sunnīs and Shīʿīs alike (as references to them in this study demonstrate); and the murder of ʿAlī by one of their number certainly did not ingratiate them to the Shīʿīs. In other words, the Khārijīs were outcasts to the large majority of Muslims. It is impossible to say at this point whether the suggestion of such hypocrisy over the matter of the call to arbitration was the doing of these historians, a command from their patrons or, probably most likely, their sources contemporary with the battle.

Another potential reason for the general uniformity of views of the historians is the fact that, as the above translations demonstrate and as is widely known, they were copying and citing from one another (even if sometimes without explicit citation). It is a certainty that each man had access to the work of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim or his tradents, and had the option to emphasize, omit, rephrase or alter whatever he wished in the construction of his own historical account. There is, interestingly, nothing in the accounts to suggest that they had ever read Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ;* the similarities in the accounts are all explicable by the evident fact that they made use of the same tradent sources. The homogeneity of tone across the various accounts does not suggest that Ṣiffīn was not an important turning point in the construction of Islamic sectarian

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[281] Crone, *God's Rule*, pp. 60-1.

identity; rather, it suggests a conformity of historical concerns and ʿAbbasid era, anti-Umayyad perspective amongst these historians.

However, the power of regimes and of sects waver, and new perspectives go hand-in-hand with new styles of recording history. The next chapter will discuss historians who took some tentative steps towards greater use of the story of the battle of Ṣiffīn as a site for argumentation, both explicit and implicit.

Chapter III

The Battle of Ṣiffīn in *Muʾarrikhī*-Style Historical Writing

<u>Historiographical Perspective</u>

The last chapter discussed the *akhbārī* historical accounts of the battle of Ṣiffīn, based largely on the vulgate text of Naṣr ibn Muzāhim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* namely al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh,* and al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk.* The early historiographical picture that emerged was striking in its general uniformity, although given the prevailing assumption of modern Islamic historiography that sectarian concerns entered into historical writing at an early date, perhaps it should not be surprising that these sources, composed when the ʿAbbasid regime was still quite strong, show a preference for ʿAbbasid historical interests and perspectives and a strong distaste for the deposed Umayyads. The similarity in tone is thus explicable by the fact that the later writers invariably cited the earlier ones or made use of the same *akhbār*, and all found in the story of Ṣiffīn a useful vehicle for musings on the imamate and for criticism of the Umayyad regime and its beginnings.

However, after the early ʿAbbasid period, the historiographical picture begins to change. These changes do not only apply to accounts of Ṣiffīn, of course, but to the great body of Islamic historical writing as a whole; such changes are detailed elsewhere.[282] Details—sometimes minutiae, sometimes large blocks of text—are appended to the

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[282] See Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, esp. pp. 18-54; Fred M. Donner, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Survey* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994); Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins;* Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography;* Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs.*

narrative, with no clear indication of exactly where or how these details were discovered.

Citation and *isnād*s follow the trend of ninth- and tenth-century Arabic historical writing

and disappear almost completely, in favor of a less formally rigid, but much more

readable, account. Commentary is interwoven with the recitation of names, locations,

and numbers at an increasing rate. The *khabar,* while not disappearing completely, is

mostly replaced by a longer-form narrative, constructed by "collecting, selecting and

arranging the available *akhbār* according to their [that is, the compilers'] sound judgment

and narrative scheme."[283] This was part of the larger trend away from monographs like

Waqʿat Ṣiffīn and towards large composite works and grand historical compilations

whose scale was universal, like al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab,* whose work, composed a

mere half century after al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh,* was nonetheless quite different in style.

The historiographical trend during the times of al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī,

Robinson states, "follow[s] patterns set during [the period ca. 730-830], and it is here that

the origins of Islamic historiography seem to lie." He explains:

> "If the earliest *akhbār* literature was doinated by relatively narrow, single-issue 'monographs' with short shelf-lives, it was the insight of [al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī, among others] to recognize that for the ever-growing past to be recorded, it required more plastic forms of narrative. It is precisely this flexibility that explains why other schemes of historical narrative, such as *futūḥ* (works on the great Islamic conquests), *manāqib* (works on the life and times of leading jurists), and *maqātil* (works on the deaths of revered figures, especially Shīʿite Imams) would be sidelined: they had had and would continue to have their champions, but they could not compete with synthetic chronography in its three principle forms [i.e., biography, prosopography and chronology]."[284]

This change, from what has been classified as an *akhbārī* style to this *muʾarrikhī* style,

was not entirely due to the simple invention of new material by writers who wrote

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[283] Ibid., p. 35.
[284] Ibid., p. 39.

accounts with *muʾarrikhī* characteristics—that is, the absence of *isnād*s and the omission of *akhbār* as the primary literary vehicle for the retelling of history in favor of the longer-form narrative. The addition of new material to the broadly-defined corpus of Islamic historical works had been in process for a long time. For example, the list of names of participants at Ṣiffīn as early as the work of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim was designed to honor notable descendants of the men named.[285] The *muʾarrikhī*-style historians sought to amalgamate these disparate and fragmented accounts into large and uninterrupted narratives. With this in mind, it must be remembered that additions to narratives from earlier versions are not only explicable in terms of the extant works in which these additions first appear; the authors probably got them from somewhere. The fact that the authors are no longer constrained to cite their sources means simply that we cannot know when and where these new details first appeared. In this case, it is more than the absence of *isnād*s that unites the historians examined in this chapter; it is a fundamental and explicit concern with the nature of history.

The Developing Historical Treatment of Ṣiffīn

In order to facilitate comparison, in the two previous chapters key episodes within accounts of the battle of Ṣiffīn were identified. These have been categorized in this study as follows: 1) The Journeys of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya to Ṣiffīn, in which they raise armies, twist the arms of reluctant allies or bribe those of a mercenary mind; 2) The Battle by the Water, in which ʿAlī and his army, having arrived second to the Euphrates

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[285] See Hugh Kennedy, "From Oral Tradition to Written Record in Arabic Genealogy," *Arabica* 44 (1997), pp. 531-544.

and having found themselves barred from the water by Muʿāwiya's cavalry under Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī, courageously conquer the drinking place and magnanimously distribute the water to both sides; 3) The Makeup of the Armies and the Early Skirmishes, in which key commanders and Companions of the Prophet, heroes and villains both, are listed and described, as are the days of low-level brawling that preceded the main battle; 4) *Laylat al-Harīr*, "the night of clamor," in which the armies finally come to full-scale battle with each other and the Iraqis come within a hair's breadth of a dominating victory; 5) The Call for Arbitration and the Appointment of Arbiters, in which the clever fox, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, uses the Qurʾān to gain a respite for his Syrian fighters—a move which appeals only to some in ʿAlī's camp, and thus exposes its divisions; and, 6) Negotiation, Ruling, and Reneging, in which the ground rules for the arbitration are set and, using these rules to his advantage, ʿAmr, little by little, dupes the credulous Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī into deposing ʿAlī for the ultimately unfulfilled promise of a reciprocal move on ʿAmr's part.

The historians examined in this chapter—al-Masʿūdī, al-Maqdisī, and Ibn al-Athīr—continued to rely heavily on the vulgate, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, as discussed in chapter one, as well as the *akhbārī* historians in chapter two and the tradents from whom the *akhbārīs* constructed their narratives (indeed, it is often impossible to tell which source is being used, an *akhbārī* or his sources). This reliance on these earlier sources does not fully hold with regard to the specific details; as was previously mentioned, new details and anecdotes appear with no indication of their source. With *isnāds* mostly gone altogether, we are left with absolutely no recourse in determining the origins of these anecdotes, or whether they were simply constructed out of whole cloth. The style of writing, too, evolves. As Robinson points out, the disappearance of the *isnād* means that

these accounts can no longer really be considered collections of *akhbār*,[286] but read much more as single, flowing narratives. The *akhbārī* style will make a kind of comeback in the works of Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, who wrote biographical dictionaries covering the cities of Damascus and Aleppo, respectively; that genre (if such a term may be applied) lent itself much more to an *akhbārī* style of laying down information. With al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī, however, despite the difference in style relative to the *akhbārī*s, the general feel of the story remains the same as the *akhbārī*; in Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*, although it it essentially a *muʾarrikhī* style, *isnād*-free repetition of al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, a few snippets of commentary sympathetic to Muʿāwiya make an appearance. Al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī wrote in the first half of the tenth century, by which time the process described by Robinson in which the *akhbārī* style had evolved into the longer synthetic works of the mid-ninth century was well underway.[287] Ibn al-Athīr wrote even later, in the thirteenth century, by which time that process was long-since complete; his work, like theirs, was designed to present a single, flowing narrative, without *isnād*s and in which what he considered to be problematic passages from al-Ṭabarī's original were either omitted or glossed.[288]

The disappearance of the *isnād*, so omitted for reasons of style and brevity, also had the ultimate effect of freeing the historians from any scholarly constraint to cite their sources. This stylistic convention allowed them the possibility of adding to, subtracting from, or altering their large mass of received material in any way they saw fit, without fear of the standard, *isnād*-based criticism. Al-Dīnawarī, of course, wrote without *isnād*s, but, as described in chapter two, the existence of nearly identical, almost word-for-word

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[286] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, pp. 15-17.
[287] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 41.
[288] Ibid., p. 99.

accounts in other sources means that we are not utterly in the dark about his sources of information.

The Historians

Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī was born in Baghdad into a Kūfan family which traced back its genealogy and connected its *nisba* to the Companion Ibn Masʿūd, no later than some years before 280/893, and died in 345/956.[289] He spent his youth in Baghdad, but information about the course of his early studies is largely nonexistent.[290] However, it may be deduced from his brief *Kitāb al-Tanbīh* that he studied with a number of important scholars, and may have been acquainted with al-Ṭabarī. The long list of scholarly contacts he made represents the principal disciplines cultivated in this period.[291] As was customary for men of letters, he travelled and read extensively. He never took an official position with the administration, and seems to have made his living entirely off of his scholarly efforts. Al-Masʿūdī did not limit himself to history, as it was understood by men such as al-Ṭabarī, as he wrote a number of geographical and travel works; it would be more accurate to say that he had a broader definition of history, given that he certainly considered himself an "historian" first and foremost.[292] Pellat points out that "the content of [al-Masʿūdī's] surviving works, which are presented in a historico-geographical framework, shows that this prolific writer has a

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[289] Charles Pellat, "al- Masʿūdī , Abu 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 19 December 2009 <http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:3678/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-0704>

[290] *GAS* I, pp. 332-6; *GAL* I, p. 150-2.

[291] Tarif Khalidi, *Islamic Historiography* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), pp. 148-50.

[292] See Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, pp. 10; 54-5.

close interest in the various disciplines which are not to be arbitrarily classified as history or geography," and that he "displays…an active sympathy for the Ahl al-Bayt and Twelver Imāmī Shīism."[293] There is a lost book called the *Kitāb Ithbāt al-waṣiyya li-al-Imām ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib,* which Shīʿīs "ureservedly attribute" to al-Masʿūdī, a "sacred history of the twelve Imāms," in the words of Pellat.[294] Although this title is not ever mentioned by any Sunnī writer, "it is impossible to deny the Shīism or, more accurately the Imāmism, of al-Masʿūdī."[295]

His main surviving work is the *Murūj al-Dhahab* (336/947)*,* a history in two parts. The first part

> "contains 'sacred' history up to the time of the Prophet, a survey of India, geographical data concerning seas and rivers, China, the tribes of Turkey, a list of kings of ancient Mesopotamia, Persia, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Egypt, and chapters on Negroes, Slavs, Gaul and Galicia. Next come the ancient history of Arabia and articles on the beliefs, the various calendars, the religious monuments of India, of Persia, of the Sabaeans, etc., and a summary of universal chronology."[296]

The second part concerns "the history of Islam, from the Prophet up to the caliphate of Muṭīʿ," including "the *khulafāʾ rāshidūn*, the Umayyad "kings" (only ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz has a right to the title of caliph…) and the Abbāsid caliphs."[297] The *Murūj*, the text from which this study draws, was a heavily researched one, drawing from no fewer than one hundred and sixty-five written sources.

Unfortunately, *Murūj al-Dhahab* and another historical work of al-Masʿūdī's, *al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ishrāf*, are the only works of his that are extant.[298] Despite Rosenthal's

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[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Pellat, "Al-Masʿūdī," *Encyclopedia of Islam*.
[297] Ibid.
[298] The critical Arabic edition of Murūj al-Dhahab used here was published in Beirut at Dār al-Marefah in 2005, and was edited and revised by Charles Pellat between 1966 and 1974.

assertion that he devoted himself entirely to history as he understood it, he wrote books on a number of subjects, including jurisprudence, the imamate, religious belief, and philosophy.[299] What is known of these works is gleaned from references within his two extant works. His views on the imamate, in particular, are elucidated through the *Murūj,* and his section on Ṣiffīn contained therein. For example, he refers to a book of his entitled *Kitāb al-Intiṣār al-Mufrad li-Firaq al-Khawārij* (The Book of Support Related to the Branches of the Khārijīs), which, it can be deduced from what is known about his ʿAlid sympathies, is actually a discussion in "support" of the Shīʿī view of the imamate against the Khārijī view. He also has references to a *Kitāb al-Ṣafwa fī al-Imāma* (the Book of Quintessence on the Imamate), in which he seems to have given "an exposition of the question of the Imamate, reporting and refuting, among other views, the opinions of certain Muslim extremist sects (*firaq al-ghulāt*), including Shīʿite and pro-ʿAbbāsid parties in whose doctrines al-Masʿūdī detects certain dualist elements and Iranian influences."[300] The *Tanbīh*'s account of Ṣiffīn, incidentally, is decidedly summary, as it is a prosopographical work.[301]

Abū Naṣr al-Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī is a writer, otherwise unknown, who composed the historical encyclopedia *Kitāb al-Badʿ wa-al-Taʾrīkh* around 355/966[302] for a Samanid official of Sijistān.[303] A book which recalls al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab, Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-al-Taʾrīkh* envisages history "from a more philosophical and certainly

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[299] Ahmad M. H. Shboul, *Al-Masʿūdi and His World* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), pp. 66-82.

[300] Ibid., p. 59.

[301] Al-Masʿūdī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ashrāf* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ḥayyāt, 1965), p. 295.

[302] Ed(s). "al- Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir (or al-Muṭahhar) al- Maḳdisī." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition.* Edited by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 20 December 2009 <http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:3678/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-5643>. See also *GAS* I, p. 337.

[303] *GAL*, Supplementband 1, p. 222.

more critical point of view,"[304] and included the broader definition of history that Rosenthal argues is also present in the works of al-Masʿūdī.[305] The introductory chapter of *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-al-Taʾrīkh*[306] is devoted to a theoretical discussion of knowledge and the intellect, as al-Maqdisī states his intention to "view the whole universe and its history under the aspect of philosophy."[307] Rosenthal describes the methodology of the work thus: "In the course of the work which follows the ordinary arrangement from the creation of the world to Muḥammad and his history, the men around him and the dynastic history of the Umayyads and ʿAbbâsids, he stresses such subjects as the attributes of the Creator, the cultural and philosophical significance of the pre-Islamic religions, and the dogmatic differences between Muslim sects, and tries to convey wherever possible scientific and philosophical information."[308] It is indeed curious that such a unique work would have fallen into disuse, and its author would have been nearly forgotten; perhaps it is because "the originality and free thought of a writer who seems to have maintained a certain independence and not to have been an adherent of any religious movement of the age when he lived"[309] made it difficult to classify, and thus to criticize or defend.

ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) was a historian of Kurdish ethnicity born in Cizre, in present day Şirnak province in Turkey, who spent much of his scholarly life studying *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* under the shaykhs of Damascus. He spent a great deal of time of in Mawṣil as a private scholar, and also spent a fair amount of time in Baghdad. He fought against the

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[304] Ibid.
[305] Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 10.
[306] No critical edition exists.
[307] Ibid., p. 114.
[308] Ibid., pp. 114-5.
[309] Ed(s). "al- Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir (or al-Muṭahhar) al- Maḳdisī." EI2.

Crusaders with Salāḥ al-Dīn, and had a personal acquaintance with Yāqūt, author of the *Irshād.*[310] Unfortunately, the circumstances of his life are "most imperfectly known as compared to the extent of his fame and influence that were his on account of his works."[311] Ibn al-Athīr was a world historian in the style of al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī, and like them, devoted much of his time to his literary work in the fields of history and biography; however, "being an expert on the important theological discipline of the biographies of the men around Muḥammad and of the religious scholars, he also was a successful lecturer, and he was supported by his ruler."[312] The status of history as a field of study was very important to Ibn al-Athīr, and he defended it as possessing examples for kings to follow in order to avoid tyranny and for men to follow in order to achieve a praiseworthy character.[313]

The early part of *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,*[314] including the section that covers Ṣiffīn, according to Lewis and Holt the "chief example" of Zangid- and Ayyūbid-era universal histories,[315] is heavily indebted to al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk,*[316] and, like the works of other *muʾarrikhī*s, entirely omits the *isnād*s and displays a more fluid narrative style. On this point, Rosenthal states: "His great compilation entitled *al-Kāmil*,

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[310] Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn al-Athīr." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman; , Th. Bianquis; , C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011. <u>Brill Online</u>. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 24 January 2011 .http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2403/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-3094 (Print Version: Volume III, page 723, column 2).

[311] Ibid.

[312] Rosenthal, *A History of Islamic Historiography,* p. 55.

[313] Lewis and Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 81.

[314] The most recent edition of al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh was published in Beirut in 1988 by Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, and edited by Dr. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī. The standard edition, edited by Tornberg, was not available to me.

[315] Lewis and Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East*., p. 82.

[316] Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 108, and esp. pp. 146-7; Lewis and Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East,* p. 89. For Ibn al-Athīr's relation to al-Ṭabarī, see C. Brockelmann, *Das Verhältnis von Ibn al-Aṯīrs Kâmil fit-taʾrîkh zu Ṭabarîs Aḫbâr er rusul wal mulûk*, Dissertation (Strasbourg, 1890).

an annalistic history from the beginning of the world to the year 628 [1230 AD], represents the high point of Muslim annalistic historiography. [It is] distinguished by the well-balanced selection of its vast material, by its clear presentation, and by the author's occasional flashes of historical insight," although it possesses a "noticeable partiality for the Zangids."[317] Ibn al-Athīr set out to correct what he perceived to be the inadequacies of prior historical works, stating that "facts were overlaid in many of them through their repetition, ornate style, or through the long chains of *isnād* to be cited: and so many important events had been intentionally passed over or omitted through prejudice."[318] The work is organized chronologically by year. The significance *Al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh* is demonstrated by the fact that as late as the nineteenth century, it was studied in Mecca by those "who wanted to shine in conversation."[319] Significantly, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh* hearkens back to the *akhbārī* account of al-Ṭabarī and points the way towards the ultimate Umayyadization of some versions of the Ṣiffīn story, exemplified in the works of other Syrian historians, most especially in Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya,* to be examined in detail in chapter five.

Clearly, the grouping of Ibn al-Athīr, a thirteenth-century writer, with tenth-century writers like al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī requires some justification. Beyond the stylistic similarities, it should be clear from the biographies of these writers that all of them were heavily concerned, first and foremost, with the nature of history and the proper means of recording it for posterity. Al-Masʿūdī's work expanded the scope of history, to include disciplines that were not traditionally associated with it; al-Maqdisī sought to apply philosophical learning to the composition of history; and Ibn al-Athīr concerned

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[317] Rosenthal, "Ibn al-Athīr," EI2.
[318] Lewis and Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East,* p. 89.
[319] Rosenthal, *A History of Islamic Historiography,* p. 53.

himself primarily with acquiring a vast readership, and to that end focused on glossing over what he considered ornate affectations and esoteric references. On a related note, in the works examined in this chapter, the presentation of the Ṣiffīn story developed in a way that is consistent with these authors' explicit historiographical goals; *isnād*s and ornate style disappeared, but new details, comments (by both the authors and the historical personages), and interpretations of events appeared. Thus, although there is very little similarity in the political milieus in which these authors wrote, there are significant parallels in both the style of writing and the nature of the influence of the different authors' historiographical agendas.[320]

The Journey of ʿAlī from Baṣra to Kūfa to Ṣiffīn and Muʿāwiya's Journey to Ṣiffīn

ʿAlī dispatches Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī to Muʿāwiya, against the better judgment of al-Ashtar. Emissaries are exchanged. Muʿāwiya wins the support of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. The key arguments of both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya are made clear.

Al-Masʿūdī:

> 1. ʿAlī left ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās in charge of Baṣra and headed for Kūfa, and his entry into Kūfa was twelve days into Rajab. He sought al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, who was just back from Adharbayjān and Armenia, and who had been ʿUthmān's governor over those areas, and also sent for Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī, who had been ʿUthmān's governor over Hamadhān. Al-Ashʿath was not a wholehearted supporter of ʿAlī's….ʿAlī

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[320] Even so, the inclusion of Ibn al-Athīr with al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī, both of whom lived close to three centuries earlier than he, remains problematic. The tenth- and thirteenth-centuries were different worlds. There is no ideal place to fit Ibn al-Athīr in this study; his placement in this chapter with al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī represents an assertion that his writing style and his intent in writing history are more relevant to his categorization in terms of Ṣiffīn than are either his nationality or the century in which he lived. Those latter considerations, however, are far from irrelevant, and must quite obviously be accounted for when examining his presentation of the battle.

sent Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh to Muʿāwiya, an action al-Ashtar warned ʿAlī was a mistake; he also warned him of his [al-Ashtar's] fear of Jarīr. Jarīr had said to ʿAlī, "Send me to him, and if he is still inclined to take my advice, I will counsel him to submit to your authority in this matter, and and I will call the people of Syria to your obedience." Al-Ashtar said, "Do not send him and do not put your trust in him, for by God I believe he thinks like them, and his intentions are just like theirs." ʿAlī said, "Enough of that until we see what he brings back to us." So he sent Jarīr and wrote a letter informing Muʿāwiya of the allegiance given him by the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, that they had gathered around him, and also of the violations of al-Zubayr and Ṭalḥā and the fate which God had assigned them, he commanded him to enter into his obedience. He also told him that he is one of the *ṭulaqāʾ* to whom the office of the caliph is forbidden. When Jarīr came to him he delayed him, and asked him to wait, and wrote to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. He came to him and he gave him Egypt as an incentive…ʿAmr suggested he gather his support from the Syrians and demand blood vengeance for ʿUthmān, and fight him for it. Jarīr came to ʿAlī and told him the news, and the agreement of the people of Syria to fight him. He said they wept for ʿUthmān, saying, "ʿAlī killed him, sheltered his killers and protected them. Truly there is no doubt that he should be fought until he is annihilated or they are." Al-Ashtar said, "I told you, O Commander of the Faithful, of his enmity towards you and of his treachery. If you had sent me, it would have been better for you than this slack-jaw."….Jarīr said, "If you had been there, they would have killed you, for by God they mentioned you as one of the killers of ʿUthmān." Al-Ashtar said, "By God, O Jarīr, if I had come to them they would not have dared to give me such an answer, and ʿAlī would not have been burdened with their speech, and I would have compelled Muʿāwiya. And if the Commander of the Faithful would allow me, I would expel you from this company to a jail, and not let you return until this whole matter is put in order."

At this, Jarīr left for Qarqīsīya and headed for the River Euphrates. He then wrote to Muʿāwiya about the treatment he had received, informing him that he was close by. Muʿāwiya returned his letter, commanding him to come to him.[321]

2. The journey of ʿAlī from al-Kūfa to Ṣiffīn took five days of Shawwāl of the year 36. He appointed Abū Masʿūd ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir al-Anṣārī over

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[321] Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahāb wa-Maʿādin al-Jawhar,* vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar El-Marefah, 2005), pp. 331-2.

Kūfa, and he passed some towns on his way. He came to al-Anbār, and continued on until he came upon al-Raqqa, where a bridge was constructed for him, and then he crossed into Syria.[322]

Al-Maqdisī:

Ṣiffīn: It is a place between Iraq and Syria where the war between the two parties lasted forty days. It is said that when news of the Battle of the Camel reached Muʿāwiya, he called the people of Syria to fight for the sake of the *shūrā* [that had legally elected ʿUthmān caliph] and [also to take up the cause of] the demand for ʿUthmān's blood. They swore allegiance to him as a commander, but not as a Caliph. ʿAlī sent Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī as a messenger to Muʿāwiya, calling him to pledge allegiance by taking the *bayʿa*. Muʿāwiya wrote to him and said, "You have given me dominion over Egypt and Syria for all the days of your life, even if your lordship dies. Furthermore, I will not give you or anybody else the *bayʿa* under duress." ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said, "God, great and mighty, does not wish me to take deceitful men as my helpers." He left Kūfa with twenty thousand men, and Muʿāwiya came with eighty thousand men.[323]

Ibn al-Athīr:

1. It is said: ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ came from Medina, before ʿUthmān was killed, by way of Palestine.

The reason for this was that when ʿUthmān was surrounded, he said, "O people of Medina, you must all refrain from killing this man, lest God curse you with ruin, for truly you will not be able to escape." Then he left, saying other things as well, and travelled until he reached [Muʿāwiya]. His two sons ʿAbd Allāh and Muḥammad traveled with him. They paused in Palestine, at which point a rider from Medina caught up to them. ʿAmr said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Ḥaṣīra." ʿAmr said, "Come closer, man. What news?" He said, "When I escaped, ʿUthmān was trapped and encircled." Then a couple of days later another rider caught up to them, and ʿAmr said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Qattāl." ʿAmr said, "He is killed, then? What news?" He said, "'ʿUthmān was killed. I know nothing else." Then another rider from

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[322] Ibid., p. 334.

[323] Al-Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, *Al-Badʾ wa-al-Tāʾrīkh*, vol. 5 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1916), pp. 216-7.

Medina came, and ʿAmr said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Ḥarb." ʿAmr said, "There will be war, then? What news?" He said, "The people have pledged allegiance to ʿAlī. Salm ibn Zinbāʿ said, 'O assembly of Arabs! There is a door between you and the other Arabs. Break it, and at them!" ʿAmr said to him, "That is exactly what we want!" Then ʿAmr, the men, and his two sons cried like women, wailing, "Woe, ʿUthmān! I announce the death of the tribe and the *dīn*!" all the way to Damascus.[324]

2. When ʿAlī returned from Baṣra to Kūfa after his victory at the Battle of the Camel, he sent for Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī, who was the governor of Hamadhān, and who had been appointed by ʿUthmān, and to al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, who was also a governor of ʿUthmān's, over Adharbayjān, commanding them to come to him to pay homage and take the *bayʿa* in his presence. When they came before him, ʿAlī wanted to send an emissary to Muʿāwiya, so Jarīr said, "Send me to him, for indeed he is kindly disposed to me." Al-Ashtar said, "Do not do this, for he thinks like Muʿāwiya." Then ʿAlī said, "Go to him and invite him to find common ground with us, that he might return to us." So he sent him with a letter he had written to Muʿāwiya, informing him of the agreement of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār in taking the *bayʿa* for him, as well as of the demise of Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr, and his war against them, and inviting him to enter into obedience to him, as the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār had already done.

So Jarīr went to Muʿāwiya, and when he came to him, they delayed him and made him wait, and he asked ʿAmr for advice. ʿAmr advised him that the people of Syria were unified in demanding retribution from ʿAlī for the blood of ʿUthmān, and that Muʿāwiya had unified them. When Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr had come to the people of Syria with the shirt in which ʿUthmān had been killed, steeped and stained with his blood, and the fingers of his wife Nāʿila, which had been severed as she held her hand to defend herself and her husband, and half of her thumb, Muʿāwiya had taken the shirt up on a platform and gathered the soldiers to him. They all cried over the shirt the whole time he was on the platform from which he had hung the fingers. The greater part of the men of the people of Syria vowed to abstain from water except as much as was necessary to drink in order to live, and that they would not sleep on beds until they killed the

[324] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 627. There are puns in this section that relate the Arabic names of ʿAmr's sources of information with the news they bring. "Ḥaṣīra" is a verb meaning "to entrap, to encircle;" "Qattāl" shares a root with the verb "to kill;" and "Ḥarb" means "war."

killers of ʿUthmān. If anyone spoke against this, they killed him. When Jarīr returned to Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī, and told him this news about Muʿāwiya, and the agreement of the people of Syria with him that they should fight him, he told him also that they cried over ʿUthmān and were saying, "Indeed, ʿAlī killed him, and gave shelter to his killers," and that they would not finish with him until either he killed them or they killed him. Al-Ashtar said to ʿAlī, "I warned you against sending Jarīr! I told you of his enmity and his faithlessness. If you had sent me, it would have been better than this, for I would not have accepted any answer that gave him such a victory, and I would not have been afraid to speak, as he was!" Jarīr said, "If you had been there, then they would have killed you, for they mentioned you as one of the killers of ʿUthmān." Al-Ashtar said, "By God, if I had come to them, they would not have said so, for I would have made a direct line for Muʿāwiya, faster than you can imagine, and beaten him until he acknowledged you as Commander of the Faithful and so put an end to this whole affair." Then Jarīr went away to Qarqīsīya, and he wrote to Muʿāwiya, and Muʿāwiya wrote him commanding him to come to him.[325]

Discussion

One of the most surprising aspects of these episodes in the work of al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī is the extent to which their tone reflects that of the generally brief account of al-Yaʿqūbī, over the considerably more detailed accounts of his contemporaries. There is also a subtle, but nonetheless pointed, argumentativeness about these men's renditions of the Ṣiffīn story, which is not quite so prevalent in the works of their earlier colleagues. The increased vitriol in the exchange between al-Ashtar and Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh—evident in the petty name calling and threats—in *Murūj al-Dhahab* is one example; further examples will become manifest in later episodes of the story.

It is evident, though, that for the bulk of this section, and, indeed, for the bulk of their accounts, al-Masʿūdī, al-Maqdisī, and even Ibn al-Athīr rely either on Naṣr ibn

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[325] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 628-30.

Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* or on al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* (or on the tradents they employed—however, the later the work in question, the more likely the author relied upon the book rather than the tradent source); the lack of *isnāds* makes it impossible to determine their exact source. The turns of phrase are often identical with those found in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*; note, for example, the very earliest part of the story, in which ʿAlī sends the ultimately unreliable Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī as an emissary to Muʿāwiya, to refute the Syrian governor's claims about ʿAlī's complicity in the assassination of the Caliph ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, and (according to some of these later accounts) to nip any Caliphal pretensions Muʿāwiya may be harboring in the bud. Al-Masʿūdī relies on Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim in this section , using al-Ashtar's phrase, "he thinks like them," (Arabic: *hawāhu hawāhum*) to mean that Jarīr is inclined in favor of Muʿāwiya, a phrase that appears in al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Ṭabarī, as well. Jarīr, it should be recalled, had been in Iran when ʿAlī originally came to Kūfa, and he, al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, and the powerful tribal leaders that had come to Kūfa as supporters of ʿAlī's cause had done so only after it was clear that ʿAlī had emerged as the military and political victor of the Battle of the Camel and acquired near unchallenged support in Kūfa. Al-Ashtar's criticism of Jarīr turns out to be justified when the latter has a temper tantrum after being accused, by al-Ashtar himself, of just such fickleness, and proves his detractors right by riding straight to Muʿāwiya.

The amount of emphatic discussion regarding Muʿāwiya's potential to assume the Caliphate for himself is striking given the lack thereof in the earlier accounts of al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Dīnawarī. Al-Masʿūdī goes the farthest in this regard, with the explicit passage, "He also told him that he is one of the *ṭulaqāʾ* to whom the office of the caliph is

forbidden."[326] Naṣr ibn Muzāhim applied the term to Muʿāwiya as well; in addition to this very episode appearing in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* as discussed in the previous chapter, during the appointment of arbiters, ʿAlī opprobriously termed Muʿāwiya as "*ṭalīq* ibn *ṭalīq,*" a reference to the argument that the Umayyads were theoretically ineligible to participate in a *shūrā,* belonging neither to the Muhājirūn nor to the Anṣār. Ibn Aʿtham, too, made the argument, contemporaneously with Naṣr ibn Muzāhim; it is surprising that such a key point, clearly already elaborated in the time of Ibn Aʿtham and Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, would be absent in the accounts of al-Dīnawarī and al-Yaʿqūbī. The Syrian Ibn al-Athīr, of course, though using the account of al-Ṭabarī as a guide, steers his account clear of such dangerous waters, and avoids argumentation on this point altogether. It is possible that he thought the point somewhat too opaque for his readership, and glossed over it for the sake of readability, or that he felt that the term's appearance at this point in the narrative would be anachronistic. However, writing with an explicit intention to simplify the story in order to expand his readership, Ibn al-Athīr's decision to omit this reference to the illegality of Muʿāwiya's ultimate accession to the imamate reveals his predilections. The pro-ʿAlid authors' references to the *ṭulaqāʾ* stand as some of their most persuasive arguments about the iniquity of the battle's outcome; when Ibn al-Athīr omits it, he implicitly moves his account away from the vehemently pro-ʿAlid perspective and subtly defends Muʿāwiya (that is, by overlooking this strong argument against him). Al-Masʿūdī's use of the term, however, is distinct from that of Naṣr ibn Muzāhim. Although both al-Masʿūdī and Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim express the term at the earliest possible moment, at a time in the narrative when Muʿāwiya's eligibility to assume the imamate was most certainly not an issue, al-Masʿūdī goes the extra step to explain the significance of

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[326] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, pp. 332.

Muʿāwiya's status as a *ṭalīq* to his reader with the phrase, "to whom the office of the caliph is forbidden." In fact, in most of the other accounts, Muʿāwiya's assumption of the position of caliph was not even considered an option at this point in the story. Ibn al-Athīr is an exception; he clearly based his text upon al--Ṭabarī's, and so his omission is, as discussed, much more telling. The other authors who omit the point do so because it makes no real dramatic sense to express it at this point in the narrative, when Muʿāwiya, called upon to pledge his allegiance to ʿAlī in a ritual act of obedience, refuses until he achieves justice for his murdered kinsman, ʿUthmān. It may be that al-Masʿūdī feels the need to explain the concept of the *ṭulaqāʾ* to his readers; more likely, it is a concept they would already have been familiar with, as it appears in the famous *sīra* of the Prophet as well as numerous times in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk,* and al-Masʿūdī is simply taking the opportunity to emphasize the point.

There are other examples of the argumentative addition of details within this section, whereas in the earlier accounts of Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, al-Dīnawarī, al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Ṭabarī, this section was presented dispassionately and summarily. Al-Maqdisī, in *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-ʾl-Taʾrīkh,* presents a summary narrative as well, but includes a point that is absent in other works; namely, that the dispatch of Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī as emissary to Muʿāwiya, with news of ʿAlī's great victory over the rebels Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr at the Battle of the Camel, was a show of strength at best and a barely veiled threat at worst. Muʿāwiya, sensitive to this threat, refuses to give the *bayʿa* under such perceived duress. The *bayʿa,* of course, cannot be valid when given under duress (*ikrāh*) in the case of an election (as opposed to a simple act of homage).[327] Whether the duress

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[327] For an overview of the illegality of oaths taken under duress in Islamic law, see Khaled Abou el Fadl, "The Common and Islamic Law of Duress," *Arab Law Quarterly,* vol. 6, no. 2 (1991), pp. 121-159, esp.

in this case was perceived by later writers as constraining (*mujlī*) or not (*ghayr mujlī*) would depend upon whether one is referencing ʿAlī's perspective or Muʿāwiya's.[328] This, of course, brings up the issue of just what a *bayʿa* is, and was. In truth, the question of the nature of the *bayʿa* depends upon whether the *bayʿa* invests a ruler with authority or simply confirms his authority.[329] That question is one of the key elements that allows for any contention from Muʿāwiya; if (as had become generally established) the right to rule comes from God, there are no grounds whatsoever upon which to refuse to give the *bayʿa*. If, on the other hand, the right to rule emanates from popular mandate, then Muʿāwiya is correct, or at least justified, in refusing to pledge his allegiance to ʿAlī at swordpoint, particularly if he holds ʿAlī responsible for the conduct of his allies in the assassination of ʿUthmān. Al-Maqdisī records ʿAlī's response as a dismissive comment about not needing the deceitful as his helpers; but what is implied in the brief interchange is a genuine disagreement between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya about just what a *bayʿa* is. As noted above, the earlier histories show an interaction between Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ in which the latter demands Egypt as a condition for his *bayʿa* to Muʿāwiya, thus confirming Muʿāwiya's position that the *bayʿa* is a worldly matter; ʿAlī, by contrast, consistently demands *bayʿa* based upon both his popular support among the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār (implicitly recalling that Muʿāwiya was one of the *ṭulaqāʾ*) and perhaps his divine right. This is thus not the first time that this divergence of opinion regarding the

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pp. 127-135. For a bibliography of relevant works that trace the contours of the medieval legal discussion of the concept of *Ikhrāh*, see p. 127, n.24-26.

[328] See Ibid., p. 127. Of course, none of these concepts had been formulated by the time of the battle of Ṣiffīn; once again, later historians and scholars could use the battle as a template upon which to construct legal, theological, or, frankly, any other kind of arguments.

[329] See Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009). Marsham makes the point about the versions of Ṣiffīn recorded by al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr (pp. 67-8) that in this case, they *bayʿa* was given by soldiers of both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, as a kind of pledge of loyalty. What ʿAlī sought from Muʿāwiya, and what Muʿāwiya refused to offer, was a pledge that not only establishes obeisance, but confirms the legitimacy of authority.

bay ͑a has appeared; it is, however, the first, and, thus far, only occasion wherein it is made explicit.

The Battle by the Water

ʿAlī and his men arrive at the Euphrates to find Muʿāwiya's men blocking their access to the drinking water. After diplomatic efforts to secure drinking water for his men fail, ʿAlī authorizes them to fight for the water. A battle ensues, and ʿAlī's men are victorious. After they achieve control of the water supply, ʿAlī allows both armies to drink.

Al-Masʿūdī:

> [Muʿāwiya] took up position on land that was wide and flat before the arrival of ʿAlī, a position that controlled any approach to the water, so that it would be difficult for ʿAlī to descend to the water in that situation. This was an act which transgressed the rules of common decency to a great degree. The routes to the water were rocky and uneven. Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī assigned four thousand men to the front to defend it, and ʿAlī and his army spent the night thirsty in the desert, with mounted men between them and the descent to the water. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to Muʿāwiya, "Alī will certainly not die thirsty, he and his ninety thousand men of Iraq, with their swords on their shoulders. Invite them to drink, and we will drink." Muʿāwiya said, "No, by God! They shall die thirsty, as ʿUthmān died." ʿAlī went out amongst his troops that night, and someone was heard saying:
>
> Shall they prevent our nation from the waters of the Euphrates
>   With ʿAlī and the rightly guided path among us?
> We have prayed and we have fasted
>   Do we have salvation under the dark sky?
>
> Then another, at the fourth banner, took up the call, saying:
>
> Shall they prevent our nation from the waters of the Euphrates
>   With lances and a large army among us?

We have ʿAlī, who can attack

> Who brings fear of destruction, but does not fear it.

In the morning it was that we met al-Zubayr

> And Ṭalḥā we scared with the risk of destruction.

Yesterday our situation was the lion's den

> Today our situation is the crest of the hill.

…ʿAlī said to [al-Ashʿath ibn Qays], "Go with four thousand horsemen and surprise them in the middle of Muʿāwiya's army. Then, drink, and give your companions to drink, or fight until every last one of you is dead. I will send al-Ashtar on horseback with footmen behind you." Then al-Ashʿath went with four thousand horsemen, saying in the *rajaz* meter:

To the Euphrates, my cavalry, let us descend!

> Straighten your forelocks or be reputed as dead!

Then ʿAlī called al-Ashtar, and sent him with four thousand horsemen and foot soldiers…and then he sent the rest of the army behind al-Ashtar. They passed al-Ashʿath and drove forward, one after another, until ʿAlī surprised the army of Muʿāwiya and removed Abū al-Aʿwār from the road, and overwhelmed them with man and horse. His cavalry descended to the Euphrates, and even al-Ashʿath was filled with zeal on that day. With his spear before him he urged on his companions, saying, "Push them back the length of this spear!" and they swept them back that length. News of al-Ashʿath's actions reached ʿAlī, and he said, "This day we have been helped by zeal."…Muʿāwiya abandoned the position, and al-Ashtar went down and discovered that al-Ashʿath had established a position on the water and had removed the Syrians from their positions. ʿAlī went down and set himself up on the very spot Muʿāwiya had previously occupied. Muʿāwiya said to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, what do you think of the man? Shall he deny us the water, for we denied it to him?" …ʿAmr said to him, "No, truly that man is not like that. But he will also not be satisfied until you enter into his obedience or he cuts his reigns upon your shoulder [i.e., he forces you to obey him]." Muʿāwiya sent a messenger to ʿAlī asking his permission for safe passage down to the river, and ʿAlī allowed this and all that was asked of him.[330]

Al-Maqdisī:

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[330] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, pp. 334-336.

[ʿAlī] left Kūfa with ninety thousand men, and Muʿāwiya came with eighty thousand men. He came down to Ṣiffīn, and beat ʿAlī to the approach path to the Euphrates. He commanded Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī to guard it and to prevent the companions of ʿAlī from reaching the water. ʿAlī sent al-Ashtar to fight them and he expelled them and overcame them on the road. Then ʿAlī wrote to Muʿāwiya and said, "Do not deny the water to servants of God.[331]

Ibn al-Athīr:

1. ʿAlī told his army to find a place to set up camp, but Muʿāwiya had beaten him to the spot. He had set up a camp in a purposefully wicked spot, commanding the road down to the Euphrates, and there was no other road to the river in that area, and its banks were unreachable. Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī was guarding the path and preventing access. ʿAlī's companions searched for another approach to the river and did not find one. They came to him and informed him of what they had done, and told him that his men were thirsty. He called upon Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān, and sent him to Muʿāwiya, saying to him, "We have travelled on this journey of ours, and we refuse to fight you before imploring you. Your cavalry and infantry came to us and made war upon us before we made war upon you. We are of the opinion that we shall desist until we call on you [to recognize ʿAlī's rightful authority] and implore you (to refrain from fighting). And this is another thing you have done: you have denied my men access to the water, and my men are in need of it, so command your companions to evacuate their position between our people and the water, and to desist from fighting, so that we can look into this matter and determine what is between us, and why we have come. If you wish for us to fight until we have defeated you and taken our drink of the water, however, then we shall do so."

Muʿāwiya said to his companions, "What do you think?" Al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Saʿd said, "Deny them the water, as they denied it to ibn ʿAffān. Kill them thirsty, may God damn them!" ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said, "Release the way to the water, for then they will not thirst and you will be quenched, and though they may still fight you, it will not be for water, which is a life and death matter, so look to what is between you and God." Al-Walīd and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Saʿd retorted, angrily, "Deny them the water until night time, and they will not be able to stand it. If they cannot get it, they will go back, and their retreat will be

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[331] al-Maqdisī, *Al-Badʾ wa-ʾl-Tāʾrīkh*, p. 217.

their defeat. Deny them the water, and may God deny them water on the final day!"[332]

2. Ṣaʿṣaʿa returned and told Alī what was said, and that Muʿāwiya had said, "I will give you my opinion. Send out waves of cavalry to [support] Abū al-Aʿwar to prevent them from reaching the water." When ʿAlī heard this, he said, "Fight them for the water." Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays al-Kindī said, "I will at them!" and he made for them. When he got close to them, they met him in battle: they threw spears at each other for an hour, then sparred with lances, and then they switched to swords and battled another hour. Muʿāwiya sent Yazīd ibn Asad al-Bajalī al-Qasrī, the grandfather of Khālid ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasrī,[333] with the cavalry to support Abū al-Aʿwar, and they joined the battle, and ʿAlī sent Shabath ibn Ribʿī al-Riyāḥī. The battle intensified, so Muʿāwiya sent ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ with a big force, and they spelled Abū al-Aʿwar and Yazīd ibn Asad, and ʿAlī sent al-Ashtar with a great host, and they spelled al-Ashʿath and Shabath. The battle intensified further.

They fought them until they captured the approach to the river, and the watering spot fell into the hands of ʿAlī's companions. They said, "By God, let us not give the Syrians anything to drink!" Then ʿAlī sent word to his companions: "Release the water that you have in your possession to them, for God has granted you victory for their error and wickedness." ʿAlī remained there for two days, sending no messengers to them and receiving no messengers from them. Then ʿAlī called for Abū ʿAmr Bashīr ibn ʿAmr ibn Muḥṣan al-Anṣārī, Saʿīd ibn Qays al-Hamdānī, and Shabath ibn Ribʿī al-Tamīmī, and said to them, "Go to this man (i.e., Muʿāwiya) and invite him to God, to obedience, and to community." Shabath said to him, "O Commander of the Faithful, shall we not tempt him with some sort of position of authority that you will bestow upon him, or a place of favor beneath you, in order to encourage his obedience to you?" ʿAlī said, "Go quickly and reason with him, and see what his opinion is." This was on the first of Dhū al-Ḥijja. They came to him and approached him. Bashīr ibn ʿAmr al-Anṣārī spoke first, praising God and extolling him, saying, "O Muʿāwiya, the world is passing, and you are

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[332] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 634-5.

[333] Khālid ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasri was a governor under the Umayyads, first of Mecca then, under Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Mālik, of Iraq. He is a subject of intense polemics, including by the Shuʿūbīs. For a comprehensive bibliography, see G.R. Hawting, "K̲h̲ālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḳasrī."*Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman; , Th. Bianquis; , C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011. Brill Online. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. 01 February 2011 http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2403/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-4145 (Print Version: Volume IV, page 925, column 2).

approaching the afterlife, and God will judge you by your actions and will recompense you for them. For God's sake, I implore you to end the split of this community, and prevent the spilling of blood within it."

Muʿāwiya interrupted him, saying, "Would you not say the same thing to your master?" Abū ʿAmr said, "Truly, my master is not like you! My master is the most just man in all creation, in terms of this matter, and in terms of *faḍl, dīn, sābiqa* in Islam, and closest in relation to the Messenger (may God's prayers and peace be upon him)." He said, "So, what does he have to say?" He said, "He commands you, by the power of God, that you answer him justly, which will be better for you in this world and the next!" Muʿāwiya said, "And forget about the blood of Ibn ʿAffān? No, by God, I will not ever do that!"[334]

Discussion

Once again, the *muʾarrikhī* accounts are much more detailed than the *akhbārī* ones, with the exception of al-Maqdisī, who speeds past this scene. The battle by the water was always an episode which, from a literary standpoint, was designed to portray Muʿāwiya in the worst possible light, and ʿAlī in the best possible light. In the the versions of the story that appeared earlier in Ibn Aʿtham, and here in the account of al-Masʿūdī, ʿAlī is presented even more favorably than he was in the *akhbārī* accounts, and Muʿāwiya is often condemned by words put into the mouths of his own sworn men. Take, for example, the account of al-Masʿūdī, which goes to great pains to set the stage for the battle. He describes the terrain as "rocky and uneven," and gives us a hitherto unseen exchange between ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Muʿāwiya:

> ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to Muʿāwiya, "Alī will certainly not die thirsty, he and his ninety thousand men of Iraq, with their swords on their shoulders. Invite them to drink, and we will drink." Muʿāwiya said, "No, by Allāh! They shall die thirsty, as ʿUthmān died." [335]

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[334] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 635-6.
[335] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, pp. 334.

For al-Masʿūdī, this is a further opportunity for characterization. Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, for example, who ultimately proves to be every bit as fickle as Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh did in the first section, does not distinguish himself in the manner of al-Ashtar, but al-Masʿūdī does mention that "even" he was filled with zeal on that particular day. This stands in contrast to the much earlier account of Ibn Aʿtham, who, like his earlier contemporaries, has al-Ashʿath ibn Qays leading the charge. With the battle over the water finished and ʿAlī victorious, al-Masʿūdī gives us another interchange between Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ which indicates ʿAlī's righteousness and his determination:

> "Muʿāwiya said to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, what do you think of the man? Shall he deny us the water, for we denied it to him?" …ʿAmr said to him, "No, truly that man is not like that. But he will also not be satisfied until you enter into his obedience or he cuts his reigns upon your shoulder." Muʿāwiya sent a messenger to him asking his permission for safe passage down to the river, and ʿAlī allowed everything that had been asked of him."[336]

Ibn al-Athīr's version of the story is, as expected, appropriated almost entirely from al-Ṭabarī; he includes a much longer description of the fighting itself than al-Ṭabarī and, at the end of the battle, an interchange between ʿAlī's emissary and Muʿāwiya, wherein the former calls Muʿāwiya to pledge allegiance to ʿAlī based upon his excellence, precedence, and *dīn*. The expansion of stories of fighting with Ibn al-Athīr, which do not appear in al-Ṭabarī, raises some interesting questions regarding his use of *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk,* which will be touched upon in the upcoming discussion of *laylat al-harīr.*

Descriptions of the Armies and Early Skirmishes

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[336] Ibid., p. 334.

The armies are described in terms of soldiers, their positioning in the ranks, and the identities of their commanders. Violent hostilities begin in earnest in the form of single-combat duels.

Al-Masʿūdī:

> 1. On Wednesday, which was the first day of Ṣafar, ʿAlī began to prepare the army, and sent out al-Ashtar to the front of the people. Muʿāwiya sent out Ḥabīb ibn Maslama al-Fihrī to meet him, for the Iraqis and the Syrians were determined to fight one another, and they fought fiercely for the remainder of the day, which resulted in a battle between the two groups, and then they withdrew.
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> On the fifth day (which was the second day of the month), ʿAlī sent out Hāshim ibn ʿUtba ibn Abī Waqqāṣ al-Zuhrī al-Mirqāl, who was the nephew of Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, who was called "al-Mirqāl" ("the swift") because he was so swift in war. He had lost an eye at the Battle of Yarmūk, and he was one of the *Shiʿat ʿAlī* ("Party of ʿAlī). We have already told the story of the day on which he lost his eye, and the grace of God for him on that day, in the middle volume of the conquest of Syria. Muʿāwiya sent out Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī, who was Sufyān ibn Awf,[337] to meet him. Abū al-Aʿwar was one of the *Shiʿat Muʿāwiya*, and one of those who was inclined against ʿAlī, and their battle had ebbed and flowed, and at the end of the day they both withdrew after much fighting….[338]
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> 2. On the eighth day, which was Wednesday, ʿAlī himself (may God be pleased with him) went out with a company of veterans from the Battle of Badr and others from the Muḥājirūn and the Anṣār. Ibn ʿAbbās said, "On that day I saw ʿAlī with a white turban upon him, with his eyes glowing fiercely, and he set about riding in front of the people in their ranks, exhorting them and rousing them, until at last he came to me, standing in the midst of the ranks, and he said, 'O Assembly of Muslims, raise your

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[337] Editor: Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī is actually ʿAmr ibn Sufyān. This is likely a mistake of al-Masʿūdī.

[338] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab,* pp. 337-338. Similar descriptions of battles on successive days between ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya and ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās and al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba, Saʿīd ibn Qays al-Hamadānī and Dhū al-Kalāʿ, and finally a second bout for al-Ashtar and Ḥabīb ibn Maslama al-Fihrī follow.

voices together, complete the task before you, be aware of your fear, rattle your swords in their sheaths and your arrows in their quivers, and look out for each other's well-being; for truly you are in the eye of God, with the cousin of the Prophet of God, so turn and attack! Let retreat be shameful to you! He who retreats is naked at the end of days in the hellfire of the Day of Judgment!'"[339]

Al-Maqdisī:

Messengers delivered letters between [ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya] for days, then they skirmished for forty full days, with the battles flaring up especially when the shirt of ʿUthmān was raised, with Muʿāwiya demanding his killers—until seventy thousand were killed—twenty-five thousand from the people of Iraq and forty-five thousand from the peple of Syria. ʿAlī would go out every day ahorse. It is said that ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar went out one day, fleeing to Muʿāwiya, frightented of ʿAlī's reprisal, and he declared in the *rajaz* meter:

I am ʿUbayd Allāh, sired by ʿUmar
        The best of the Quraysh who have passed, beyond a doubt
The revelations of the Messenger of God and the noble Shaykh[340]
        Were driven to failure in the inadequacy of ʿUthmān the Muḍar
And the horsemen who do not give rainwater to drink.

And ʿAlī called out to him, "Why are you fighting me? By God, if your father was here, he would not fight me." He said, "I am demanding revenge for the blood of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān." ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said, "And we demand blood revenge for our fallen from you!" Then al-Ashtar al-Nakhaʿī went out to fight him, saying:

Lo! I am al-Ashtar, known as the ripper
        Lo! I am the well-known Iraqi viper
You are sired by the best of the Quraysh, you who flees from battle
        From the unlucky children of ʿUmar, idle prattle.

ʿUbayd Allāh went out, disgraced himself in the contest, and was killed thereafter. Then ʿAmmār [ibn Yāsir] went out, and Abū ʿĀmir al-ʿĀmilī

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[339] Ibid., p. 339.
[340] i.e., ʿAlī.

killed him. He was one of the Companions of the Prophet. About him it is said:

The Prophet said to him, "A small band will kill you
Their flesh will burn for their wicked treachery
On that day the people of Syria will know that they
Have as their companions the despicable and ignominious!"[341]

Ibn al-Athīr:

1. That year, in the month of Muḥarram, a negotiation took place between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, in which they agreed to suspend the fighting until the end of Muḥarram. This gave everybody a month-long taste of peace, during which messengers were exchanged. ʿAlī sent ʿAdī ibn Ḥātim, Yazīd ibn Qays al-Arḥabī, Shabath ibn Ribʿī, and Ziyād ibn Ḥaṣfa.

ʿAdī ibn Ḥātim spoke [first], praising God and saying, "Now to our topic, we have come to you to invite you to join in what God has ordained for us, for which we have spoken and fought and spilled blood. That is, that your cousin, the master of the Muslims and one of those with the most *sābiqa* and standing within Islam, upon whom all the people, save you and those here with you, have agreed. So take care, O Muʿāwiya, that what happened on the day of the Camel does not happen here to you!" So Muʿāwiya said to him, "It seems as though you have come with threats, and not in the spirit of the cease-fire! How preposterous, O ʿAdī! One does not prattle on hatefully to [Muʿāwiya] Ibn Ḥarb! You are one of the conspirators against ʿUthmān, and you are one of those who killed him, and I swear that you are one of those whom God will kill for the deed!" Then Shabath and Ziyād ibn Ḥaṣfa said, voices in unison, "We have come for the sake of this peace between us. Give us examples, if you please. Describe what is not useful to you, and answer according to what is." Yazīd ibn Qays said, "We did not come for any reason other than to deliver the message we were sent with, so tell us what we shall hear from you. We will relate your answer faithfully to the thousands of Iraqis gathered in community and brotherhood. Truly, our master, whose excellence is already known to the Muslims, is not afraid of you. So fear God, O Muʿāwiya, and do not oppose him, for we see nobody among all the people who is more beloved of God, righteous in the world, or better than he."

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[341] al-Maqdisī, *Al-Badʾ wa-ʾl-Tāʾrīkh* , p. 217-219.

Muʿāwiya praised God, and then said, "Now to our topic. You have called me to 'obedience and community.' As for the community to which you have called me, why, here it is. As for obedience to your master, we do not see it as right, for your master has killed our Caliph, divided our community, and denied us our rightful vengeance! Your master claims that he did not kill him, and we will accept this as long as he delivers those who killed ʿUthmān to us, so that we may kill them. Thus we answer you on the matter of 'obedience and community.'" Then Shabath ibn Ribʿī said, "Will it make you happy, O Muʿāwiya, that you will kill ʿAmmār?" He said, "What do you mean by this? If you mean Ibn Samiyya, I would kill him in revenge for Natīl, the *mawlā* of ʿUthmān's."[342]

2. Muʿāwiya sent Ḥabīb ibn Maslama al-Fihrī, Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Simṭ, and Maʿn ibn Yazīd al-Akhnas to ʿAlī. They approached him, and then Ḥabīb praised God and extolled him, saying, "Now to our topic. ʿUthmān was a righteous Caliph who acted according to the Book of God and obeyed its commands, yet you all found his life intolerable and you waited impatiently in anticipation of his death, so because you could wait not longer you became his enemies and killed him. Send us ʿUthmān's killers, if you wish to claim that it was not you who killed him. We will kill them. Then withdraw from this matter of the people, and let there be a *shūrā* among them, so that they may appoint (as Caliph) him upon whom they all agree." ʿAlī said to him, "Are you out of your mind, you motherless fool? Withdraw from this matter? Shut your mouth, for you were not there and you are not one of his kin." Ḥabīb said, "By God, you see us and treat us with such disgust!" ʿAlī said to him, "And why should I not, for what are you? May God not preserve you, if God preserves us, so go and fight us as best you can!" Shuraḥbīl said to him, "I have no words except those that my companion has just said. Do you have any answer other than this?" ʿAlī said, "I have no other answer."[343]

3. When Muḥarram ended, ʿAlī stood up and shouted out, "O People of Syria! The Commander of the Faithful says to you, you have continued to ignore the truth and even to fight against it, and you have not finished your wickedness and will not answer to the truth. I have warned you against evil. Truly, God does not love evildoers!"[344]

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[342] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 641-2.

[343] Ibid., pp. 642.

[344] Qurʾān, 2:276; 7:55; 42:40.

Then the people of Syria rallied around their princes and commanders. Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr went out, organizing the ranks and charging up the people. The Commander of the Faithful did the same, and he said to the people, "Do not fight them until they fight you, for by the grace of God you are the more powerful. Fight with all your might, and if you have destroyed them, do not kill them while they retreat, do not slaughter the wounded, and do not expose them to shame. Do not desecrate the battle-slain, loot nothing from their possessions, and do not rape their women, even if they mock your land and take your family as prisoners, for those women are weak of strength and soul." He said words to this effect to all of the people, and they all became eager to fight and said, "Servants of God! Trust in God, lower your eyes and raise your voices! Prepare your souls for fighting, skirmishing and warcraft, for battling and onslaught! 'O you who believe! When you meet an armed force, take a firm stand against them and remember the name of God much, so that you may be successful.'"[345] He continued, "'And obey God and his messenger, and do not dispute (with one another) lest you lose courage and your strength depart, and be patient. Surely, God is with those who are patient.'[346] May God grant us patience, and victory over them, and make the wages of victory great!"

ʿAlī set out, and placed al-Ashtar over the Kūfan cavalry, Sahl ibn Ḥanīf over the Baṣran soldiers, ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir over the Kūfan foot soldiers, and Qays ibn Saʿd over the Baṣran foot soldiers. Hāshim ibn ʿUtba al-Mirqāl was his standard-bearer, and Misʿar ibn Fadakī was placed in charge of the *Qurrāʾ* of Kūfa and the soldiers of Baṣra. Muʿāwiya placed Ibn Dhū al-Kalāʾ al-Ḥimyarī over his right flank, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama al-Fihrī over his left flank, and placed Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī in his vanguard. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ was given command over the cavalry of Damascus, Muslim ibn ʿUqba al-Murrī was put in charge of the foot soldiers of Damascus, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays was given general command over the whole force. The men of Syria pledged allegiance (to Muʿāwiya) to the death, bound themselves [to each other] in turbans, and formed up in five lines. On the first day of Ṣafar they went out and did battle; among those who went out with the Kūfans was al-Ashtar, and with the Syrians, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama. They battled fiercely all day and a large part of the night, then they separated and some of them demanded revenge from each other. On the second day, Hāshim ibn ʿUtba went out with cavalry and infantry both, and Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī went out with the

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[345] Qurʾān, 8:45.
[346] Qurʾān, 8:46.

Syrians to meet him. They fought all day, and then separated. On the third day, ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir went out, and he was met by ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ They fought the fiercest battle yet, and ʿAmmār said, "O People of Iraq! Do you want to see what engenders the enmity of God and his Messenger, and those who fight for them, oppresses the Muslims, and is what the pagans desire? For such it was that God made glorious his religion and made manifest his Messenger, the Prophet (may God's prayers and peace be upon him)." Then ʿAmmār said to Ziyād ibn al-Naḍr, who was on horseback, "Charge the Syrians!" He charged them, and fought the people, but they withstood him. Then ʿAmmār charged, and met ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ at his position. On that day, Ziyād ibn al-Naḍr dueled his half brother, whose name was ʿAmr ibn Muʿāwiya from the Banū al-Muntafiq, and when the battle brought them together they recognized each other, and they each withdrew from the fight, and the people separated from each other. On the following day, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, who was Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, was met by ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and they fought with two great hosts. They fought the fiercest of battles, and then ʿUbayd Allāh sent a message to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya inviting him to duel. So he went out to him, and ʿAlī spurred his mount and sent his son back, so that ʿAlī dueled ʿUbayd Allāh. ʿUbayd Allāh returned to his place, and then Muḥammad said to his father, "If you had allowed me to fight, I would have killed him." Then he said, "O Commander of the Faithful, how does one fight such wickedness? For by God, I would not have had to fight his father!" Then ʿAlī said, "O my son, say nothing of his father but good things." And they returned to the people. On the fifth day, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās went out and was met by al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba, and they fought a fierce battle. Al-Walīd insulted the sons of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalab. Then Ibn ʿAbbās challenged him to a one-on-one duel, but he refused, and their fierce battle continued. On the sixth day Qays ibn Saʿd al-Anṣārī went out and was met by Ibn Dhū al-Kalāʿ al-Ḥimyarī, and they fought a fierce battle and then withdrew. The next day was a Tuesday, and al-Ashtar went out and fought Ḥabīb, and they withdrew around noon.[347]

Discussion

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[347] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 645-7.

This section stands out against its earlier counterparts for its dramatic and colorful representation of the skirmishes leading up to the main fighting, as well as for its narrative integration of the various episodes. Certainly, the earlier accounts described the fighting; the bulk of Naṣr ibn Muzāhim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* is devoted to these skirmishes, and Ibn Aʿtham, of course, narrated them extensively, as well. However, the *akhbārī* accounts tended to use this section as a kind of implicit argumentation for ʿAlī's legitimacy, by listing the men in each party and showing the clear superiority of ʿAlī's side in terms of their *faḍl* and their *sābiqa.* Muʿāwiya, it should be recalled, had only two of the Anṣār on his side, and the rest of them were with ʿAlī; this fact alone put ʿAlī above Muʿāwiya in terms of his legitimacy as a leader of the early Muslim community. As one would expect with a *qāṣṣ* like Ibn Aʿtham, and as one would expect with the more unified style of narration that is intrinsic to *muʾarrikhī* accounts, in this episode it is the telling of the story itself that is more important. The fact that the descriptions of these early skirmishes are much more detailed and dramatic than descriptions of *laylat al-harīr* demonstrates not that the *muʾarrikhī*s' theological perspectives were less important in any way, but rather that these duels lend themselves specifically to good storytelling. The dramatic aspect of human history in the works of Arab universal historians tends to be strongly character-based, and these single-combat duels are perfectly situated within that convention of the genre. Certainly the duels are far superior for storytelling, with respect to that preference for character-based drama, to a giant anonymous mass of a battle, however clamorous. The individual nature of the narratives presented lies not with the specifics of the brawls or the lists of supporters of each side, but rather in the dramatic voice. In Ibn al-Athīr's account, for example, ʿAlī's speech before the battle, in which he

invokes the Qurʾān, enjoins his men to commit no atrocities but exhorts them to great feats of martial prowess, belongs in a category with the St. Crispin's Day Speech Shakespeare's *Henry V* as one of the great pre-battle speeches of all time. Furthermore, the quick pace of the narration—with each duel occupying one or two sentences before he moves on to the next one—leaves the reader with a clear sense of exertion. Indeed, there is a great amount of agreement concerning who fought whom at what point, and what the outcome of the fights were. There is a fair amount of disagreement over who said what to whom; however, the differences are all style and no substance.

As was already mentioned, absent are the lists of men that in the earlier accounts make up the bulk of this section. The lists of Muhājirūn, Anṣār and Companions of the Prophet do not amount to more than an afterthought in the later accounts. Given the apparent importance of these men to *akhbārī* historians, this is most likely because the general memory (as distinguished from religious or scholarly memory) of such men had faded by the time al-Masʿūdī wrote. This is not to say that memory of them had vanished altogether; certainly, religious scholars would have been interested in them as transmitters of *ḥadīth*, if nothing else, and would have been interested in their biographies in order to determine the authenticity of *isnāds* and of *aḥādīth*. Many *aḥādīth* are attributed to the notables of Ṣiffīn. However—and this is a key point—universal historians, *muʾarrikhūn*, such as these men examined here seemed generally more interested in developing a theory of history, seeking common themes and threads that tied nation to nation, age to age, prophet to Prophet, and, especially, story to story. Al-Masʿūdī's use of the term *shīʿa* suggests that, to some extent, sectarian—that is, Sunnī

and Shīʿī —identities had further crystallized by the time he wrote.[348] The earlier

historians were still actively exploring such identities; if not consciously, then they were

at least subject to the same forces that ultimately emanated from Islam's first and largest

schism, among those first three sects of the religion. They were working to present a

pious version of the historical truth, not just of Ṣiffīn but of the whole sequence of events

that split the *umma*, and the names and stories of the great men, be they Muhājirūn,

Anṣār, or Companions of the Prophet, who supported ʿAlī acted as implicit arguments in

his favor. In theory, the opposite case could also have been true; the great men who

supported Muʿāwiya would act as implicit arguments in his favor, but their scanty

numbers and middling *sābiqa* and *faḍl* made them them the exceptions that proved the

rule, and his shady supporters discredited both him and his cause. ʿAlī held the support of

most of those men who were important to Islam's early success and who were closest to

the Prophet, while Muʿāwiya held the support of those who, a generation back, had

fought against the Prophet, his new religion, and the impending ascendancy within the

Quraysh of the Banū Hāshim over the Banū Umayya. Furthermore, it was, by the time of

al-Masʿūdī, no longer of real interest if one's Anṣārī or Muhājirūn ancestors had been

present at this battle, since the Muslim audience for these later texts was so large and

diverse that it had ceased to have much direct connection to these people except as names

in *isnāds*. The decline of the Arabian tribal aristocracy and elites in al-Masʿūdī's period

disconnected people from the individuals of the past, and this was even truer by the time

Ibn al-Athīr was active.[349] It is clear that lists served a function in the claim-making

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[348] See Momen, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam;* Qasim Zaman, *Religion and PoliticsUnder the Early ʿAbbāsids;* Kennedy, "The late ʿAbbasid pattern 945-1050"; Hodgsen, "How did the Easrly Shiʿa Become Sectarian?" Khārijī identity had crystallized much earlier.

[349] See Robinson, *Islamic Historiography,* pp. 39-54.

(specifically relating to the legitimacy of ʿAlī) in the early accounts, and thus, their absence in the later accounts is likely an indicator of the declining importance of lists to a population increasingly disconnected from the heroic Arab past, as the old *ashrāf* elites for whom these names would have been important had all died off, or the irrelevance of such lists to claims of ʿAlī's legitimacy, not to mention the historians' facility with narrative prose. In this case, the lack of lists of men suggests that the argument particular to creating legitimacy based upon *sābiqa* and *faḍl* was, to these historians, unnecessary. The possible explanations for the disappearance of lists of supporters as a key component of the story vary. One possibility is that any one of the historians may have supported Muʿāwiya in his claims. This is unlikely, even for Syrian locals like the biographers, Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Ibn ʿAsākir, as well as the historians Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Kathīr who display the most sympathy towards Muʿāwiya; but any one of these later historians who supported Muʿāwiya in this conflict would have been hard pressed to find convincing arguments in the form of lists of his prominent supporters, as all of their early sources were heavily pro-ʿAlid in bias. In this section, this is true especially for Ibn al-Athīr, who does his best to equate the legitimacy of both ʿAlī's claims and Muʿāwiya's, as the latter articulates the (fully valid) reasons for his reluctance to pledge allegiance to ʿAlī (he is complicit in the death of ʿUthmān, responsible for the division of the community, and unwilling to allow the slain Caliph's kin their right to revenge). A second possibility to explain the general lack of descriptions of the armies in the *muʾarrikhī* accounts is that any of the three authors may simply have been disinterested in such a dry from argumentation in favor of exciting readability (these texts are certainly more entertaining than their *akhbārī* counterparts), and detoured around such tiresome lists of names as

action killers and momentum stoppers, saving their literary argumentative energy for later events. This is more likely, but it is still clear that they each had specific sectarian perspectives; even al-Maqdisī, about whom almost nothing is known, will be seen in subsequent sections to be quite critical of the perceived hypocrisy of the Khawārij. The most likely possibility is that such lists were, indeed, unnecessary, as the righteousness and rightness of ʿAlī in this conflict was not only unquestioned (as it apparently was for the earlier historians of a pro-ʿAlid bent), but *widely assumed*, except in the case of Ibn al-Athīr, whose origins in Syria and later period of activity allowed him to do no more than equate the legitimacy of the two sides (but he certainly did not compose a "pro-Muʿāwiya" version of the story). Freed thus of the obligation to count ʿAlī's great supporters and thus bolster his role as the hero (however tragic) of the story, al-Masʿūdī is able to elaborate on the cries used by al-Ashtar to exhort his compatriots to victory; al-Maqdisī is able to pause from his encyclopedic progression of events to insert a taste of some of the *hijāʾ* poetry the sides may have flung at each other, relating the death of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir a touch earlier than his colleagues. Ibn Aʿtham, of course, writing much earlier, had still been somewhat constrained to include such specifics, although he avoided tedious lists and allowed dramatic descriptions of the various duels fought at the beginning of the Ṣiffīn encounter to stand in their place. Ibn al-Athīr, writing much later, omits them, probably both for reasons of style—they were certainly to onerous for the very fluid and readable account he wished to produce—and argumentative expediency—they placed Muʿāwiya in a very negative light and, as was evident in his omission of any mention of the *ṭulaqāʾ*, he wished to avoid doing so.

Laylat al-Harīr—"The Night of Clamor"

There is a great battle. Ibn al-Athīr's description is long and detailed, and describes dramatic scenes of fighting during *laylat al-harīr* that are heretorfore unprecedented.

Al-Masʿūdī:

> ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir said, "Lo, I see the faces of a nation which will not stop fighting until the sinners are put in their place. By God, even if they destroy us to the point of disaster, we are still in the right and they are still sinners."
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> Then ʿAmmār went out and fought, then returned to his position and asked for a drink. A woman from the Banī Shaybān brought it to him from their stores in a big container, with milk….Then he said, "O you people! Who shall go to God with me?....And the people came together, and fought tooth and nail. Abū al-ʿĀdiyya al-ʿĀmilī and Ibn Jawn al-Saksakī killed him, and bickered about his plunder. They appealed to ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ for a legal decision, and he said to the two of them, "Get away from me. For I heard the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) say that the Quraysh were glowing with enthusiasm about ʿAmmār, and he said, "What spoils for him who kills ʿAmmār? Invite him to the jinn and invite him to hellfire." His death occurred in the evening, and he was ninety-three years old. He was buried at Ṣiffīn, and ʿAlī (peace be upon him) prayed over him. The people were at odds over who had the greatest connection to him by virtue of his connection with the Banī Makhzūm, some of whom accepted ʿAlī as their Caliph and some of whom did not.[350]

Al-Maqdisī:

> When ʿAmmār was killed, the people took notice and were at the point of blaming Muʿāwiya when he said, "It was ʿAlī who killed him, when he sent him out to battle!" Then ʿAlī went out and called, "The people are being killed, for my sake or for yours! Shall we put it to God, great and mighty? Let the two of us fight, and whoever kills the other takes the whole matter for himself!" Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said, "He treats you justly in this, by God, O Muʿāwiya." Then Muʿāwiya said, "You know, by God, that he does not duel anybody he does not kill!" The people allege that Muʿāwiya then said, "Why do you not go fight him yourself, O

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[350] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab,* p. 341.

ʿAmr?" So [ʿAmr] donned armor with two openings in the front and in the back and dueled ʿAlī, and when he came at him, ʿAlī dominated him with strikes, so that ʿAmr raised his leg up and exposed his genitals, and when ʿAlī turned his head in disgust, he escaped.

They say that one day, ʿAlī went out with his troops, with al-Ashtar al-Nakhaʿī in the vanguard. They pressed the battle upon them until the people of Syria had no lines left that were not in utter disarray. A great number of them were killed. The sunrise found ʿAlī (peace be upon him) in an extremely advantageous position and close to victory.[351]

Ibn al-Athīr:

On Wednesday the people got up and fought a fierce battle and withdrew at sunset, with neither side emerging as dominant. When Thursday came, ʿAlī prayed in the predawn darkness, and then took his people and went out to fight the Syrians. He advanced toward them, and they advanced with him. ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Budayl ibn Warqāʾ al-Khuzāʿī was on the right flank, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās on the left flank, and the Qurrāʾ were led by three men, ʿAmmār, Qays ibn Saʿd and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Budayl. The people were all in the center, and ʿAlī was located in the heart of the people of Medina, between the Baṣrans and the Kūfans. Most of those Medinans who were with him were the Anṣār, as well as a number of the Khuzāʿa and the Kināna, as well as others from the people of Medina. Muʿāwiya raised a great platform, and placed the shirt upon it, and most of the people of Syria pledged allegiance to him through the use of the *bayʿa* on until death, and the Damascus cavalry surrounded him in his position. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Budayl, on the right flank, advanced against Ḥabīb ibn Maslama, who was on Muʿāwiya's left flank, and he did not stop his advance until he reached Muʿāwiya's platform around noon....

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Budayl fought a fierce battle on the right until he reached Muʿāwiya's position. He met those who had pledged the *bayʿa* to Muʿāwiya until death, and he ordered them to withstand ibn Budayl on the right, but he destroyed them. The people of Iraq became manifest to him because of the right flank, until none were left except for ibn Budayl with two or three hundred of the *qurrāʾ*, who were guarding each other.[352]

Discussion

[351] al-Maqdisī, *Al-Badʾ wa-ʾl-Tāʾrīkh*, p. 219.
[352] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 648-9.

The fact that duels are a storytelling device preferred by early *muʾarrikhī* historians to great battles is clear from the relative brevity of these accounts and, shockingly, the near absence of a description of the main battle in al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab*, and its equally scant appearance in *al-Badʾ wa-al-Taʾrīkh*. On the other hand, Ibn al-Athīr's account of *laylat al-harīr* is incredibly long. Since the great majority of his text is drawn almost word for word from al-Ṭabarī, the questions of where Ibn al-Athīr obtained his information and why he chose to include such an extensive narration for the battle (relative to other historians' accounts of the battle) arise. He provides a large amount of battle detail for which there exists no apparent prior source. Perhaps it comes from a source that is unknown to us, such as the "lost" sources discovered by Sezgin, or perhaps he is making it all up for dramatic effect (though this seems unlikely). One interesting possibility for the souce of this material is that, since we know that the version of al-Ṭabarī that we have is not the only version of his work that exists, it is possible that he is citing a parallel or alternate version of al-Ṭabarī (and, potentially, a parallel or alternate version of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥīm). For al-Masʿūdī, the large battle is left out, and in its place is a section entitled *Dhikr Jawāmiʿ mimmā kāna bayna ahl ah-ʿIrāq wa-ahl al-Shām bi-Ṣiffīn,* wherein he recounts the stories of the experiences of some of the notables there: ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, Hāshim ibn ʿUtba al-Mirqāl, Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān and his his sons, and ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. These episodes were quoted from Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, Ibn Aʿtham (or, more likely, his tradent sources), or both. In other words, in al-Masʿūdī's work, the distinction between the sections on *laylat al-harīr* and the descriptions of the armies made here is somewhat contrived; only the

account of the death of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, which is commonly agreed to have occurred during *laylat al-harīr,* allows any distinction in the narration between "the skirmishes" and "the big battle" to be made. This preference for character-driven battle scenes was true of the earlier historians, as it is true of these later ones. For the earlier two of the three *muʾārrikhī* historians, *laylat al-harīr* is the action sequence, but the action is muted by the general anonymity of the fighting. For example, in the account of al-Maqdisī, he devotes one sentence to the Iraqi charge that left the Syrians in "disarray," and that is the extent of his description of the fighting of the main battle. There is obviously some honor given to al-Ashtar, and of course a great amount of honor is given to ʿAlī himself. Muʿāwiya has his fair share of ignominy. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ is portrayed in a particularly embarrassing manner in al-Maqdisī's "close-up" of his engagement by ʿAlī in *Kitāb al-Badʿ wa-al-Taʾrīkh.* But of these historians, none try to carry the character-based fighting of the earlier skirmishes into this main battle.

The death of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir is still prominent. As a dramatic episode, after all, the death of one of the Companions of the Prophet is often presented as the very catalyst for the partisans on ʿAlī's side eagerly to accept the possibility of a peaceful solution by any means. The sense given by such narratives is that the death of a Companion was such a shock to the Muslims of that time (and, presumably, to the readers of the story) that further battle seemed beyond cataclysmic; indeed, Ṣiffīn appears prominently in a number of eschatological stories.[353] Of the three men here discussed, al-Masʿūdī, who chose not to include a real description of the large battle at all, placed

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[353] Kaʿb al-Aḥbār fortold the battle of Ṣiffīn, saying that the Banū Isrāʾīl fought at that very site nine times, and that the Arabs would fight the tenth battle there until "they slaughtered one another and hurled at each other the same stones hurled by the Banū Isrāʾīl." See Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, ed. Zakkār (Beirut: 1993), p. 31; Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Al-Ishrāf fī Manāzil al-Ashrāf*, ed. Khalaf (Riyadh: 1990, p. 271); *Encyclopedia of Islam*, "Ṣiffīn."

ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir's death into the context of his fight with Abū al-ʿĀdiyya al-ʿĀmilī and ibn Jawn al-Saksakī; al-Maqdisī makes a point of ʿAmmār's heroism in the early skirmishes, and devotes a significant chunk of text to his death, as he incorporates the death of ʿAmmār as a device to instigate a direct challenge from ʿAlī to Muʿāwiya, that they two should fight in single combat, winner-takes-all. The sense of that episode is that so many are dying, and such great men as ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir are dying, that they should fight a duel out of obligation to their people. However, ʿAlī being described as such a great warrior and Muʿāwiya being described, in the most flattering terms he is given, as corpulant and cowardly, the outcome of such a battle is not in doubt: ʿAlī would win easily. In the accounts of al-Maqdisī and, later on, Ibn Kathīr, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ suggests that ʿAlī's challenge is a just one, and that Muʿāwiya should accept; Muʿāwiya, perhaps cognizant of the qualities and cleverness of his top advisor, suggests that ʿAmr's intentions in this are less than honorable, and he retorts that ʿAmr should fight ʿAlī himself. In the unique account of al-Maqdisī, ʿAmr obliges him, and in the fight with ʿAlī he is humiliated, disgraces himself, and absconds.

Even with the greater detail, further development of characters, and more involved descriptions of the battle itself, the purpose of the presentation of the battle has not changed. Unlike the previous section covering the descriptions of the armies and the early skirmishes, whose focus and purpose shifted from argumentation to storytelling because of the changed milieu where the argument made was no longer necessary or relevant, the battle is functionally irreplaceable, as the forerunner to the arbitration agreement, where the "real" story takes place. The exception to the notion that the battle is a necessary part of the Ṣiffīn story is in al-Masʿūdī, who does not include the Night of

Clamor in his section on Ṣiffīn in *Murūj al-Dhahab*. Commuting the battle into a single sentence, he gives the literary analyst a small gift of a clear expression of the literary purpose of the battle. By all accounts, *laylat al-harīr* is a clear-cut victory for ʿAlī. Of course, victorious on the battlefield and on the verge of triumph, ʿAlī can have no idea that the fickleness of his supporters and divisions within his ranks are about to be exploited to bring about his downfall, and emphasizing the divisions in ʿAlī's camp is the only real purpose of relating the big battle. The armies, their movements, and the behavior of the main characters may provide fertile soil for storytelling and characterization, but amongst these historians it is almost a dry desert for theological or legal argumentation (although this will not be the case with the Syrian historians to be examined in the following chapter). Fortunately, the soil more fertile for less subtle argumentation follows the battle forthwith.

The Call for Arbitration and the Appointment of Arbiters

Desperate for deliverance from crushing defeat, Muʿāwiya asks ʿAmr for his advice. ʿAmr comes up with the brilliant and devious plan to raise aloft the Qurʾān and call for arbitration based upon it. ʿAlī's army is split, with some wanting to keep fighting, and some wanting to end the bloodshed and accept the offer. Those who wish to accept the offer force their will on ʿAlī, and then force him to appoint Abū Mūsā as his arbiter. Muʿāwiya appoints ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ.

Al-Masʿūdī:

> 1. On that day, which was a Friday, Al-Ashtar was on ʿAlī's right wing, and he had commanded the victory. Then, the leaders of the Syrians

called out, "O Assembly of Arabs! God, God for your wives, for the women and the girls!" Muʿāwiya said, "On with your secret plan, O Ibn al-ʿĀṣ, for we are being wiped out! Think of the governorship of Egypt!" ʿAmr yelled out, "O you people! Whosoever has with him a *maṣḥaf* must now raise it upon his lance!" The *maṣāḥif* of the Qurʾān sprung up all across the ranks, and a great din rose up as they called out, "The book of God between us and between you! Who shall guard Syria after the Syrians have perished? Who shall guard Iraq after the Iraqis have perished? Who shall fight against Byzantium? And who against the Turks? Who shall fight the infidels?" About five hundred copies of the Qurʾān were raised in the army of Muʿāwiya….When many of the Iraqis saw this, they said, "Let us answer the book of God, and turn in repentance towards it."[354]

2. The people wanted to stop fighting, and ʿAlī was told, "Muʿāwiya has given you the truth, and called you to the book of God, so you must accept." The most strident of those who so insisted that day was al-Ashʿath ibn Qays. ʿAlī said, "O you people, yesterday I was your commander, but today I have been changed into the commanded." Al-Ashtar said, "Indeed, Muʿāwiya has no real [fighting] support from his men, but by the grace of God you do have such support. If he had men like yours, or if he had your endurance, he would not do this. Let steel ring against steel, and place your trust in God." [355] The chiefs among the companions of ʿAlī echoed al-Ashtar's sentiments, and al-Ashʿath ibn Qays said, "We are to you today what we were to him yesterday, and we do not know what will be tomorrow. But by God, the iron has been blunted, and understanding has dimmed." Others spoke similar sentiments using many words, until ʿAlī said, "Woe unto you! They did not raise them thinking that you know what is in the book and they do not. They did not raise them before you for aught other than treachery, deceit, and stratagem!" They said to him, "What we understand is that we are called to the Book of God, and we are refusing to accept it!" ʿAlī said, "Woe unto you, for you have fought them beside me under the judgment of the Book, and they have refused God in his commandments to them in it, and thus have they rejected his Book. They play upon your honesty and your intentions. Truly Muʿāwiya, Ibn Abī Muʿayṭ, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama, Ibn al-Nābigha [ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ], and a number of others like them, are not among the companions of the *dīn* nor the Qurʾān. I know them better than

[354] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, pp. 348.
[355] Ibid., p. 348.

all of you do! I have been their companion man and boy, and they have been evil boys, and evil men.” He gave a long speech to his men, part of which we have just related, and they threatened him that they would treat him as they treated ʿUthmān. Al-Ashʿath said, “If you want, I could go to Muʿāwiya and ask him what he wants.” ʿAlī said, “Do so, if you wish.” Al-Ashʿath came to him and asked him, and Muʿāwiya said to him, “I want that we and you will return to the Book of God and to what is stipulated therein. I want you to pick a man from among you whom you trust, and we will similarly select a man, and we will enjoin upon them the task and the duty to discover what is written in the Book of God, and not to deviate from what is in it, and that all will be bound by what they decide, which is based upon what they will find in God’s judgment.” Al-Ashʿath agreed with his statement, and made his way back to ʿAlī. He related to him what had been said, and most of the people said, “We hear, agree and accept!” The Syrians chose ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and al-Ashʿath said, along with those who later became Khawārij, “We are pleased with Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī.” Then ʿAlī said, “You have rebelled against me since the beginning of this matter, and you shall not rebel against me now. I do not wish to appoint Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī!” Al-Ashʿath said, “We will agree to none but Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī.” ʿAlī said, “Woe unto you! He is not trustworthy! He has already opposed me and incited the people against me! He has done this and that,” and here he mentioned some of the things that Abū Mūsā had done, then continued, “and he abandoned me for a month’s time until I guaranteed his safety! However, here we have ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, and I shall appoint him to this matter.” Then al-Ashʿath and his companions said, “By God, no! Do not appoint a Muḍarī over us!” ʿAlī said, “Very well, then, I shall appoint al-Ashtar.” They replied, “And who started this matter other than al-Ashtar?” ʿAlī said, “Very well, get whom you wish, I will do what you have demanded that I do.” They sent for Abū Mūsā and informed him of what had happened. It was said to him, “The people have reconciled!” He said, “Praise be to God!” It was said to him, “You have been appointed as an arbiter.” He said, “From God we come, and to him we return [an expression of regret or resignation].”[356]

Al-Maqdisī:

Then ʿAmr said to Muʿāwiya, “I have just thought of a word that, if you say it, will win the day for you. Will you give me Egypt as my

[356] Ibid., p. 348-9.

incentive?" He said, "I have done so." He said, "Raise the *maṣāḥif!*" and they did so. Then ibn [   ][357] called, "O people of Iraq, between us and between you the Book of God! We call you to it!" Then the people said, "'Muʿāwiya has treated you justly." Then ʿAlī said, "Woe unto you! This is trickery! It is only because we were killing them that they profess to adhere to the Book of God!" They said, "We have no doubt of the sincerity, and we must answer the Book of God!" The most vociferous proponent of this position was al-Ashʿath ibn Qays. Then ʿAlī (peace be upon him) said, "This is the Book of God! Who shall judge between us?" The people of Syria chose ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and the people of Iraq chose Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī. ʿAlī (peace be upon him) objected, saying, "Here is ibn ʿAbbās." Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays said, "We do not approve of him. By God, do not ever appoint a Muḍarī over us!" Al-Aḥnaf said that Abū Mūsā was not a thoughtful man. They brought him from his place, and placed their trust in him that he would ensure that the affair had an acceptable outcome, even though the tribesmen of Yaman did not find him suitable.

They wrote the agreement to stipulate that the two arbiters would decide based on the Book of God, the Sunna, with the purposes of ending the schism. But indeed, they did the opposite, for they had no wisdom between them. They appointed the month of Ramaḍān for the two arbiters to meet at a place equidistant between Kūfa and Damascus. The two of them wrote the agreement, and then al-Ashʿath ibn Qays went out and demanded that it be read to the people. ʿUrwa ibn Udiyya al-Tamīmī was walking by, and drew his sword and smacked the rump of his mount and said, "Men are arbitrating, when there is no judgment but to God (*lā ḥukma illā lillāh*)."[358]

Ibn al-Athīr:

When ʿAmr saw that the position of the Iraqis had strengthened and was afraid that it would lead to destruction, he said to Muʿāwiya, "What if I put something to you that can only increase our unity and their division?" "All right," said Muʿāwiya. ʿAmr said, "We will raise the *maṣāḥif* and say, 'their contents are to judge our dispute (*mā fīhā ḥukm baynanā wa-baynakum*).' Even if some of them refuse to accept it, you will find that some of them will say, 'Indeed, yes, we must accept,' and there will be a division between them. If, on the other hand, they say, 'Yes, indeed, we

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[357] There is a blank space in the original manuscript. It is likely, based upon the other versions including *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, that the man in question is al-Ṭufayl ibn Ādam.
[358] al-Maqdisī, *Al-Badʾ wa-ʾl-Tārīkh*, p. 219-221.

accept what is in it,' then we will have disburdened ourselves of this fighting and this warfare until an appointed time or a later occasion." So they raised the *maṣāḥif* on lances and said: "This is the Book of God between us and you. Who will protect the frontier districts of Syria if the Syrians all perish, and who those of the Iraqis if the Iraqis all perish?" When the men saw that the *maṣāḥif* had been raised, they said, "We respond to the book of God, and we turn in repentance to it."

So they raised the *maṣāḥif* of the Qurʾān on their lances and said, "This is the judgment of the Book of God, great and mighty, between us and you. Who will guard the borders of Syria after its people [have died]? Who will guard the borders of Iraq after its people [have died]?" When the people saw the book, they said, "We answer the Book of God." Then ʿAlī said to them, "Servants of God! They are playing upon your justice and righteousness, so fight your enemies! For Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr, Ibn Abī Muʿayt, Ḥabīb, Ibn Abī Sarḥ, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk are not companions of the religion nor of the Qurʾān! I know them better then you, for I was their companion as a child and then as a man, and they were evil children and evil men. They would not have raised it except for some deception, trick and stratagem." They said to him, "It will not suit if we are called to the Book of God, but refuse to accept!" Then ʿAlī said to them, "Indeed, I shall fight them to determine what the wisdom of the Book would be, and they seek to defy the wisdom of God in this matter, to thwart His will, and nullify His Book." Misʿar ibn Fadakī al-Tamīmī, Zayd ibn Ḥuṣayn al-Ṭāʾī, and a group of the *qurrāʾ* who afterward became Khawārij said to him, "O ʿAlī, answer the Book of God, great and mighty, if you are called to it! If you do not, we will deliver your cadaver to the nation, or do to you what we did to Ibn ʿAffān!" ʿAlī said, "Lo! Today the commander has become the commanded, you have taken my place. You obeyed me yesterday and fought, and today you defy me, so do what you wish." They said, "Send for al-Ashtar to come to you." So ʿAlī sent Yazīd ibn Hāniʾ to al-Ashtar, demanding that he come to him. Al-Ashtar protested, "This is not the hour that you wish to come to me to tell me to abandon my position, for God will deliver his victory to me anon!" Yazīd returned and reported this to him, and the voices screamed out and the dust rose from al-Ashtar's direction. The people said [to ʿAlī], "By God, we believe you commanded him to keep fighting!" ʿAlī retorted, "Did you see me whisper a secret to him? My words are upon your heads, and you all heard them!" They demanded, "Then command him to come to you, and if you do not, then we are leaving you!" ʿAlī said, "Woe, O Yazīd! Say to him, 'Come to me, for the *fitna* has taken hold.'" Then this news came to

al-Ashtar, and he said, "[Is this about] the raising of the *maṣāḥif*?" He said, "Yes." He said, "By God, we thought this might engender difference and division [in our camp]! This is a stratagem of Ibn al-ʿĀṣ! Do you not see how close we are to victory? Do you not see what God has given us?" And he withdrew back to them. Yazīd said to him, "Is it your wish to be victorious when the Commander of the Faithful must make peace with his enemies or be killed?" He said, "By God, no. God forbid!" Then he told them what they had said [to ʿAlī], so al-Ashtar came to them and said, "O people of Iraq! O people of disgrace and weakness! Now you have betrayed the people. They knew that you were to be victorious over them, and raised the *maṣāḥif* and called for arbitration based upon what is in the Qurʾān—how have you been taken in by those who, by God, have already left behind that which God commanded them to do, and the Sunna of him to whom it was revealed? Grant me some time [to finish what I started], for I was at the cusp of conquest." They said, "No." He said, "Grant me some time, for I have already tasted victory!" They said, "We refuse to enter with you into error." He said, "Then explain yourselves to me. How are you just? You fought earlier, and now you refuse. So tell me whether you were just when you fought or are just now. Those who did not know what was right fought against you, but they will have a better position than you in the hellfire." They said, "We answered your call, Ashtar, and fought them for God, and now we stop fighting them for God!" He said, "You have been duped, and you have let yourselves be duped. You have been called not to peace but to war, and you have answered, O you with wicked lives!" The people said, "We have accepted that the Qurʾān will act as arbiter between us and them."

Then al-Ashʿath ibn Qays came to ʿAlī and said, "I see that the people wish to accept that which they were called to, that is, the wisdom of the Qurʾān; if you wish, I could go to Muʿāwiya and ask him what he wants." He said, "Go to him." So he went to him, and said to Muʿāwiya, "For what reason have you raised up the *maṣāḥif*?" He said, "So that we and you may meet to determine what God commanded us in his Book. Let you pick a man whom you trust, and we will pick a man whom we trust, and we will enjoin upon those two men to look through the Book of God and determine what is in it, and they shall not exceed its bounds, and we will be obligated by what they agree upon." Al-Ashʿath said, "That is just." So he returned to ʿAlī and informed him, and the people said, "We approve of this, and accept." The Syrians said, "We appoint ʿAmr." Al-Ashʿath and those men of the nation who became Khawārij, "We appoint Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī." ʿAlī said, "You have disobeyed me in the first

matter, so do not disobey me now. No, do not believe that I should appoint Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī." Then al-Ashʿath, Zayd ibn Ḥuṣayn and Misʿar ibn Fadakī said, "We will not accept anybody except him, for he warned us against *fitna*." ʿAlī said, "He is not to be trusted. He separated from me and tried to set the people against me, and then he fled from me until I gave him promises after some months. However, here is Ibn ʿAbbās, and I will appoint him as my arbiter in this." They said, "By God, we will not accept your cousin, Ibn ʿAbbās! We want nobody but a man who is equidistant between you and Muʿāwiya." ʿAlī said, "Then I will place the matter upon al-Ashtar." They said, "Who started this conflagration in the land, other than al-Ashtar?" He said, "You will reject all except Abū Mūsā?" They said, "Yes." He said, "Then do as you wish."

So they sent word to him, as he had withdrawn from the fighting to ʿUrḍ. A *mawlā* of his came and said, "The people have called a stop to the fighting." Abū Mūsā said, "Praise God." The *mawlā* said, "They have appointed you as arbiter." He said, "From God we come, and to him we return." Abū Mūsā travelled until he reached the army, and then al-Ashtar came to ʿAlī and said, "Send me to meet ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, for by God if he tries to fill my eyes with lies, I will not accept them." Then al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays came and said, "O Commander of the Faithful, you have already thrown earthen stones. I have put Abū Mūsā to the test, and though he has his good days and his bad days, I have found him somewhat dull-edged, shallow, and he is not pleasing to any of the people except for those who are close to him. I have come to you so that you may appoint me as an arbiter instead of him, or at least that you send me as a second or third man, so that he will not agree to anything that I do not approve of, and that he will not deprive you of your rights."

The people rejected anybody except for Abū Mūsā, and the judgment of the Book. So al-Aḥnaf said, "If you reject all but Abū Mūsā, then send somebody to back him up."[359]

Discussion

In this famous moment of the Ṣiffīn story, as in the *akhbārī* accounts, the key elements from *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* remain; that is, the raising of the copies of the Qurʾān, the

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[359] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 667-70.

call for arbitration, the divisions within ʿAlī's camp on this point, and ʿAlī's reluctant

selection of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī as ʿAlī's representative in the negotiations. However,

there are a few important developments here from *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and the other *akhbārī*

works.

The differences in the camp over the questions of whether or not to accept the

arbitration offer from the Syrians, and then, once accepted, whom to appoint as the Iraqi

representative, are presented in the dramatic style that is so important in works of this

genre. "Those who would later become Khawārij," including most famously al-Ashʿath

ibn Qays al-Kindī, are presented, as before, in an extremely unfavorable light. First, they

are presented as hypocrites, for forcing ʿAlī to accept the arbitration, and then secondly as

fools, for they are the ones who insist upon the fickle Abū Mūsā as their representative.

It was al-Dīnawarī who first mentioned that those who later became Khawārij were the

"most forceful" in demanding Abū Mūsā as their arbiter; all of the historians here accept

that premise and relate it in a most dramatic fashion—with considerably more dialogue

presented than we have seen in the earlier accounts, and with a narrative voice that

conveys much more of the emotion of the moment. For example, the section below

contains the interchange between ʿAlī and Yazīd ibn Hāniʾ, who is one of those men

demanding he accept arbitration, and then the interchange between Yazīd an al-Ashtar.

The anger evident in ʿAlī's words is impossible to ignore; al-Ashtar's desperation to

continue the fight is palpable:

> ʿAlī sent Yazīd ibn Hāniʾ to al-Ashtar, demanding that he come to him.
> Al-Ashtar protested, "This is not the hour that you wish to come to me to
> tell me to abandon my position, for God will deliver his victory to me
> anon!" Yazīd returned and reported this to him, and the voices screamed
> out and the dust rose from al-Ashtar's direction. The people said [to ʿAlī],
> "By God, we believe you commanded him to keep fighting!" ʿAlī

retorted, "Did you see me whisper a secret to him? My words are upon your heads, and you all heard them!" They demanded, "Then command him to come to you, and if you do not, then we are leaving you!" ʿAlī said, "Woe, O Yazīd! Say to him, 'Come to me, for the *fitna* has taken hold.'" Then this news came to al-Ashtar, and he said, "[Is this about] the raising of the *maṣāḥif*?" He said, "Yes." He said, "By God, we thought this might engender difference and division [in our camp]! This is a stratagem of Ibn al-ʿĀṣ! Do you not see how close we are to victory? Do you not see what God has given us?" And he withdrew back to them. Yazīd said to him, "Is it your wish to be victorious when the Commander of the Faithful must make peace with his enemies or be killed?" He said, "By God, no. God forbid!" Then he told them what they had said [to ʿAlī], so al-Ashtar came to them and said, "O people of Iraq! O people of disgrace and weakness! Now you have betrayed the people. They knew that you were to be victorious over them, and raised the *maṣāḥif* and called for arbitration based upon what is in the Qurʾān—how have you been taken in by those who, by God, have already left behind that which God commanded them to do, and the Sunna of he to whom it was revealed? Grant me some time (to finish what I started), for I was at the cusp of conquest." They said, "No." He said, "Grant me some time, for I have already tasted victory!"

When compared to the relatively dry account of part of this incident in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* the differences are clear:

> Those who became Khawārij thereafter went to ʿAlī with their swords upon their shoulders, called him by his name, but not "Commander of the Faithful," and said, "O ʿAlī, cause the people here to answer the Book of God when you are called to it, and if you do not we will kill you as we killed Ibn ʿAffān. By God, we will do this if you do not answer." ʿAlī said, "Woe unto you! I am the first one to call for obeisance to the Book of God, and the first to answer such a call. I am not free in my *dīn* to refuse a call to the Book of God. But I am fighting them, and our hands are guided by the wisdom of the Qurʾān. They have already disobeyed the command of God in this matter, rejected his unity, denied his Book. I have now told you that they intend to dupe you. They call you to deception." They said, "Call to al-Ashtar to come to you."[360]

In *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* there is no sense of the urgency of the moment, as there is in the work of Ibn al-Athīr. The elements of the story remain the same: ʿAlī is quite reluctant to accept

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[360] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, p. 489-90.

the call for arbitration, initially refuses on the same grounds, and tries to argue his men back into fighting. But absent in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* are ʿAlī's sarcastic replies, "Did you see me whisper a secret to him?" and "the *fitna* has taken hold," this last an obviously passive-aggressive comment directed at his own men, who are splitting his camp. Ibn al-Athīr even relates the incredible incident, first hinted at in al-Yaʿqūbī, in which al-Ashʿath threatens to kill ʿAlī if he does not comply. Ibn al-Athīr takes this episode one step further, as al-Ashʿath offers to do to ʿAlī specifically what was done to ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān.

Another dramatic version of this episode of the story appears in the accounts of al-Masʿūdī and Ibn al-Athīr, which first appeared in the account of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (and, as is most often the case, al-Ṭabarī); namely, that ʿAlī has known the men on the other side of the battle all his life, and they were and remain evil men, committed to their own power and naught besides. ʿAlī says that they are neither people of *dīn* nor of the Qurʾān (*aṣḥāb al-dīn* and *aṣḥāb al-Qurʾān*). The use of the term *dīn* in this case may recall the argument made in the first chapter surrounding the salvific nature of one's choice of imam. The authors are not using ʿAlī to make the argument that his Syrian opponents are not Muslim, but rather that they have made the wrong choice concerning their own salvation and have the wrong opinion of the path that will lead to salvation (under, of course the right leader) for the *umma*. They also, implies the character of ʿAlī, cannot be trusted now because of their early opposition to Islam, and their self-serving use of it at this point. Of course, it is not clear that the word *dīn*, or the concept attached thereto, meant the same thing to later medieval Muslims as it did to early Muslims; to medieval Muslims, it was likely closer in sense to its current meaning, namely,

"religion." However, the presence of this statement from ʿAlī tells us that the concept of *dīn* as a kind of universal salvation, as argued by Crone, rather than a "religion" was at least understood.[361] It should be recalled that, in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, ʿAlī mentions that it is not within the bounds of his *dīn* to refuse any call to the Qurʾān, bearing in mind that he views the call to the Qurʾān quite cynically. To ʿAlī, the call for arbitration is a way to avoid the true judgment of the Qurʾān, being borne out in the form of the battle he is winning. In the light of Crone's argument,[362] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's version of ʿAlī's conception of his *dīn* is that it is more than a simple religious commandment, and his refusal to accept the call for arbitration is based upon a clear view of the underhanded intentions of his opponents in calling for arbitration. Rather, as the imam, the salvation of the entire community is his responsibility, and to enter into error would jeopardize not only his own salvation, but also that of the entire *umma*.

Still another change is the depiction by al-Maqdisī and al-Masʿūdī of ʿAmr's demand for the governorship of Egypt as occuring at Muʿāwiya's most desperate moment—the immediate prelude to ʿAmr's ordering of the *maṣāḥif* to be raised aloft. In most other accounts, including the all the earlier ones, Egypt is ʿAmr's precondition for joining Muʿāwiya's cause, rather than a concession ʿAmr opportunistically wrings out of him at a time when all would otherwise be lost.

There is another interesting development in the work of al-Masʿūdī. Given the now widely accepted view that early Islamic stories, and even non-Qurʾānic religious texts, reflected the context in which they were related, rather than preserved to match the context in which they were created, the phenomenon of this development of the Ṣiffīn

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[361] Crone, *God's Rule,* pp. 21-23.
[362] Ibid., pp 21-23.

story specifically within the broader context of Islamic historiography is not unique. The call for arbitration used the specter of Islam's external enemies to enhance the appeal for unity. Naṣr ibn Muzāhim relates the cry, "O you Arabs! God, God for your women and daughters, for who will to Rūm [Byzantium] and the armies of Persia tomorrow if you die?" [363] In al-Dīnawarī's account, the call goes out: "O community of Arabs! God, God, for your women and children, for tomorrow Persia and Byzantium will come for them, and you will have been killed!"[364] Al-Ṭabarī is less specific, but his implication is understood: "Who will protect the frontier districts of Syria if they [the Syrians] all perish, and who those of the Iraqis if they [the Iraqis] all perish?" [365] The threats of Persia, on the Iraqi border, and Byzantium, on the Syrian border, of course, were quite real to the early Muslims—Persia had only been conquered by about 17/638, twenty years before Ṣiffīn, and the Byzantines remained a threat in al-Masʿūdī's day—and while this is never presented as a compelling reason for the Iraqis to accept the arbitration in the face of more important matters, it was important enough for the authors to relate in those three earlier accounts, as a fear tactic instituted by the Syrians to strengthen the chances that their call to arbitration would be accepted. By al-Masʿūdī's time, of course, although the Byzantines remained a threat on the borders of the empire, Persia had long since been absorbed, and had become a cultural pillar and central subject of Islam. Thus al-Masʿūdī makes the call more topical but less authentic: "Who shall guard Syria after the Syrians have perished? Who shall guard Iraq after the Iraqis have perished? Who shall fight against Byzantium? And who against the Turks?"[366] The Turks, of course, were still

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[363] Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, *W.Ṣ.,* p. 478.
[364] Al-Dinawārī, *Al-Akhbār,* p. 202.
[365] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Rusūl waʾl-Mulūk* volume 17, p. 78.
[366] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, pp. 348.

decades away from being from a concern to the Muslims at the time of Ṣiffīn. We see here an example of how the specific historical details of the story became less important than contemporary intelligibility. The narrative role of that particular moment—that is, the Syrians appealing to possible Iraqi fears about the wider geo-political situation—was thus preserved. This indicates the importance to al-Masʿūdī of maintaining the literary thrust of the story, even at the cost of sacrificing some of the historical authenticity. When historians earlier than al-Masʿūdī wrote, Persia was in the process becoming Islamicized, but was still remembered as the crown jewel of the conquests. In al-Masʿūdī's time, the Turks had replaced the Persians as the outsider group in process of Islamicization, and though their experience and the Persian experience under Islam were distinct, the Turks remained an "other" who could, for their greater topical applicability, more usefully be conjured to the purposes the narrator here devised—to make the story as relevant as possible to a readership of his contemporaries.. It is noteworthy that none of the subsequent historians—al-Maqdisī, Ibn Kathīr, and even in much later accounts like that of ibn Khaldūn—even mentioned this particular Syrian appeal to the Iraqis about Islam's external threats.

Negotiation, Ruling and Reneging

The ground rules for the arbitration are set, with some disagreement over ʿAlī's title, Commander of the Faithful. The arbiters meet, argue the points, and fail to come to an agreement immediately. Abū Mūsā suggests deposing both men, and electing a third party, a suggestion which ʿAmr accepts. When they go to tell the people of their decision, Abū Mūsā speaks first and deposes ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya both, as was agreed;

ʿAmr, however, deposes only ʿAlī, and confirms Muʿāwiya as caliph. A scuffle breaks out.

Al-Masʿūdī:

> 1. Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī related before the Battle of Ṣiffīn, saying: "Truly, the strife of the Banū Isrāʾīl rose and fell until they sought out two arbiters to arbitrate a settlement of which their descendents would eventually disapprove." Suwayd ibn Ghafala said to him, "And you, if you had lived during that time and had been one of the arbiters, what would you have done?" He said, "Who, me?" Suwayd said, "Yes, you." He said, as he removed his shirt, "God would leave me no point of ascent to the heavens, and no refuge on the earth!" After the affair at Ṣiffīn, Suwayd came to him and said, "O Abū Mūsā, do you remember your statement?" Abū Mūsā said, "May your creator maintain your health" [a disgusted and dismissive retort].[367]

> 2. In the letter of agreement, it was stipulated that the two arbiters would live as the Qurʾān command they live and die as the Qurʾān stipulated that they die, and would take no liberties with the text nor seek to dupe the other, and that the Muslims would be bound by their decision. When he gave the two arbiters their charge, ʿAlī spoke to them. Al-Ashtar had been the most glorious in the achievement of victory that day, and he heard a report that they had said to ʿAlī that he would receive no quarter from Muʿāwiya, and they would do to him what he had done to Ibn ʿAffān. This caused al-Ashtar to seek out ʿAlī, in fear. Now, ʿAlī said to them, "You will arbitrate based upon what is in the Book of God, in its entirety. If you do not arbitrate based upon what is in the Book, then your judgment is invalid." They set the appointment for the arbiters to meet for the month of Ramaḍān, in a place between Kūfa and Damascus. The time that was written in the letter was for the remaining days of Ṣafar of the year 37. After that month, al-Ashʿath took the letter, reading it to the people, pleased and gratified, until at last he came to a gathering of the Banū Tamīm, with all of their leaders, including ʿUrwa ibn Adhaya al-Tamīmī, who was the brother of Bilāl the Khārijī, and read it to them. Al-Ashʿath and some of the people had a long conversation, and he began by preventing them from battling their enemies until they returned to the

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[367] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, pp. 350.

command of God. ʿUrwa ibn Adhaya said, "Does one proceed in his own way when dealing with the *dīn* of God, His authority and His prescription for men's fate? There is no judgment but God's alone (*lā ḥukma illā lillāh*)!" He was the first to say this phrase. He took that as a standard, and a disagreement broke out about it. He assaulted al-Ashʿath with his sword, but hit his horse instead. The horse fell from weakness and al-Ashʿath was able to escape. The Nizārīs and the Yamanīs were on the verge of blows over their disagreements regarding the nature of *dīn* and *taḥkīm* (arbitration), and over what ʿUrwa ibn Adhaya had done to al-Ashʿath.[368]

3. In the year 38 was the meeting of the two arbiters at Dūmat al-Jandal. It is said: Contrary to what has come down to us in descriptions of this disagreement, ʿAlī took ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās and Shurayḥ ibn Hāniʾ al-Hamadānī with four hundred men, including Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿārī. Muʿāwiya took ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ along with Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Simṭ in his four hundred, and when the mass of people came close to the location at which the meeting was set, Ibn ʿAbbās said to Abū Mūsā, "ʿAlī did not choose you to be his arbiter for your honor; he had many choices before you. But the people rejected the others, and I think they did this for some mischief that they are intending. You are tangled up with the sly fox of the Arabs. Do not forget that ʿAlī has received the *bayʿa* (allegiance) from those who gave it to Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān before him, and that there is no reason whatsoever to remove him from the office of the Caliph. Furthermore, Muʿāwiya has no right to the office of the Caliph." Muʿāwiya had declared to ʿAmr at the time of his departure from him that he wanted him to meet with Abū Mūsā. He said, "O Abū ʿAbd Allāh, the people of Iraq have forced Abū Mūsā upon ʿAlī. I, and the people of Syria, appoint you to be verbose but not brief when asked for your opinion, to delay the solution and apply all manner of flattery. Never give your full opinion." Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf al-Zuhrī, al-Mughīra ibn Shaʿba al-Thaqafī and others supplied them with witnesses. These men were among those who had pledged allegiance to ʿAlī. This was in the month of Ramaḍān in the year 38.[369]

4. When Abū Mūsā met ʿAmr, ʿAmr said to Abū Mūsā, "Speak, and say what you like!" Abū Mūsā said, "On the contrary, you speak first, O

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[368] Ibid., p. 350-1.
[369] Ibid., p. 352-3.

ʿAmr." ʿAmr said, "I would never place myself before you, for you have all the right to speak first. You were a companion of the Propet and you are my guest!" Abū Mūsā praised God and extolled him, and then occurred the incident that is transfixed in Islam, his disassociation with the position of his people, as he said, "O ʿAmr, now to the matter for which God has gathered the thousands, and set to order through the use of reason." ʿAmr answered in agreement, and said, "Now to the matter of the first and last word; that is, when we argue in speech about the words we use, by the time we reach the end of our discussion we will have forgotten the beginning of it. Let us commit to writing all the words we say." He answered, "Very well, let us write." ʿAmr called for paper and a writer, and this writer was a slave of his. He commissioned his slave to begin at first without Abū Mūsā; when he wanted to create some deception, he would say to him in the presence of the group, "Write, and bear witness to us; write nothing one of us commands you to write without the consent of the other. If I command you to write, you shall not write until our opinions coincide. Now, write." Then he dictated: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Such was agreed upon by so-and-so," and here he began to list the names. The scribe began with ʿAmr himself, and ʿAmr said to him, "Motherless bastard! You place me before him, as if you are utterly ignorant of his rights?!" So the scribe began with the name of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays [Abū Mūsā], and then he wrote: "It is established that they affirm that there is no God but God, who has no equal, and that Muḥammad is his servant and his prophet, whom he sent with the right way and the correct *dīn*, to reveal to him the entire *dīn* though the polytheists attacked him!" Then ʿAmr said, "We bear witness, too, the Abū Bakr was the successor (*Khalīfa*) to the Prophet of God, who gathered the book of God and the *sunna* of the Prophet of God until such time as God called him, and he pointed the way to the truth to which he adhered." Abū Mūsā said, "Write it." Then he talked about ʿUmar after this, and Abū Mūsā said, "Write it." Then ʿAmr said, "And write, 'And furthermore, ʿUthmān was the rightful ruler after ʿUmar, according to the consensus of the Muslims and the *shūrā* of Companions of the Prophet, and he was a believer.'" Abū Mūsā said, "That is not what we were sent here to determine." Then ʿAmr said, "By God, there can be no doubt that he was either a believer or an infidel!" Abū Mūsā said, "He was a believer." ʿAmr said, "Then instruct the scribe to write it." Abū Mūsā said, "Write it." ʿAmr said, "Then tell me, was ʿUthmān killed justly or unjustly?" Abū Mūsā said, "No, he was killed unjustly." The ʿAmr said, "And has not God granted power to the *walī* of the unjustly killed man to

make claims upon his blood?" Abū Mūsā said, "Yes." ʿAmr said, "And do you know of any other *walī* to ʿUthmān before Muʿāwiya?" Abū Mūsā said, "No." ʿAmr said, "So, is it not so that Muʿāwiya has the right to demand his killers, wherever he may be, either to kill him or to cripple him?" Abū Mūsā said, "Yes, of course." ʿAmr said to the scribe, "Write it down," and Abū Mūsā also commanded him, and he wrote. Then ʿAmr said, "We submit that ʿAlī killed ʿUthmān." Abū Mūsā said, "The matter to which you refer has already afflicted Islam [in the past], but we have met here for other reasons. Let us get to the matter that God has put us to, that is to fix the *umma* of Muḥammad." ʿAmr said, "What solution do you propose?" Abū Mūsā said, "You already know that the people of Iraq will never accept Muʿāwiya, and that the people of Syria will never accept ʿAlī. Come! Should we then depose them both, and appoint ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar?" ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar was married to the daughter of Abū Mūsā. ʿAmr said, "Would ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar agree to such a thing?" Abū Mūsā said, "Yes, he would, if the people demanded it he would do it." But ʿAmr rejected any notion that Abū Mūsā put forth. He said to him, "What do you think about Saʿd?" Abū Mūsā said no, so ʿAmr suggested a variety of people, and Abū Mūsā rejected all of them with the exception of Ibn ʿUmar. At this ʿAmr took the document and hid it by placing it beneath his foot after everyone had signed it. He said, "Do you think that if the people of Iraq choose ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar and the people of Syria reject him, will they fight against Syria?" Abū Mūsā said no. ʿAmr continued, "And if the people of Syria choose someone whom the people of Iraq reject, will they fight Iraq?" Abū Mūsā said no. ʿAmr said, "Then you have therefore suggested the solution to this matter and the best thing for the Muslims. So stand up before the people and tell them. Depose both of our masters together, and speak in the name of this man whom you wish to appoint as successor." Abū Mūsā said, "You go up and speak, for you have more right in this matter," but ʿAmr said, "What good if I go first? My words and your words will be the same. So you speak, rightly guided."

"So Abū Mūsā got up, praised God and extolled him, and prayed for the Prophet, then he said, "O you people! We have looked into the matter of our strife, and our opinions have met and joined regarding security and peace, and for the sake of healing our brokenness and preventing the spilling of blood of the thousands here present, we have agreed to depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya. I depose ʿAlī as I remove this turban"—here he reached for his turban and removed it—"and we have appointed a man who was a companion of the Messenger of God in his

own right, whose father was a companion of the Prophet, excellent in his precedence within Islam. He is ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar!" And he praised him highly, and declared that the people want him, then he came down.

Then ʿAmr climbed to the stage, praised God and extolled him, and prayed for the Prophet, then he said, "O you people! Truly Abū Mūsā ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays has just deposed ʿAlī and removed him from consideration in this matter. He is very wise in this, for I, with him, do similarly depose ʿAlī. But I confirm Muʿāwiya over me and over you, for indeed Abū Mūsā has written in the document of agreement between us that ʿUthmān was unjustly killed and was a martyr, and that his *walī* has power to make claims for his blood. Muʿāwiya was a companion of the Messenger of God in his own right, and his father was a companion of the Prophet." Then he praised him, and declared that the people want him, and continued, "He is our Caliph, and he commands our obedience and our pledges of allegiance in support of his claim for the blood of ʿUthmān." Abū Mūsā said, "ʿAmr, you lie! We did not appoint Muʿāwiya as a successor, but we deposed Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī both!" Then ʿAmr said, "No, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays, you lie! ʿAlī has been deposed, but Muʿāwiya has not!"

(Al-Masʿūdī says): I have found in another version of the story that they agreed to depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya and to put the whole matter before a *shūrā*, so that the people could choose a man whom they liked. ʿAmr invited Abū Mūsā to speak first, and Abū Mūsā said, "I hereby depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, and I put the matter to you," and he stepped aside, and then ʿAmr got up and took his place and said, "Truly this one has deposed his master, and I depose his master just as he has, and I confirm my master Muʿāwiya." Abū Mūsā said, "What are you doing! God will not grant success to what you have done! You have acted treacherously and sinned. Truly your kind is like a dog who lolls his tongue in thirst!"[370] Then ʿAmr said to him, "No, on the contrary, it is you whom God will damn and curse! You have acted treacherously and sinned, and truly you are like the donkey that carries books of scripture!" Then he punched Abū Mūsā, and when Shurayḥ ibn Hāniʾ saw that he struck ʿAmr with a whip. At that Abū Mūsā went on his way and travelled to Mecca, and he did not return to Kūfa, where resided his line, his family and his son, and the long and short of it was that he did not look upon the face of ʿAlī for the rest of his days. Ibn ʿUmar and Saʿd went to Jerusalem

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[370] Qurʾān, 7:176.

(*bayt al-maqdis*) and entered into a state of ritual consecration [thus removing themselves from politics].[371]

Al-Maqdisī:

The story of the two arbiters, which took place eight months after Ṣiffīn. Abū Mūsā al-Ashʾarī and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ met in order to negotiate a resolution at a place that is called Dūmat al-Jandal, between Mecca, Kūfa and Damascus (al-Shām). This meeting was attended by a number of the companions from the battle, including ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn al-Aswad ibn ʿAbd Yaghūth, al-Maswar ibn Mukhrima, representing the people of Medina, and ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās came from Kūfa. Ibn ʿAbbās said to Abū Mūsā, "Be cautious, for you are dealing with the stone of the earth and the sly dog of the Arabs. They have forgotten what you must not forget: that is, that those who pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān also pledged allegiance to ʿAlī, and that he [Muʿāwiya] has no right to the caliphate at all." When Abū Mūsā and ʿAmr met to settle the matter, ʿAmr said, "It is best that we write down everything we say, lest we forget." So they sent for a scribe, and ʿAmr had said to him before this, "Begin with my name." When the scribe took the paper and wrote, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful," he began with the name of ʿAmr. Then he said, "Erase it! Begin with the name of Abū Mūsā, for he is more honorable than I!" He was flattering him. Then he said, "What shall we say, O Abū Mūsā, about the killing of ʿUthmān?" He said, "By God, he was killed unjustly." ʿAmr said, "Write it, boy." Then he said, "O Abū Mūsā, in order to set this *umma* aright and stop the flowing of blood, what could be better than to depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, and to appoint as Caliph over the *umma* whom the Muslims esteem? This is a great solution to our charge." Abū Mūsā said, "There is no doubt of that." ʿAmr said, "Write it, boy." They concluded writing that very day, though the night had grown long. ʿAmr had achieved everything he wanted to in the meeting with Abū Mūsā, regarding the unjustness of the killing of ʿUthmān and the deposing of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya from the matter. They talked all night until the morning came, and then ʿAmr said, "O Abū Mūsā, we have agreed to depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya from this position. Name whom you would like." He said, "I name al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī." ʿAmr said, "Do you really mean to depose a father from the position which you would fill with his son?" He said, "What about ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar?" ʿAmr replied, "No, he is too pious

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[371] Ibid., p. 353-356.

to have anything to do with this." Then Abū Mūsā named a number of people whom ʿAmr rejected, so he said, "Very well, you name somebody, O Abū ʿAbd Allāh." He said, "I name Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān." He said, "What right does he have to this?" Then ʿAmr said, "Very well, I name my son, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr." Abū Mūsā saw that he was toying with him, and said, "May God bring his curse upon you! You are like the dog who lolls his tongue in thirst!" And ʿAmr said to him, "No, may God bring his curse upon you! For your kind is like the donkey who carries books of scripture."[372]

2. Then ʿAmr said, "Indeed, this one has just deposed his master." ʿAmr removed his ring and continued, "I, too, depose him, just as I take off this ring." He placed the ring on his other finger and said, "I confirm Muʿāwiya as Caliph, as I place this ring upon my finger." Then Abū Mūsā made his way to Mecca, and ʿAmr went to Syria. About this, the poets said:

Abū Mūsā, you have become decrepit when you were a wise man,
          Not thoughtful and with a lolling tongue
ʿAmr played your sincere friend O Ibn Qays
          In a matter where he should have been seen as the enemy."[373]

Ibn al-Athīr:

1. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ attended ʿAlī to write the agreement for the arbitration in his presence, so they wrote, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is what has been agreed upon by the Commander of the Faithful." Then ʿAmr said, "Write his name and the name of his father, for he is your Commander, but not ours!" Al-Aḥnaf asid, "Do not erase the name of the Commandership of the Faithful, for I fear that if it is erased, it will never return to you. Do not erase it, even if the people kill each other." ʿAlī rejected (the erasure of the title) for a long period of the day, until al-Ashʿath ibn Qays came and said, "Erase the name!" Then it was erased, and ʿAlī said, "Allāhu Akbar! A Sunna upon a Sunna. By God, I was the scribe of the Messenger of God (amy God's prayers and peace be upon him) on the day of Ḥudaybiyya, and I wrote, 'Muḥammad, the Messenger of God,' and they said, 'You are no Messenger of God, so write your name and the name of your father.' The Messenger of God

[372] al-Maqdisī, *Al-Badʾ wa-al-Tāʾrīkh*, p. 227-8. Qurʾān, 7:176 and Qurʾān, 62:5.
[373] Ibid., p. 228

commanded me to erase, and I said, 'I am not able to.' He said, 'Give it me,' so I gave it to him, and he erased it with his own hands and said, 'You will be asked to do the same thing as I, and you must answer.'" Then ʿAmr said, "God forbid! We have been compared to infidels, when we are believers!" Then ʿAlī said, O Ibn al-Nābigha, when were you not the appointed choice of the losers, and an enemy of the believers?" ʿAmr said, "By God, after this day I will never sit with you, ever again." ʿAlī said, "I hope that God never chastens me with a meeting with you and your like." The document was written, "This is what has been agreed upon by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān. ʿAlī is the commander of the people of Kūfa and those with them, and Muʿāwiya is the commander over the people of Syria and those with them, and we hereby submit to the judgment of God in his Book, and we will not accept to be bound by anything other than it. We agree to submit to the Book from the opening verse to the closing, that we will live as it commands we live and die as it commands we die, and that whatever the two arbiters, that is, Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, find in the book shall be applied, and that whatever they do not find from the Book of God and the generally accepted Sunna is unacceptable." The two arbiters took authority from ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya and the two armies the authority and the trust that they execute their office faithfully for their own souls and for their two peoples, and that they were entrusted with solving this matter for the sake of the *umma*. Upon ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ God has placed his trust that they arbitrate the matter before this *umma*, that they not enter it into war nor division, and set the date for their determination during Ramaḍān, although this can be delayed if they wish it to be delayed, at a place of their choosing equidistant and just for both the people of Kūfa and the people of Damascus."

Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, Saʿīd ibn Qays al-Hamdānī, Warqāʾ ibn Sumayy al-Bajalī, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥill al-ʿIjlī, Ḥujr ibn ʿAdī al-Kindī, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Ṭufayl al-ʿĀmirī, Uqba ibn Ziyād al-Ḥaḍramī, Yazīd ibn Ḥujiyya al-Tamīmī, Mālik ibn Kaʿb al-Hamdānī were ʿAlī's witnesses, and Muʿāwiya's witnesses were Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama, Ziml ibn ʿAmr al-ʿUdhrī, Ḥamura ibn Mālik al-Hamdānī, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Khālid al-Makhzūmī, Subayiʿ ibn Yazīd al-Anṣārī, ʿUtba ibn Abī Sufyān, and Yazīd ibn al-Ḥurr al-ʿAbsī."

Al-Ashtar was told to write at this meeting, and he said, "You did not befriend me to make use of my right hand (for writing), and my left hand is useless to write this paper. How can I be useful in achieving right by my enemies, when you all did not see my victory?" Al-Ashʿath said to

him, "By God, I saw no victory, so get lost! We do not want you." He said, "Yes, by God, what you want in this world is for this world, and in the afterlife for the afterlife. God has shed the blood of better men than you upon my sword, and withdrawn no blood of mine. It is as if God has crushed al-Ashʿath's nose to smithereens." Al-Ashʿath went out with the written document to read it to the people. At that point, a group of men from the Banū Tamīm passed by, including ʿUrwa ibn Udayy, the brother of Abū Bilāl, and he read it to them. ʿUrwa said, "Men are to be judging in a matter of God? There is no judgment but God's! (*lā ḥukmā illā lillah*)." Then he drew his sword and smacked the rump of al-Ashʿath's donkey, and the donkey startled and took off. Al-Ashʿath's companions shouted at him, so he went back. Al-Ashʿath's people, and many of the Yemenīs, were wroth with him, but then al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays, Misʿar ibn Fadakī, and others of the Banū Tamīm, came to him and apologized. He accepted the apology.

The document was written on Wednesday, the 13th of Ṣafar, in the year 37. They agreed that Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī would appear at the location of the two arbiters' decision, at Dūmat al-Jandal or in Adhruḥ in the month of Ramaḍān. ʿAlī was told, "Truly, al-Ashtar does not agree to what is written in the document, and does not see any option but for the people to do battle." ʿAlī said, "By God, I do not like and I do not love that which you like, but you refused to have it any way but what you wished, so I consented. If I have consented, and this does not serve to mend the community, and creates no change after the agreement, except to defy God and to assail his Book, then we should have continued to fight those who defied the command of God. As for what you have mentioned about abandoning me and my command, I am not afraid of that, for if only there were two of you who were the equal of al-Ashtar! If only there was one of you who was his equal, who sees in my enemies what I see; in that case, it would reduce my burden, and I hope that would sustain me as I seek to fulfill your needs. But rather, you have finished with me and made of me an enemy."[374]

2. When the time came for the meeting of the two arbiters, ʿAlī sent four hundred men, including Shurayḥ ibn Hāniʾ al-Ḥārithī, and instructed him to say to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "'Alī says to you, 'The greatest of men in the eyes of God, great and mighty, is he who works for truth and loves it, and who fights error, even if it decreases him. By Allāh, O ʿAmr, if you know where the truth lies, why would you continue in your ignorance? Is it

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[374] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 670-2.

[merely] because you have been granted some trifling desire that you would become the enemy of Allāh and his friends? By Allāh, that which you have been given shall be taken from you, and you will be neither an adversary to the faithless, nor a helper to the unjust. As for me, I know that the day on which you repent will be the day of your death, and you shall wish that you were not shown to be an enemy of the Muslims, and that you had not accepted bribes for your wisdom.”

When this came to him, his face changed, and then he said, “Since when do I accept ʿAlī’s advice, or bend to his commands, or heed his opinions?” Then he said to him, “So what prevents you, O Ibn al-Nābigha, from accepting advice of the noblest of the Muslims after their Prophet? After all, your betters, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar requested his advice and were enlightened by his opinions.” Then he said to him, “Truly, my like does not speak to your like.” Then Shurayḥ said, “By which of your parents do you claim superiority over me, O ibn al-Nābigha? Is it by your mediocre father or your ‘distinguished’ mother?” And he got up and left him.

ʿAlī had also sent ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās to lead the prayers for his delegation, as well as to witness the affair, along with Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī.

Muʿāwiya sent ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ with four hundred of the Syrians, who came to Dūmat al-Jandal in Adhrūḥ. If a letter came to ʿAmr from Muʿāwiya, he did not reveal what was in it, nor did the Syrians ask him a thing; however, the people of Iraq asked ibn ʿAbbās about every missive he received from ʿAlī. If he told them about them, they always expressed their opinions. Ibn ʿAbbās said to them, “Why do you think you know what is best? When Muʿāwiya’s messenger comes, nobody knows what he brings with him, and nobody breathes a word of his messages’ contents; but every day, you all bombard me with your opinions.”

Ibn ʿUmar, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, Ibn al-Zubayr, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn ʿAbd Yaghūth al-Zuhrī, Abū Jahm ibn Ḥudhayfa al-ʿAdwī, and al-Mughīra ibn Shaʿba also attended.[375]

3. When the two arbiters met, ʿAmr said, “O Abū Mūsā, do you not know that ʿUthmān was killed unjustly?” He said, “I bear witness to that.” He said, “And do you not know that Muʿāwiya is his *walī*?” He said, “On the contrary, I do.” He said, “Then what prevents you from accepting him, when his position in the Quraysh is what you have already admitted? And

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[375] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 680-1.

if you are afraid that the people will say that he has no *sābiqa*, you can say, 'I have discovered that he is the man legally responsible for ʿUthmān, the wronged Caliph, and the claimant of his blood. ʿUthmān, who was an excellent administrator and an excellent commander, the brother of Umm Ḥabība, Mother of the Faithful and wife of the Prophet (God's prayers be upon him), who was his companion, and upon whom he bestowed temporal authority." Then Abū Mūsā said, "Fear God, O ʿAmr! As for what you say concerning the honor of Muʿawiya, truly this matter is not about the honor brought to him by his relations. If it was about honor, the most just of the people in this affair among Muʿāwiya's supporters is Abraha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ, for he is the favorite candidate of the pious and virtuous. However, if I were to award the maximum amount of honor for the Quraysh, I would give it to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. And as for your argument that Muʿāwiya is the kin of ʿUthmān and that the right of vengeance should be his, I will not follow Muʿāwiya, and neither will the first of the Muḥājirūn. And as for your claim to his power, if anything comes to me from his power, by God, I would shun it lest I be corrupt in the eyes of God. However, if you wish, we could revive the name of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may God be pleased with him)."

ʿAmr said to him, "Then what prevents you from accepting my son, when you know his excellence and his righteousness?" So Abū Mūsā said, "Truly, your son is a righteous man, but you have soiled him by immersing him in this *fitna*." Then ʿAmr said, "This matter is fit for no man but he who eats and tastes, and Ibn ʿUmar is a fool." Then Ibn al-Zubayr said, "I warn you, be wary!" Then ʿAmr said, "By God, I will never bestow anything upon him." Ibn al-Zubayr said, "O Ibn al-ʿĀṣ, the Arabs placed this matter in your hands after striking at each other with swords, so do not force them to return to *fitna!*"

Then ʿAmr began to condition Abū Mūsā to speak before him, flattering him by saying, "You are a Companion of the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him), and elder than I, so speak." Abū Mūsā was flattered by this, which is precisely what ʿAmr wanted; that is, that he would precede him in deposing ʿAlī. ʿAmr suggested his son and Muʿāwiya, but Abū Mūsā rejected them, and Abū Mūsā wanted to appoint Ibn ʿUmar, and ʿAmr rejected him. Then ʿAmr said to him, "Please tell me what your opinion is." He said, "I think that we should depose both these men, and we should put the matter to a *shūrā*, and the Muslims will choose for themselves whom they love." ʿAmr said to him, "My opinion is the same as yours." Then they went before the people, who had gathered, and ʿAmr said, "O Abū Mūsā, tell them that our

opinions agree." Then Abū Mūsā spoke, saying, "Our opinions agree on the matter, and we hope that God will settle the matter afflicting this *umma*." Then ʿAmr said, "Correct! Continue, O Abū Mūsā, speak." Then Abū Mūsā started to continue, but Ibn ʿAbbās interrupted him, saying, "Woe unto you! By God, I believe that he has deceived you. If you have indeed agreed on the matter, step aside and let him speak first, then you speak on the matter after him. Truly, he is a sly man, and I do not believe that he will hold to your agreement, and before the people he will disagree with you."

But Abū Mūsā was heedless, and said, "Truly, we have agreed," and then he said, "O you people, we have looked into the matter afflicting this *umma*, and we see no better solution to the matter nor none more ordering of its disorder than the matter upon which my opinion and the opinion of ʿAmr have met. This is that we depose both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, and the people will appoint as their commander whom they live. I hereby depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, so confront this matter and appoint over you he whom your opinions dictate." Then he stepped down.

Then ʿAmr came forward, got up and said, "This man has just said what you have heard and deposed his master. I, too, depose his master, just as he deposed him. But I confirm my master, Muʿāwiya, for he is the *walī* of Ibn ʿAffān, the claimant of his blood revenge, and the most righteous of the people for the position."

Then Saʿd said, "How weak you are, Abū Mūsā, against ʿAmr and his stratagems!" Then Abū Mūsā said, "So what should I do? He agreed with me on a matter, and then reneged upon it!" Ibn ʿAbbās said, "No sin of yours, O Abū Mūsā. The sin is upon the one who placed you in this position."[376] He said, "What could I do against treachery?" Ibn ʿUmar said, "Look what this matter has come to! It has gone in favor of a man who does not care what he engenders, the worst of all."

ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Abī Bakr [later] said, "If [Abū Mūsā] al-Ashʿarī had died before that, it would have been better for him."

Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī said to ʿAmr, "God will not grant success to what you have done, you have lied and acted shamefully! You ʿare like the dog which, if you attack it, it lolls out its tongue, or, if you leave it alone, it still lolls out its tongue.'" ʿAmr responded, "And you ʿare like

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[376] Ibn ʿAbbās could be making a small joke. It should be recalled that al-Maqdisī suggested that Muʿāwiya argued that the sin of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir's death should fall upon ʿAlī, who sent the old Companion out to fight; here, too, Ibn ʿAbbās suggests (wryly, it seems) that the result of the arbitration was also ʿAlī's fault, or perhaps the fault of those who put Abū Mūsā in a position where he was, like the elderly ʿAmmār, predisposed to fail.

the donkey which carries books of scripture.'"[377]   Shurayḥ ibn Hāniʾ attacked ʿAmr, lashing at his head with a whip, and a son of ʿAmr assailed Shurayḥ, striking him with a whip. Everyone got up and separated the two of them, and subsequently Shurayḥ would say, "I regret nothing more than striking at ʿAmr with a whip, and not with a sword."

The Syrians looked for Abū Mūsā, who retired to Mecca. Then ʿAmr and the Syrians withdrew towards Muʿāwiya. They conferred the caliphate upon him. Shurayḥ and Ibn ʿAbbās returned to ʿAlī, and thereafter when ʿAlī would pray, he would curse the names of his enemies, saying, "God! Curse Muʿāwiya, ʿAmr, Abū al-Aʿwar, Ḥabīb, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Khālid, al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays and al-Walīd!" When news of this reached Muʿāwiya, he cursed the name of ʿAlī, Ibn ʿAbbās, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn.[378]

Discussion

The climax and conclusion of the affair at Ṣiffīn offers some of the most fascinating developments in the narrative heretofore. In this section, amongst these historians, we see the image of al-Ashʿath ibn Qays mildly rehabilitated, that of al-Ashtar mildly tarnished, a clear explication of the major issues at play here, new arguments in favor of ʿAlī and a surprising justification of the otherwise universally derided treachery of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ.

Al-Masʿūdī provides the account with the most insight into the importance of the events of Ṣiffīn to Muslim identity. Interestingly, he uses an interchange, also extant in a different form in Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*, between al-Ashʿath ibn Qays (here presented as a messenger to the Khawārij, rather than as one of them), and ʿUrwa ibn Adhaya al-Tamīmī, one of the leaders of the Khārijī exodus from ʿAlī's camp. It is not surprising, perhaps, to see such an inconsistency in the reports about the early Khawārij;

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[377] Qurʾān, 7:176 and 62:5.
[378] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* v. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), pp. 682-4.

after all, the details of early Khārijī history are famously obscure.[379] However, this particular narrative gets right to the heart of the matter of the importance of the battle of Ṣiffīn to Islamic history. Consider the following passage:

> "ʿUrwa ibn Adhaya said, "Does one proceed in his own way when dealing with the *dīn* of God, his authority and his prescription for men's fate? There is no judgment but to God alone (*Lā ḥukma illā lillāh*)!" He was the first to say this phrase. He took that as a standard, and a disagreement broke out about it. He assaulted al-Ashʿath with his sword, but hit his horse instead. The horse fell down, lame, and al-Ashʿath was able to escape. The Nizāris and the Yamanīs were on the verge of blows over their disagreements regarding the nature of *dīn* and *taḥkīm* (arbitration), and over what ʿUrwa ibn Adhaya had done to al-Ashʿath." [380]

In this one small passage, we are presented with a plethora of concerns facing the later Muslim community as a result of the events leading up to Ṣiffīn and the schisms created by its (non-)resolution. The historical battle had at its heart the question of power, plain and simple; this passage must be read as an ahistorical one, which suggests how the meaning of the battle in historical memory came to be so much more complex and essential to the issues surrounding the development of sectarian identity within Islam. The standard of the Khawārij (*lā ḥukma illā lillāh*) proclaims not only their position with regard to the decision to accept the arbitration offer, but their general intolerance towards other, non-Khārijī Muslims. Furthermore, there is a disagreement, also previously unreported, presented between the Nizārīs and the Yemenīs on *taḥkīm* and *dīn*—which, as we have explored before, does not refer to the modern sense of the word (that is, "religion") but rather to a path to salvation for the community based upon the idea of

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[379] Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmerman, *The Epistle of Salim ibn Dhakwan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1.
[380] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, p. 350-1.

legitimate leadership and the appropriate imam.[381] As far as *taḥkīm* goes, it goes without saying that, given the Khārijī's origin and the nature of their disagreement with ʿAlī, this was an issue that required some exploration in the incipient Khārijī community. After all, the idea that there is *lā ḥukma illā lillāh* probably did not arise spontaneously, but after at least some discussion; if any of the other accounts contain kernels of truth (accounts which are, in all fairness, decidedly unsympathetic to the Khārijī positions), those who would become Khawārij were initially in favor of the arbitration, and then insistant upon Abū Mūsā as arbiter, and only became righteously indignant at the whole affair when their chosen arbiter failed them and the arbitration went against them.[382]

The key point in this matter is that questions of leadership, *dīn, taḥkīm*, and the validity of human judgment on the course of Islamic politics were very much the issues at the heart of these developing accounts about the battle of Ṣiffīn (even if the battle itself was probably mostly about power, plain and simple), and were at the heart of the disagreements among Sunnī, Shīʿī and Khārijī Muslims over the proper path for Muslims to follow. Al-Masʿūdī is here the first to address these issues explicitly, and the only historian to address all of them at once. As an Imāmī Shīʿī, al-Masʿūdī was probably very concerned with the exploration of issues of leadership and similar issues.[383]

Al-Masʿūdī also included the story, previously seen in the *Taʾrīkh* of al-Yaʿqūbī, of Abū Mūsā ahistorically criticizing the foolish arbitrators of the Banū Isrāʾīl and, in the process, unwittingly criticizing himself. Unlike in the account of al-Yaʿqūbī, the

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[381] Crone, *God's Rule,* pp. 21-23.

[382] Cf. G.R. Hawting, "The Significance of the Slogan 'lā hukmā illā lillāh' and References to the 'Ḥudūd' in the Traditions about the Fitna and the Murder of ʿUthman," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London,* Vol. 41, No. 3 (1978), pp. 453-463.

[383] After all, he did compose the *Kitāb al-Intiṣār al-Mufrad li-Firaq al-Khawārij,* apparently a treatise supporting the Shīʿī view of the imamate.

ahistorical significance of which has been described above,[384]al-Masʿūdī has a character,

in this case Suwayd ibn Ghafala,[385] remind Abū Mūsā of his statement, further

emphasizing the point that Abū Mūsā was a foolish arbiter and should be punished by

God for his incompetence in that capacity. Another ahistorical comment in the *Murūj al-*

Dhahab, one that appears in the account of al-Maqdisī, as well, is Ibn ʿAbbās' statement

to Abū Mūsā, reminding him that Muʿāwiya has no right to the imamate. While it comes

closer to the moment of the story when that issue becomes a genuine possibility—

namely, ʿAmr's pronouncement that Muʿāwiya is caliph—it still comes before the

moment in the narrative in which ʿAmr actually claims the imamate for Muʿāwiya.

The trend towards including greater detail in an *akhbār-* and *isnād*-free style

continues in these accounts, with the exception of Ibn al-Athīr, who, once again, presents

the words of al-Ṭabarī and Naṣr ibn Muzāhim sans *isnād*; we see in his account the

attribution of the Syrian objection to ʿAlī's title to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, just as in al-Ṭabarī.

Of particular interest are the narratives of al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī, who portray not

only the treachery of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ but also the methods behind his chicanery. In

Murūj al-Dhahab, the clever ʿAmr gets Abū Mūsā to confirm the tenets of Muʿāwiya's

position—namely, that ʿUthmān was killed unjustly, that Muʿāwiya was his *walī* and thus

had the right to avenge his blood—although this of course has been seen in other

accounts. What is different in this account is the fact that Abū Mūsā confesses that he

can think of no *walī* of ʿUthmān before Muʿāwiya; even given the ambiguity of the which

meaning of the term is meant, Abū Mūsā's acceptance of the term's application in the

sense ʿAmr meant it with regard to Muʿāwiya is inexcusable from a pro-ʿAlid

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[384] See above, Chapter II, p. 153.

[385] Suwayd ibn Ghafala is a traditionist who is frequently cited in the *ḥadīth* collections of al-Bukhārī. See *Encyclopedia of Islam,* c.v.

perspective. Muʿāwiya was a governor, and in that sense a *walī*; but so, too, was al-Ashʿath ibn Qays. The term could also have applied to ʿUthmān's son, but Abū Mūsā just accepts ʿAmr's position, perhaps to help end the *fitna* quicker. For a Shīʿī like al-Masʿūdī, who presumably understood this ambiguity in the term *walī,* allowing this argument to pass unopposed effectively damns Abū Mūsā and emphasizes his unsuitability to the task that was appointed to him. This version of the story is also found in the account of Ibn al-Athīr. Furthermore, al-Masʿūdī adds a character to the story, that of a slave-scribe of ʿAmr's, whom ʿAmr commanded publicly to write matters agreed upon only if both he and Abū Mūsā concurred, but privately instructed him to write down only what was useful to him. He also began his flattery of Abū Mūsā very early on in this account, from the beginning of the document they were creating, where he commanded his scribe to write down Abū Mūsā's name before his, even cursing the scribe when he started with ʿAmr's own name. Then, as Abū Mūsā accepts argument after argument of ʿAmr's (arguments he should contest), ʿAmr instructs the scribe to write each of them down, recording Abū Mūsā's acquiescence point by point. He twists Abū Mūsā's words, and even, for the first time, is given credit for suggesting that both men be deposed, although he puts the words into the mouth of Abū Mūsā by slyly suggesting that Abū Mūsā was correct when he made the suggestion to do so, although Abū Mūsā's suggestion to depose both men does not appear in the account. Then, when the time comes for him to renege on their agreement, he uses the prop of the document that the slave-scribe had written, which Abū Mūsā had signed confirming the tenets of Muʿāwiya's argument. Al-Masʿūdī includes a brief paragraph with the standard version of the story, in which Abū Mūsā makes the initial suggestion, and in which al-Masʿūdī

includes the new detail that ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar and Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ retired to Jerusalem, shunning politics forever.

Al-Maqdisī uses an abridged version of the story with the scribe, although he attributes the foolish suggestion to depose both men to its customary initiator, Abū Mūsā, while ʿAmr simply replies, "Write it, boy," in a narrative tone of al-Maqdisī's that suggests that ʿAmr is unable to believe his good fortune or Abū Mūsā's fickleness. Al-Maqdisī is also the first and only one of these historians to intimate that Abū Mūsā suggested ʿAlī's eldest son al-Ḥasan succeed him, before then proceeding to his customariy first choice, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar. In al-Maqdisī's account, the interchange wherein the two arbiters depose ʿAlī and quarrel over ʿAmr's deceitful actions does not seem to have taken place in front of the crowd. This is impossible, as it is so key to the story that the reneging be public, that it is likely that al-Maqdisī simply elided this point, understanding it to be common knowledge; this is likely why the appearance of the two Qurʾānic *suras* that appear in the other accounts are referenced after ʿAmr and Abū Mūsā are unable to come to an agreement regarding the identity of the best man for the imamate, rather than at the conclusion of the (in this case, nonexistent) public announcement. The publicity of the deposing of ʿAlī is critical; ʿAmr's reneging on the agreement, if it happened in private, could simply be denied later by his opponents. For it to be effective, it must take place in sight of a large portion of the community, so that it could not be denied.

Conclusion

In this section we saw a small amount of sympathy for Muʿāwiya's cause at Ṣiffīn creep into the narrative of Ibn al-Athīr, perhaps part of the general trend towards historical writing sympathetic to the Umayyads explored by Pellat, El-Hibri and Shahin.[386] However, this trend does not reach any sort of real apex until the authors examined in the fourth chapter, namely Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and the fifth chapter, namely Ibn Kathīr. The works examined in this chapter provided an historiographical bridge from the dry and relatively factual accounts of the *akhbārīs* to those men.

Of course, it was not the intention of al-Masʿūdī, al-Maqdisī, or Ibn al-Athīr to provide any sort of bridge, to be simply links in a chain or an intermediate step. They had set out to write histories, and the historiographical conventions of the time influenced the way they wrote them.[387] By moving away from the *khabar* as the primary device through which to relate historical events, seeking instead to construct a more unified picture of Islamic history, these authors necessarily expanded, and possibly embellished, the extant body of Ṣiffīn lore.

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[386] See below, Chapter IV, pp. 233-8.
[387] See above, pp. 160-2.

Chapter IV

The Battle of Ṣiffīn in Syrian Local Histories

Historiographical Perspective

In the previous two chapters, we have seen how the retelling of the battle of Ṣiffīn changed according to both when the accounts were written and what style of historical writing was employed. Although there was a great deal of substantive agreement among all those heretofore examined—Ibn Aʿtham, Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, al-Dinawārī, al-Yaʿqūbī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Masʿūdī, al-Maqdisī, and Ibn al-Athīr—there was a significant divergence in the styles in which the story was presented, which had a subtle, but nonetheless significant, impact upon the ultimate effect of the story. The *akhbārī* historians—that is, Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, al-Dinawārī, al-Yaʿqūbī, and al-Ṭabarī—presented a more or less uniform picture. This uniform picture is in large part due to the fact that they drew upon the same traditionists, and the later writers all borrowed, sometimes directly and sometimes via an intermediary like al-Ṭabarī, from Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, and also in large part due to the fact that the milieu in which most of them wrote was a solidly ʿAbbasid—that is, pro-ʿAlid, whether Sunnī or Shīʿit—one. This continued use of the same source material, as well as the ʿAbbasid milieu, encouraged them to write histories that followed what became the "standard" view of Ṣiffīn; namely, that the Umayyad Syrians were wicked rebels-turned-usurpers, and ʿAlī's rights were stolen by the combined misfortunes of devious adversaries, a divided constituency, and fickle and foolish supporters. This view was shared by the *muʾarrikhī*s examined in the last chapter; however, developments

in the style of writing history allowed for a much greater space for men the like of al-Masʿūdī, al-Maqdisī and Ibn al-Athīr to embellish the story with anecdotes, arguments, and elaborations. Ibn Aʿtham, writing much earlier, also made the choice to construct a unified narrative, rather than to present slightly varied but repetitive versions of the same stories, as was the style amongst his *akhbārī* contemporaries. As a result, these later world historians added to the story of Ṣiffīn a corpus of information that fleshed out the somewhat dry narratives of the *akhbārī*s. Although the sectarian perspectives of al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī, the earlier two of the three *muʾarrikhī* historians, are discernable in their accounts of Ṣiffīn, this expansion of the story was done mostly based upon evolving literary convention and for the purposes of enhanced readability for the literate populace, rather than any specific attempt to alter the generally accepted perception or interpretation of the battle's course and political or theological significance. Ibn al-Athīr, another *muʾarrikhī* historian, essentially lifted his entire section on Ṣiffīn directly from al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, though without *isnāds* and significantly abridged; indeed, his indebdtedness to al-Ṭabarī is not limited to his coverage of Ṣiffīn, as Ibn al-Athīr uses his work similarly for almost all of his coverage of early Islamic history.

Even given the distinctions in style, and the resulting distinction in the level of detail afforded descriptions of the events surrounding the battle of Ṣiffīn, the perspectives on the battle and its use in the written histories, and its function in Islamic history, thus remained more or less constant. The amount of hostility towards Muʿāwiya and the Syrians, placed upon them because of the subsequent distaste for the dynasty they founded, varied, but the story's function remained. In each account, the story was presented as a key component in the historical narrative of the First *fitna*, and did not

diverge in purpose from the generally understood narrative of Islamic history. ʿUthmān was assassinated, ʿAlī's complicity was alleged, Muʿāwiya demanded blood revenge and ʿAlī demanded he take the *bayʿa*, and they marched from Syria and Iraq, respectively, to meet at Ṣiffīn to see that their demands were met. There were skirmishes and one large battle, followed by the call for arbitration, ʿAmr's deception of Abū Mūsā, and the desertion of the Khawārij, one of whom later murdered ʿAlī, making Muʿāwiya's accession to the imamate a *fait accompli*. The subsequent massacre of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī by the Umayyads was the defining event in the subsequent emergence of Shīʿism. Given the generally sympathetic view of ʿAlī's claims held by the majority of these authors, this sequence of events was undoubtedly a historical tragedy, and the Syrians (Umayyads) were its villains. Whatever differences existed among the different writers, it is clear that never did Ṣiffīn step outside the bounds of this role in Muslim narrative of early Islamic history until (as we shall see) the twelfth century AD.

Furthermore, it must be understood that in order for the story to fulfill its role in early Islamic history, as defined by the worldviews of both the *akhbārī*s and the *muʾarrikhī*s, the base behavior of the Umayyads could not be denied. It could be tempered or qualified, or even explained or understood, but it could never be defended. To suggest that the Syrians were sincere in their beliefs was perfectly fine, as it was to allude to their skills as rulers; to suggest that they were somehow not in error would have undermined the narrative that the ʿAbbasid-era, Shīʿī or ʿAlid-sympathizing historians believed and strove to present in their works.

Some historical accounts thus began to appear which, though certainly not pro-Umayyad, begin to be at the very least sympathetic to the legitimacy of Muʿāwiya's

complaints and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ' tactics, and offer explanations of and excuses for their actions at Ṣiffīn and following it. As Tayeb El-Hibri points out, this surprising attitude of sympathy for Muʿāwiya, while certainly not ubiquitous in ʿAbbasid sources, was in line with the slowly increasing (and ultimately relatively minor) trend towards pro-Umayyad writings that developed slightly later, which may have been motivated by anti-Shīʿī sentiment.[388] According to Charles Pellat, Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads were convenient symbols of opposition to ʿAlī, who was obviously central to Shīʿī theological arguments and claims about the imamate. Thus, it was not out of love for Muʿāwiya, but rather hostility to Shīʿism, that this trend developed.[389] El-Hibri makes the point that the motives behind this "anomalous favorable representation" of the Umayyad dynasty in ʿAbbasid sources tend to be ethical and religious in nature; he points out the common example of the pious Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 101/720).[390] In general, however, one would be hard pressed to find any explicit extolling of Umayyad religious virtues beyond those of ʿUmar II, a general appreciation for their Islamic architectural triumphs, such as the construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and their administrative skill. El-Hibri mentions Muʿāwiya as well, saying that "despite his detrimental role in the first *fitna,* [Muʿāwiya] continues to hold the keys for some important virtues—patience, forbearance (*ḥilm*), generosity, and political wisdom, to name but a few."[391] Such sympathetic ʿAbbasid characterization of the Umayyads was by no means limited to these examples; the Umayyads were highly (if not necessarily widely) praised, especially for their skill as statesmen and leaders. The milieu to which

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[388] Tayeb El-Hibri, "The Redemption of Umayyad Memory by the ʿAbbāsids," *IJMES* vol. 61, no. 4 (October, 2002), pp. 241-265.
[389] Charles Pellat, "Le culte de Muʿāwiya au IIIe siècle de l'hégire," *Studia Islamica*, no. 6 (1956), p. 65.
[390] El-Hibri, "The Redemption of Umayyad Memory by the ʿAbbāsids," p. 242.
[391] Ibid., p. 242.

El-Hibri refers is that of "the third/late-ninth century attitude of the *jamāʿī-sunnī* religious circles, which tried to reshape much of the history of previous scholars and eminent political figures to fit the political and relgious considerations of the post-Miḥna era," or, in other words, to "extend an image of orthodox dominion to earlier eras."[392] El-Hibri mentions in particular a collection of dialogues covering all sorts of topics, from religion to governance, between Muʿāwiya and ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās (who also features in Ṣiffīn accounts, as we have seen), in which the latter is clearly shown to be superior (no doubt for his historical importance to the ʿAbbāsid caliphs, who drew their legitimacy by their descent from him). This collection is among those texts sympathetic to Muʿāwiya explored by Aram Shahin;[393] Shahin points out that none of the works (all of which are monographs on Muʿāwiya) amounts to a biography of Muʿāwiya, but rather they seek to praise his merits or condemn his shortcomings. Shahin's study amply demonstrates that Muʿāwiya was a subject of intense interest and debate in his own right, irrespective of Ṣiffīn. However, as we shall see, the development of certain sympathies towards Muʿāwiya, often as a symbol of opposition to ʿAlī and the developing Shīʿī identity, would find expression in the Ṣiffīn story, as well.

Too much must not be made of the appearance of any earlier writings sympathetic to the Umayyads; as Pellat and El-Hibri both assert, this appearance was likely caused by Sunnī distaste for an increasingly defined Shīʿī identity and a general appreciation of the skillful administration of the Islamic state by men who had been classified by many of their predecessors and earlier colleagues as political and religious leaders who had

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[392] Ibid., p. 255.
[393] Aram Shahin, "In Defense of Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān: Treatises and Monographs on Muʿāwiya from the 8th to the 16th Centuries," in Paul M. Cobb, ed., *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred M. Donner* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, Forthcoming). Shahin includes a comprehensive bibliography of these works.

immorally exersized authority.[394]   Although these "sympathetic" accounts begain to appear much earlier, in the case of the universal historians examined in this study, the process did not truly find expression until later. ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm looked to reinvent the historical narrative in order to "rehabilitate" Syrian history in this same way: to make that narrative conform to a proper brand of Sunnī Orthodoxy. We saw that Ibn al-Athīr, writing about a century after ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, attempts the same sort of rehabilitation in his Ṭabarī-heavy *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh,* even despite his heavy reliance upon al-Ṭabarī and hence the limits of the vulgate received from Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim.

The phenomenon of praise for the Umayyads seems to appear after the decline of ʿAbbasid power and the emergence of local sultanates under the caliph's nominal authority. While it should not be inferred that pro-Umayyad sentiment was a form of veiled (or not-so-veiled) criticism of a declining regime, it is perhaps more reasonable to conclude that the decline in ʿAbbasid power also meant a decline in ʿAbbasid patronage and ability to control scholarly output, thus freeing later ninth- and tenth century historians to interpret the texts more creatively in order to suit them to their own personal historiographical, theological, or legal outlook. That freedom that allowed historians to create works sympathetic to Muʿāwiya was a two-sided coin, however; Shīʿīs or proto-Shīʿīs could also emphasize Muʿāwiya's villainy even beyond what was present in the earlier bare-bones, *akhbārī* versions of the story, as we saw in the cases of al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī.

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[394] Shahin points out, quite rightly and quite obviously, that criticism of Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān is "abundant in the Islamic literary sources," so the appearance of sympathetic treatment to the Umayyad Caliph should clearly not be seen as a part of any sort of popular trend.

For Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, writing in a different genre altogether, this dynamic between the presentation of the story of Ṣiffīn itself and its place in the written narrative shifted. This shift was a result of the emergence of Syrian historians, all of them fervent Sunnīs, who sought to change the implications of the established narrative described above. The general rule that Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* contained every event at Ṣiffīn that would be recorded for posterity, most often in the *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* of al-Ṭabarī, holds firm even in modern historical writing. Ibn Aʿtham's equally early account drew from the same traditionists as Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, most notably Abū Mikhnaf and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd. His *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, as has been demonstrated, did not have the influence that *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* did on later works on Ṣiffīn. This disparity between the two earliest surviving works on Ṣiffīn exists in part because *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* fulfilled the scholarly expectations of the next generation of writers (examined in chapter II), and thus was utilized more as a source for information about Ṣiffīn. *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*'s centrality to the depiction of Ṣiffīn in *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* is especially important, as al-Ṭabarī's history that became a nearly-ubiquitous source for later historians. *Ṭaʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* similarly influenced Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*, which became similarly ubiquitous. The establishment of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* as the vulgate text for the Ṣiffīn story, and the cooperation of such prominent historians as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr meant that the edifice of the Ṣiffīn story was unchangeable; however, with the construction of a small amount of scaffolding, the artifice could be redone. Rather than have them play the role of villains in the story, the Syrian historians sought to cast their ancestral countrymen as reasonable men who

were fulfilling their function in God's plan, and who were not always as manifestly erroneous as they had been presented.

Of course, since the facts of the story—that is, the dates, the location, the names of the combatants, and the general flow of events at Ṣiffīn—were indelible, this desire to refocus the thrust of some of the most formative events in Islamic history made the writing of that history automatically (and necessarily) argumentative. The presentation of Ṣiffīn, for these men, therefore became a site for explicit argumentation, most of it about the Umayyad legacy in Islamic history.

In the 5th/11th century the composition of *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* by al-Khāṭib al-Baghdādī changed the face of Islamic historiography, popularizing a new genre: the local biographical dictionary. Drawing inspiration from *rijāl* literature, the biographical dictionary "might reasonably be defined as name lists, annotated (often generously) and arranged in accordance with the compilers' design and purpose."[395] By the 6th/12th century, and extending even further into the era of the Egyptian Mamlūk dynasty, the local biographical dictionary as a genre had proliferated, and two men—ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm—sought to do for Damascus and Aleppo, respectively, what al-Khāṭib al-Baghdādī had done for Baghdad, with the collections *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* of Ibn ʿAsākir and *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* of Ibn al-ʿAdīm.[396] The style and structure of the biographical dictionary genre allowed them to include everything they might wish about any particular story; these "increasingly ambitious" historians composed works of truly staggering size, with ʿAlī Ibn ʿAsākir's *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* originally

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[395] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 68.

[396] Ibn al-Athīr, author of *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*, examined in the last chapter, began a biographical dictionary entitled *Taʾrīkh Mawṣil* that was not completed. See Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 154; Cf. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 482.

containing as many as 16,000 folios, rather than the still-impressive seventy volumes the most recent edited version boasts.[397] These men were also uniquely positioned to offer an original take on the Ṣiffīn narrative. As Syrians, writing about events that were important to Syrian (specifically Damascene and Aleppan) history, rather than the broader catchall of Islamic history, they had the opportunity to offer additions, new perspectives, and even some creative legal interpretation to help rehabilitate Umayyad history in order to help that demonized Syrian dynasty conform to a more properly Sunnī brand of historical orthodoxy.

A large part of what allowed and motivated first Ibn ʿAsākir and then Ibn al-ʿAdīm to construct such purposefully pro-Syrian historical reconsiderations was the reemergence of Damascus as an important political and cultural center as the Ayyūbid capital in the middle of the sixth/twelfth century. As such, it once again became a city of religious prestige and military and cultural importance. At the time of Ibn ʿAsākir's life, the Sunnī reaction to the Shīʿī Fāṭimid dynasty of Cairo, which had ruled Syria but was in the process of losing large chunks of it to the Crusaders, was fevered. For the first time since the Seljuks, the immense majority of the city was Sunnī.[398] Once Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (who was Ibn ʿAsākir's patron) had emerged as the clear leader of Syria, persecution of Shīʿīs (including a massacre in 523/1129) began. Nūr al-Dīn "extended massive patronage to religious institutions and scholars, selected in accordance with [his] personal preferences regarding school of law, theological orientation, or attitude towards the study

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[397] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography,* p. 68.
[398] Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VIIe/XIIIe s. Vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq Sarl Éditeurs, 1988), p.23.

of philosophy and the 'ancient sciences'."[399] Ibn ʿAsākir was thus one of the men who enjoyed the benefits of arch-Sunnism during that time.

One of the effects of the initial reemergence of Damascus as a city of great importance for patronage was that such patronage extended towards scholars, which helped increase the city's already impressive standing as an intellectual center. Nūr al-Dīn was a strong supporter of Sunnī scholars and *madrasa*s, and appointed Ibn ʿAsākir to head his newly created *dār al-ḥadīth* (a school established for the purpose of the study of *ḥadīth*), which consequently became the intellectual center for Nūr al-Dīn's *jihād* against enemies of Sunnī Islam everywhere.[400] Nūr al-Dīn did not restrict his efforts in that vein to the support of scholarship; he was "arguably the most important architectural patron of the twelfth century and the motivating force behind the Sunnī revival."[401]

However, it should be noted that, in the grand scheme of Syrian history, Ṣiffīn is an event of mediocre import, at best. ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir's section on Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, for example, where one might expect to find a wealth of information about Ṣiffīn, more or less speeds through the battle in order to use the successes of his subsequent reign for the aforementioned purpose of rehabilitating Umayyad history. The universal histories examined in the study, of course, contained histories of the Umayyad dynasty, as well. However, in works that are organized annalistically, the focus is on

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[399] Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146-1260)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007), p. 9.

[400] James E. Lindsay, "Ibn ʿAsākir, His *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq* and its Usefulness for Understanding Early Islamic History," in James E. Lindsay, ed., *Ibn ʿAsākir and Early Islamic History* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 2001), p. 8. For a discussion of the ideology and propaganda of Nūr al-Dīn's *jihād* see Emmanuel Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade: idéologie et propaganda dans les reactions musulmanes aux Croisades* (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1968), pp. 59-62.

[401] Yasser Tabbaa, *The Transformation of Islamic Art During the Sunni Revival* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2001), p. 3. Tabbaa's study traces the development the forms of calligraphy, arabesque, geometric patters, *maqarna*s, and symmetrical plan at the time of the Sunnī revival, which coincided with and contributed to Ibn ʿAsākir's life and work.

events, and Ṣiffīn was an event of great importance to the Muslim community. In works that, by contrast, focus on individuals, like these local biographical dictionaries, the events exist in the text only insofar as they shape the life or the career of the individual being discussed. In Muʿāwiya's case, as is the case with many of the men listed who fought at Ṣiffīn, his presence at Ṣiffīn was noted and discussed, but it is not Ṣiffīn alone, or even primarily, that gives him his reputation; rather, it is his subsequent rule. Many of the references to Ṣiffīn in these books are merely statements that a given individual was with ʿAlī at Ṣiffīn, or witnessed the day of Ṣiffīn with Muʿāwiya, or was killed at Ṣiffīn, and so on, with no further narration or explanation. The shift from presenting accounts of history, as the *akhbārī* historians did, or presenting history as a unified, flowing narrative, as the *muʾarrikhī* historians did, to discussing history as a collection of men and their stories, is quite significant. So, too, is focusing the flow of history around a specific place; and the Ṣiffīn battlefield is remote from both Damascus and Aleppo. Because of the different foci of these biographical dictionaries, therefore, Ṣiffīn, while remaining an important crux of Islamic history, is not such an important crux for these texts, whose scope and focus lay upon places and individuals over the course of several centuries. There is very little information about Ṣiffīn in these texts; however, the information that is contained within them is indeed significant.

Ṣiffīn itself plays even less of a role in *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* than it does in either *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* or *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab,* and the role it does play in that text is not as significant to this study. Since this study seeks to trace a developing strand of Umayyad rehabilitation within the story of Ṣiffīn (a story which, traditionally, showed the very worst side of the dynasty's founder, Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān), it is

these locally produced and focused Syrian biographical dictionaries that must be examined. Put another way, the treatment of Ṣiffīn, and the Syrian side of Ṣiffīn in particular, in *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* is not significantly developed from the earlier, ʿAbbasid-era histories already discussed; like the majority of the occasions that Ṣiffīn is mentioned in *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* and the *Bughya, Taʾrīkh Baghdād* rarely goes into greater detail than to say that a certain person was present at Ṣiffīn, or that he died there. The entries included below comprise all mentions of Ṣiffīn in the surviving parts of both works that go beyond the mere mention that a man was present at the battle.

The Historians

ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176) was the eminent twelfth-century Damascene scholar, historian and biographer whose biographical dictionary *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq* has been described as "a veritable gold mine of information for our understanding of the first five and one half centuries of Islamic history."[402] Ibn ʿAsākir grew up in an ardently Sunnī home, hostile to both the Faṭimid Caliphs in Cairo and the Ismāʿīlī Assassins active in Syria.[403] Ibn ʿAsākir's studies took him on a tour of the eastern Islamic lands in general, studying with Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī shaykhs in Damascus, Baghdad, Kūfa and the Ḥijaz, as well as in some of the great cities of Khurasān, Transoxania and Persia. Significantly, since his family had played a prominent role in the political life of Damacus, he was patronized by Nūr al-Dīn (d. 569/1174) shortly after the latter occupied Damascus, an alliance which allowed Ibn ʿAsākir to use his

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[402] Lindsay, "Ibn ʿAsākir," p. 1.
[403] *GAL* I, p. 403-4.

influence to attempt to preserve Islam's "proper" Sunnī character, whether against Shīʿīs or Crusaders.[404]

Ibn ʿAsākir's *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq*[405] has entries for figures of all types; religious, political and scholarly personalities make up the bulk of the entries. The entries are not limited to Damascus itself, but, since Ibn ʿAsākir's stated intent is to extol the virtues of the city and present its importance in Syiran history, he "casts his net far beyond the city proper and focuses his attention on individuals from the whole of Syria, many of whom hailed from Aleppo and Ḥimṣ to the north as well as from such coastal towns as Beirut, Tyre, Sidon, and ʿAsqalān."[406] In *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq,* Ibn ʿAsākir's "apparent intent is to demonstrate the pivotal role that Damscus specifically and Syira more broadly have played in his understanding of the past in which God has intervened and acted at times to reward the righteous and punish the wicked."[407] Fred Donner, for example, argues that "Ibn ʿAsākir's clear authorial intent was to present to his readers an overwhelmingly positive picture of ʿUthmān as a pious Muslim who entered Paradise, and to cast aspersions on those who claimed that ʿUthmān's blood was licit or who sought to portray him as a usurper of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib's (d. 40/661) claim to the caliphate."[408] This presentation of ʿUthmān extends to Muʿāwiya and the

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[404] Lindsay, "Ibn ʿAsākir," pp. 4-8.

[405] Until recently, his Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq was woefully underutilized as an historical source. Lindsay points to two reasons; the first is the size of the text, whose 10,226 biographical entries "made it rather daunting to work with," and the second is the fact that it has existed mostly in fragmentary manuscript form; until recently, it did not exist at all in any form other than manuscript, and those manuscripts (all of them partial) were scattered throughout the Islamic world, with holdings in Damascus, Istanbul, Marrakech, Rabat and Tunis. The mukhtaṣar of ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) was employed to fill in some of the lacunae and to clarify some of the problematic renderings of narrative reports in the other editions. Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq was edited and compiled into eighty volumes, the last six of which are indices, by ʿUmar al-ʿAmrawī and ʿAlī Shīrī, and published by Dār al-Fikr (1995-2001). The Dār al-Fikr edition has become the critical edition.

[406] Ibid., p. 11.

[407] Ibid., p. 12.

[408] Ibid., p. 20.

Umayyad regime in general, and to Ṣiffīn in particular; however, because *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* is a biographical dictionary, rather than a chronologically linear history, the accounts of the battle of Ṣiffīn are interspersed throughout the text.

Kamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn al-ʿAdīm (588/1192-660/1262) set out to write a history of Aleppo in the style of *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq*, also modeled on *Taʾrīkh Baghdād,* which he entitled *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab.* He also wrote a later, briefer history of Aleppo, entitled *Zubdat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab*, in which he presented the city's history in a *muʾarrikhī* style, but did not include more than a brief paragraph about the events at Ṣiffīn. *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* uses oral information, documents, and a great number of manuscript sources, for the most part lost, which are meticulously cited to include entries on roughly eight thousand people.[409] These sources include eleventh- and twelfth-century chronicles of Aleppo and North Syria, including Ibn Zurayq al-Tanūkhī al-Maʿarrī's (b. 4421/1051) chronicle of the Turkish conquest and Frankish invasion, Ibn Abī Jarāda's book on the sovereigns of Aleppo, Al-Athāribī's (d. 542/1147) treatise on the history of the Frankish conquest, and al-ʿAẓīmī's (b. 483/1090) local history of Aleppo.[410]

Ibn al-ʿAdīm's father had been the *qāḍī* of Aleppo under both Zangid and then Ayyūbid rule, while Ibn al-ʿAdīm himself, after studying in Aleppo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdād and the Ḥijāz, served in Aleppo as a secretary, as a *qāḍī,* and later as *wazīr* to the Ayyūbid rulers al-Malik al-ʿAẓīz Mūsā (r. 612-632/1216-1236) and his son

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[409] See David Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and His World: Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Aleppo as Portrayed in His Biographical Dictionary of Peoples Associated with the City* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994); *GAL* I, p. 404-6.
[410] Sami Dahan, "The Origin and Development of the Local Histories of Syria," in Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 111.

al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf (r. 632-658/1236-1260).[411] He fled from the city when it was sacked by the Mongol Hülegü Khan in 658/1260. He returned to Syria to serve as its chief *qāḍī*, but his hometown was in ruins; he then returned to Egypt, where he died.[412]

As for the dictionary itself, the *Bughya* follows the same structure as Ibn ʿAsākir's *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq*. It begins with the name of the subject, followed by an abstract, in which Ibn al-ʿAdīm mentions the subject's connection with Aleppo (a geographic area, it must be said, that was defined by Ibn al-ʿAdīm in the broadest possible terms). This is followed by an appraisal of his subject's qualities and the salient points of his career.[413] Ibn al-Adīm's sources are explored by Anne-Marie Eddé.[414] As Eddé has pointed out, Ibn al-ʿAdīm relies heavily upon Ibn ʿAsākir, and the *isnād*s and *akhbār* he employs. Regarding Ṣiffīn in particular, Eddé argues that his main sources were Ibn ʿAsākir, who in turn relied in part upon the *Kitāb Ṣiffīn* of Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Hāshimī, whose identity is uncertain and whose work is now lost; but that both Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm were certainly reliant upon al-Ṭabarī (and Abū Mikhnaf). Eddé fails to mention Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, but the combination of al-Ṭabarī and Abū Mikhnaf is an unmistakable indication that the vulgate of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim is present in both *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* and the *Bughya*. Lamentably, about three-quarters of the *Bughya* is now lost; this means that there are massive lacunae which, if ever discovered, could alter the conclusions drawn here.[415]

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[411] See Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and His World*.

[412] Ibid.

[413] David Morray, "Egypt and Aleppo in Ibn al-ʿAdīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab*," in Hugh Kennedy, ed., *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950-1800)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), p. 14.

[414] Anne-Marie Eddé, "Les Sources de L'Histoire Omeyyade Dans L'œvre d'Ibn al-ʿAdīm," in Antoine Borrut and Paul M. Cobb, eds., *Umayyad Legacies: Medieval Memories from Syria to Spain* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), pp. 131-166.

[415] Morray, "Egypt and Aleppo in Ibn al-ʿAdīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab*," p. 13. "

From the following excerpts from both books, *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* and *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab*, it will become clear that, although both books contain some surprising omissions, Ṣiffīn was of far more interest to Ibn al-ʿAdīm, writing about a century later, than it was to Ibn ʿAsākir. Perhaps this is because Ṣiffīn (indeed, any town along the Euphrates) was seen as being more in the orbit of Aleppo than Damascus. For both Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Ṣiffīn offered a challenge to their efforts to rehabilitate Syrian or Umayyad history, given the Ṣiffīn story's inherent structural tendency to favor ʿAlid claims, legitimacy and righteousness, specifically as opposed to the contemporaenous Syrians. However, in the times of Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, because "the unity of [the Islamic] world was threatened from without as never before…differences within it had…to be papered over."[416] Given the unifying force generated by rise of the Seljuks, the rise of the Ismāʿīlī threat and the coming of the Crusades witnessed by Ibn ʿAsākir and the coming of the Mongols and their sack of Baghdad in the time of Ibn al-ʿAdīm, the importance of presenting a unifying vision of Islamic history was paramount.

The Journey of ʿAlī from Baṣra to Kūfa to Ṣiffīn and Muʿāwiya's Journey to Ṣiffīn

ʿAlī dispatches Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī to Muʿāwiya, against the better judgment of al-Ashtar. Emissaries are exchanged. Muʿāwiya wins the support of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. The key arguments of both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya are made clear.

Ibn ʿAsākir:

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[416] Ibid., p. 20.

[*Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān*]: When ʿAlī left Baṣra, he sent Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī to Muʿāwiya, and Jarīr spoke to Muʿāwiya and related ʿAlī's entitlement to rule, his precedence in Islam, and his relation to the Prophet. He also related the consensus among the people for him, and his desire that Muʿāwiya enter into obedience to him and take the *bayʿa*. Muʿāwiya refused, however, and between him and Jarīr there passed a long and detailed conversation. Jarīr returned to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and related this to him and that is when ʿAlī made the decision to leave for Ṣiffīn. Muʿāwiya sent Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī to ʿAlī to demand several things, including asking him to send him the killers of ʿUthmān that he may kill them, and explaining that if he did not do so, it would fall to the people—that is, the people of Syria—to fight for this. But ʿAlī refused to do this, and so Abū Muslim returned to Muʿāwiya, and related to him what he had seen of ʿAlī's [military prparations] and also of his companions and followers.

Between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, a great number of letters were exchanged, after which ʿAlī decided to leave Kūfa and head towards Muʿāwiya in Syria. News of this reached Muʿāwiya, and he took the people of Syria and headed out to meet ʿAlī, and the armies met at Ṣiffīn for the last seven nights of Muḥarram in the year 37.[417]

Ibn al-ʿAdīm:

(None)

Discussion

It will be noted that much of the introductory material, which accounted for a fair amount of the bulk of the accounts of the previously discussed *akhbārīs* and *muʾarrikhīs*, is absent. Ibn al-ʿAdīm spends no time at all, in any entry extant, on the journey to Ṣiffīn. Ibn ʿAsākir's *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* presents the brief narration above from his

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[417] ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir, (ʿUmar al-Amrawī and ʿAlī Shīrī, eds), *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* (v. 59) (Beirut: Dral-Fikr, 1995-2001), p. 117.

section on Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, and this is decidedly a summary, explicitly mentioning speeches and letters that were exchanged but choosing not to provide them.

The absence of this material is not surprising, given the genre. The goal is not to tell a story or present historical accounts, but rather to put the focus on men and their great (or ignominious) deeds. The genre's shift in focus from an event-centered descriptive structure to a *rijāl*-centered descriptive structure renders such events unnecessary and essentially "homeless;" there is no logical place to put them in the text, so they are naturally excluded. Both men, for example, in their entries on Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī, mention him as ʿAlī's emissary to Muʿāwiya before Ṣiffīn, but the nature of the correspondence he shuttles back and forth, the authors seem to feel, does not belong in his biographical entry.

The Battle by the Water

ʿAlī and his men arrive at the Euphrates to find Muʿāwiya's men blocking their access to the drinking water. After diplomatic efforts to secure drinking water for his men fail, ʿAlī authorizes them to fight for the water. A battle ensues, and ʿAlī's men are victorious. After they achieve control of the water supply, ʿAlī allows both armies to drink.

Ibn ʿAsākir:

> *(None)*

Ibn al-ʿAdīm:

> 1. [*Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān*]: ʿAlī wrote to [Muʿāwiya], "May God preserve us and you," and he was the first one to write this. When ʿAlī arrived at Ṣiffīn, it was said to him, "O Commander of the Faithful, the legions of Syria have come to you as ripples on the river, cutting off the

clouds and creating the darkness of night. Muʿāwiya is driving this force, and Abū al-Aʿwar is spurring it on, and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ is guiding it"….Then Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī hastened to the waters of the Euphrates, stationed his horse in front of it, and prevented access to the followers of ʿAlī. Then Muʿāwiya consulted his followers, and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to him, "Release the water for them, for truly Ibn Abī Ṭālib will not bear thirst whilst he has cavalry at his disposal." ʿAlī sent word to Muʿāwiya, "We and you have both come to deal with this matter, so release the water to us. If you do not, we will fight you over it." Muʿāwiya sent word to Abū al-Aʿwar, "Release the water for them." He sent word back, "By God, they shall not have a drop to drink whilst my soul remains in my body!" Ibn Abī Sarḥ said to him, "Kill them thirsty, may God damn them, as they killed the Commander of the Faithful, ʿUthmān, while he was thirsty!" Muʿāwiya said to them, "Truly, ʿAmr is wiser than you both!" But Abū al-Aʿwar refused to allow them to drink the water. Then al-Ashʿath ibn Qays came with twelve thousand men, and they took the drinking spot. Then ʿAlī said, "This day of our victory was gained by our zeal!"[418]

2. [Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays al-Kindī]: Abū ʿUbayda said, "Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays al-Kindī. He said, on the authority of Khalīfa--ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad—Maslama ibn Muḥārib—Ḥarb ibn Khālid ibn Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya: "Muʿāwiya came with twenty thousand men, and got to the Euphrates first and fortified the position. When ʿAlī and his companions came, Muʿāwiya denied them the water, and so ʿAlī sent al-Ashʿath ibn Qays with two thousand men. Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī was holding the position adjacent to the water for Muʿāwiya with five thousand. They fought a fierce battle, and al-Ashʿath secured the water for ʿAlī."

Al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Walīd ibn Mazyad said, "The companions of Muʿāwiya arrived to the water at Ṣiffīn before the companions of ʿAlī. Among the companions of Muʿāwiya were two men, one of whom was Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī and the other of whom was Bisr ibn Abī Arṭā. When the companions of ʿAlī came, they denied them the water and prevented them from reaching it. Then ʿAlī sent word to Muʿāwiya demanding that he release the water to his army, even though his army had secured the position first.

He said, "He asked the opinion of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Sarḥ, who was ʿUthmān's brother. ʿAmr said, "I think you should

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[418] Kamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* (Damascus: Dār Ṭalas, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 315-7.

release the water." But ibn Abī Surḥ said, "Do not release the water! Let them die thirsty, as they killed the Commander of the Faithful while he was thirsty (he meant ʿUthmān)." Muʿāwiya was favorably disposed to what he said, and not to what ʿAmr had said. When word of this reached ʿAlī and his companions, ʿAlī opened the floodgates and gathered twelve thousand men, who said, "O Commander of the Faithful, will you be destroyed while we can see the water?" He said, "Who will do this task?" Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays said, "I will!" Then ʿAlī said, "Then the affair is yours," and he continued, "Go get them!"

He attacked them and expelled them from the water and gained control over it. Then ʿAmr said to Muʿāwiya, "Woe unto you! Now shall we have to fight for the water, as they fought you for it yesterday?" Muʿāwiya said, "They are better men than that." ʿAlī sent word to al-Ashʿath, commanding him to allow access to the water to all.[419]

Discussion

More surprising than the absence of discussion of the approach of both armies to the battlefield of Ṣiffīn is the utter absence of any mention of the battle by the water in ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir's *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq,* especially given the complex and contradictory description of that event in the *Bughya.* It is not, it must be admitted, an event which portrays the Syrians in a particularly positive light, and this likely explains Ibn ʿAsākir's total exclusion of this episode from the whole of *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq*; but even so, it is extraordinary to see it omitted even from his section on Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī, who commanded Muʿāwiya's cavalry and led the fight to keep ʿAlī's companions from the potable waters of the Euphrates River. Abū al-Aʿwar had a long and distinguished military career stretching back to the reign of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and Ibn ʿAsākir covers that record extensively. The brief admission that he was at Ṣiffīn with Muʿāwiya is unsatisfying, given his role as one the Syrians' top commanders. It is

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[419] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, vol. 4, pp. 1912-3.

in keeping with his general goal of improving the reputation of the Syrians: the omission of the one unsuccessful battle of Abū al-Aʿwar's career is consistent with the general pro-Umayyad glossing over of the history that generally pervades *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq*.

As for Ibn al-ʿAdīm, however, he provides the most interesting account yet examined in terms of the development of the Ṣiffīn story in a direction sympathetic to the Umayyads and their founder. He includes the story in several versions, fully cited, that attribute the idea to deny ʿAlī and his companions water to Muʿāwiya's advisors, with ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ dissenting. It is not clear from his retelling the reasons for ʿAmr's dissent on this point; however, whether ʿAmr urged Muʿāwiya to release the water for practical reasons, as in the accounts of Ibn Aʿtham and al-Masʿūdī, or on moral grounds, as is suggested in the account found in identical versions in Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr, this version shares with all the others the simple fact that it was Muʿāwiya himself who ultimately ordered access to the water blocked.

However, the *Bughya*, as Morray pointed out, contains many anecdotes retold in Ibn al-ʿAdim's own words. Therefore, it is of great interest when one reads the following passage regarding Muʿāwiya's intentions at the time of the battle by the water:

> "Muʿāwiya sent word to Abū al-Aʿwar, "Release the water for them." He sent word back, "By God, they shall not have a drop to drink whilst my soul remains in my body!" Ibn Abī Sarḥ said to him, "Kill them thirsty, may God damn them, as they killed the Commander of the Faithful, ʿUthmān, while he was thirsty!" Muʿāwiya said to them, "Truly, ʿAmr is wiser then you both!" But Abū al-Aʿwar refused to allow them to drink the water."[420]

This astonishing turn of historiographical events surely boggled the mind of any of Ibn al-ʿAdīm's contemporaries familiar with the standard course of the narration of the battle

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[420] Ibid., p. 1913.

of Ṣiffīn. Ibn al-ʿAdīm, naturally, had access to all of the historians that have been examined here, and others as well.[421] The only comparable event occurs in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, in which Muʿāwiya orders the water released and Yazīd ibn Asad, an otherwise minor character, refuses him. Here it is Abū al-Aʿwar himself; this change is apparently of Ibn al-ʿAdīm's making. The decision to include this particular story, unrepeated since *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* represents a shift in Muʿāwiya's character and this shift has a number of effects, the most important of which is that he is softened from a villain to a simple honorable adversary of ʿAlī's. His commands to do right by his opponents at Ṣiffīn were thus ignored. In other words, Ibn al-ʿAdīm is attempting to do for Muʿāwiya's villainy what Ibn Aʿtham did for ʿAlī's eventual defeat at Ṣiffīn: explain it away by attributing it to the failings in his underlings. Unfortunately, from a literary standpoint, this shift in Muʿāwiya's character is startling. His villainy is indeed softened; however, even given this story as recorded in the tradition in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* as a corollary to Ibn al-ʿAdīm's decision to include this version of the narrative, Muʿāwiya's authority over the Syrians is eroded and the unity of the Syrian camp and its loyalty to him is severely undermined. It had always been a group of ʿAlī's soldiers (most of whom later became Khawārij) who ignored their commander's orders, threatened him with desertion and bodily harm if he disregarded their demands, and abandoned him to his fate when ʿAmr turned the arbitration into a farce. This disunity in ʿAlī's camp, coupled with the corresponding *unity* amongst the Syrians, is what allows ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ to stall for time with his stratagem of raising aloft the *maṣāḥif* and to turn a day of military defeat to Muʿāwiya's great political advantage by manipulating the arbitration process. Now, if Ibn al-ʿAdīm's account is to be believed, Muʿāwiya's camp lacked that unity, and he lacked the ultimate

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[421] See Eddé, "Les Sources de L'Histoire Omeyyade Dans L'œuvre d'IbnʿAdīm," esp. pp. 131-135.

authority that Shīʿī traditionists and ʿAbbasid Sunnī historians alike agree was a main cause of ʿAlī's defeat at Ṣiffīn, the beginning of his political descent which culminated in his assassination at the hands of ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Muljam, a Khārijī, and the emergence of sectarianism in Islam itself. The story is difficult to accept, in either a literary or theological sense, if Muʿāwiya does not possess absolute authority, or if his soldiers do not possess absolute commitment and obedience to his cause. While it is true that one dissenting follower is not at all the same as an entire faction within a camp that turns against its leader, from a literary standpoint the argument holds. It is inconsistent with the strong implication of the historical tradition up to this point to see a Muʿāwiya who is not completely obeyed at Ṣiffīn. Even if Ibn al-ʿAdīm is just reviving a "softer" Muʿāwiya from *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* where a similar story appears, unlike the *akhbārī*s and the *muʾarrikhī*s al-Masʿūdī and al-Maqdisī, Ibn al-ʿAdīm is choosing to focus at least some of the ultimate responsibility for Ṣiffīn away from Muʿāwiya, and even from ʿAmr, and placing the blame for this ignoble moment upon the significantly less relevant Abū al-Aʿwar.

Descriptions of the Armies and Early Skirmishes

The armies are described in terms of soldiers, their positioning in the ranks, and the identities of their commanders. Violent hostilities begin in earnest in the form of single-combat duels.

Ibn ʿAsākir:

[*Dhū al-Kalāʿ al-Ḥimyarī*]: When the day began, that Tuesday, the people went out in their ranks, and Abū Nūḥ al-Ḥimyarī said, "I was in ʿAlī's cavalry, and I realized that one of the Syrians was calling out for Abū Nūḥ al-Ḥimyarī." Abū Nūḥ said, "Which of you wants him?" And he said, "Al-Kalāʿī," so I said, "You've found him. Who are you?" He said, "I am Dhū al-Kalāʿ, so come to me." He said, "God forbid I come to you any way but here in my ranks." He said, "Come to me, and you will have the protection of God, the protection of his Messenger, and the protection of Dhū al-Kalāʿ until you return. I just want to ask you about something relating to your opinion of this matter." So Abū Nūḥ went to him, and Dhū al-Kalāʿ went to him until the two of them met. Then Dhū al-Kalāʿ said to him, "Seeing as how I called you here, I want to relate to you a Ḥadīth which ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ related to him about the reign of ʿUmar." Abū Nūḥ said, "What is it?" Dhū al-Kalāʿ said, "'ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to us that the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) said, "The people of Iraq and the people of Syria will meet in two ranks, one of which will be right." He said, "The right one will have ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir." Abū Nūḥ said, "Yes, by God, for ʿAmmār is with us and here in our ranks." He said, "Has he come here to fight us?" Abū Nūḥ said, "Yes, by the Lord of the Kaʿba, he is here with me to fight against you."[422]

Ibn al-ʿAdīm:

1. [*ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir*]: A man came to ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd and said, "Truly, God has decreed that those who are in the wrong and are not believers who cause *fitna*. If a *fitna* comes, when do you think it will happen?" He said, "Look in the Book of God." He said, "I said, "What do you think if a whole of the people calls for [arbitration of a dispute] based upon the Book of God?" He said, "I heard the Messenger of God (God's prayers and peace be upon him) say, "If there is a dispute among the people, Ibn Sumayya is in the right."….[After another long isnād]: "Fāṣiḥ said, on the authority of Sammāk, on the authority of Jābir ibn Samra, that the Messenger of Allāh (God's prayers and peace be upon him) said, "The rebel band will slay ʿAmmār [ibn Yāsir]."

From these two *ḥadīths* it becomes clear that ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him] was in the right, for he said in the first *ḥadīth*, "If there is a dispute among the people, Ibn Samiyya is in the right," and that refers to ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, and he was with ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him), and in the second *ḥadīth*, he said, "The rebel band will slay

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[422] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq*, vol. 17, p. 393.

ʿAmmār," and he was slain by the companions of Muʿāwiya (may God have mercy upon him).[423]

2. [ʿ*Ammār ibn Yāsir*]: Jabala ibn Khuwaylid said, "I was with Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, and two men came to him arguing over which of them had slain ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir (may God have mercy upon him). Both of them said, "It was I who killed him." Then ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ] said, "One of you must be trying to save the soul of the other! For I heard the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) say, "'The rebel band will slay him!'" Then Muʿāwiya said, "What is it you think you are saying?!" ʿAbd Allāh said, "My father complained about me to the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him), and [Muḥammad] said to me, 'Follow your father as long as he is alive, and do not do anything to harm him.' I am with you, but I will not fight."[424]

3. [ʿ*Ammār ibn Yāsir*]: When the day began, that Tuesday, the people went out in their ranks, and Abū Nūḥ al-Ḥimyarī said, "I was in ʿAlī's cavalry, and I realized that somebody from the people of Syrians was calling out for Abū Nūḥ al-Ḥimyarī." Abū Nūḥ said, "Which of you wants him?" And he said, "Al-Kalāʿ," so I said, "You've found him. Who are you?" He replied, "I am Dhū al-Kalāʿ, so come to me." Abū Nūḥ said, "God forbid I come to you any way but here in my ranks, advancing on your position." Dhū al-Kalāʿ replied, "Come to me, and you will have the protection of God, the protection of his Messenger, and the protection of Dhū al-Kalāʿ until you return. I just want to ask you about something relating to your opinion of this matter." So Abū Nūḥ went to him, and Dhū al-Kalāʿ walked to him, and the two of them met. Then Dhū al-Kalāʿ said to him, "Seeing as how I called you here, I want to relate to you a *ḥadīth* which ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ related to him about the reign of ʿUmar." Abū Nūḥ said, "What is it?" Dhū al-Kalāʿ said, "'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to us that the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) said, 'The people of Iraq and the people of Syria will meet in two ranks, one of which will be right.' He said, 'The right one will have ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir.' Abū Nūḥ said, "Yes, by God, for ʿAmmār is with us and here in our ranks." Dhū al-Kalāʿ said, "Has he come here to fight us?" Abū Nūḥ said, "Yes, by the Lord of the Kaʿba, he is here with me to

[423] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya,* vol. 1, pp. 286-7.
[424] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 287.

fight against you."[425]

4. [*Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān*]: Ibrāhīm—that is, ibn Dayzīl, said that it is said that Muʿāwiya traveled until he came to Ṣiffīn in the middle of Muḥarram, and had the luxury of setting up his camp first, guarding the road to the drinking place and upon the banks of the Euphrates, and he built a fortress to guard it.

Ibrāhīm said that he was informed by Yaḥyā—that is, Ibn Sulaymān—who said, "Ibrāhīm said on the authority of Abū Yūsuf, on the authority of al-Mukhālid, on the authority of ʿAmmār, that ʿAlī came to Ṣiffīn in the year 37, with seven or eight days remaining in Muḥarram. They observed the peace [*sulḥ*] of Muḥarram, and then they fought.

Abū Yūsuf also mentioned, on the authority of Abū Bakr al-Hudhalī, that they met in the month of Muḥarram."

Ibrāhīm ibn Dayzīl said that he was informed by Abū al-Yamān al-Ḥakam ibn Nāfiʿ, who said that he was informed by Ṣafwān ibn ʿAmr, who said, "The people of Syria numbered sixty-thousand, of whom twenty-thousand were killed, and the people of Iraq numbered one hundred and twenty-thousand, of whom forty thousand were killed.

Furthermore, I read in the Book of Ṣiffīn, composed by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Hāshimī, that, according to his *isnād* via Abū Mikhnaf Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā, said that he was informed by al-Ḥārith ibn Kaʿb al-Wālibī, on the authority of ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn ʿUbayd Abī al-Kanūd, who said that Muʿāwiya had come to Ṣiffīn with eighty-three thousand men.

Ibn Mushar also said that he heard the Shaykhs say this as well, that Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān came to Ṣiffīn with eighty three thousand.[426]

Discussion

The story of Dhū al-Kalāʿ al-Ḥimyarī and his kinsman, Abū Nūḥ al-Ḥimyarī, appeared first in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and *Kitāb al-Futūḥ;* the version in *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* is repeated almost verbatim by Ibn al-ʿAdīm for inclusion in *Bughyat al-Ṭalab*

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[425] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 287-8.
[426] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 310-11.

fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab. Given the fact that the story is presented from the point of view of Abū Nūḥ, rather than Dhū al-Kalāʿ, it is interesting and surprising to note that the version presented in these two works has more in common with Ibn Aʿtham's version, who also reported the story from Abū Nuḥ's side, than Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, who told the story from the perspective of Dhū al-Kalāʿ. Although Ibn al-ʿAdīm does indeed include a description of the armies, it is this interaction between Dhū al-Kalāʾ and Abū Nūḥ, as well as the story of the Companion of the Prophet ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, which are of paramount importance to him.

Ibn al-ʿAdīm's sympathies for Muʿāwiya and his attempt to rehabilitate the Umayyad legacy should not be confused with support for him or the dynasty Muʿāwiya founded. After all, to Ibn al-ʿAdīm, ʿAlī Ibn ʿAsākir, and all the historians heretofore discussed, there is no question that ʿAlī was in the right at Ṣiffīn. Ibn al-ʿAdīm thus has no interest in challenging the rightness of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib; rather, he seeks (as will be seen later, quite explicitly) to mitigate the wrongness of Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān.

Ibn al-ʿAdīm's retelling features oft-repeated Prophetic *ḥadīth* prominently, predicting ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir would be slain by "the rebel band" (*al-fiʿa al-bāghiya*). For ʿAlī Ibn ʿAsākir's and Ibn al-ʿAdīm's Dhū al-Kalāʿ al-Ḥimyarī, as well as for Ibn al-ʿAdīm's Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, 'Ammār ibn Yāsir's presence in ʿAlī's army is cause for grave concern. If he is to be slain by the rebel band, and if he is to be killed in the coming battle (which, given his very advanced age, was a real possibility, if not a likelihood), it then follows that they, the Syrians, are indeed "the rebel band." Al-Maqdisī suggested that Muʿāwiya made the questionable claim that, given his age, those who killed ʿAmmār are the ones who sent him out to battle; Ibn al-ʿAdīm does

not accept or repeat this argument. It is very specifically the "rebellious" nature of Muʿāwiya's enterprise he wishes to emphasize—"rebellious," that is, as opposed to apostate. This will be discussed further below;[427] for now, it is sufficient to point out that this story, and all references to ʿAmmār's death at the hands of the rebel band, are included to argue not *for* the rightness of Muʿāwiya, but *against* the most severe accusations of wrongness; that is, the accusation of apostasy. It is not clear where this charge was made, but it is clear that Ibn al-ʿAdīm feels compelled to answer it.

This is a novel use of the character of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir and his demise. ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir writes the account of the worried Dhū al-Kalāʿ inquiring after ʿAmmār to Abū Nūḥ, and the effect is much the same that ʿAmmār's presence and death have in all the other accounts. The idea that the "rebel band" would slay ʿAmmār is used in all previous account to demonstrate beyond a doubt that the Syrians were rebels against the rightful authority of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib; rebels, which is to say, in the wrong. Even the Syrian counterargument presented in the account of al-Maqdisī, namely that those who killed ʿAmmār were ʿAlī and his companions, who sent the old man out into a battle, comes across as peevish and cynical, which are traits the reader of the historical accounts would have come to expect from Muʿāwiya. Ibn al-ʿAdīm uses the exact same story as Ibn ʿAsākir, word for word, and buttresses it with several other *akhbār* which say the same thing but all of which use the word *bāghiya*—"rebel"—to describe ʿAmmār's killers, and explicitly emphasizes "rebel" to argue *against* the Syrians' extreme wrongness without making any claims to their rightness. Such is the cleverness of Ibn al-ʿAdīm; once again, he seeks to emphasize that Muʿāwiya and the Syrians, though in error, were nonetheless honest, moral and, most importantly, still Muslim in their error. In other words, Ibn al-

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[427] See below, pp. 264-271.

ʿAdīm has to admit that Muʿāwiya's side is the rebellious party. But there are worse criticisms in Islam than calling someone a rebel.

Laylat al-Harīr—"The Night of Clamor"

There is a great battle.

Ibn ʿAsākir*:*

> [*Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān*] When the month of Ṣafar was coming to a close, the fighting subsided slightly, but on the days of Ṣiffīn they fought a fierce battle between them until the people grew war-weary and loathed the fighting.[428]

Ibn al-ʿAdīm:

> *(None)*

Discussion

One might have expected more of a description of the battle from these two men; however, like the *muʾarrikhī* historians, the structure of the genre does not serve to allow for its inclusion. For the *muʾarrikhīs,* the battle was too anonymous, and remained, for all its action, just another battle from the time the one-on-one duels and light skirmishes ended until ʿAmr and the Syrians raised the Qurʾāns aloft on their lances. The reason for its general omission from the biographical dictionaries of ʿAlī ibn Asākir and ibn al-Adīm is similar; battles tend to be anonymous, and the nature of the biographical

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[428] ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq, Vol. 55,* p. 116.

dictionary as a genre is anathema to anonymity. The battle, much like the omission of the journey of the two armies to Ṣiffīn, has become "homeless;" the anonymity that dispossessed it from the *muʾarrikhī* accounts also means that it does not belong in the biographical entry of any one man. It belongs in no one man's grand narrative. If a man took part in the events of Ṣiffīn, it was mentioned on which side he fought, and then assumed that he took part in the large battle (given that he survived the early skirmishes); however, snippets here and there describing, for example, that al-Ashtar commanded ʿAlī's right flank, do not serve the same purpose as a description of the fighting or an account of the battle's ebb and flow. It is counterintuitive that the actual battle of Ṣiffīn itself should be omitted. However, the strictures on the structure of the genre leave no place for the mass action of large groups of people.

The only noteworthy mention of *laylat al-harīr* in either work comes in that of ʿAlī Ibn ʿAsākir, who, with a nod to his clear preference for all things Syrian, allows Muʿāwiya some charity by explaining that the Syrians raised the *maṣāḥif* when the people had grown weary of fighting and come to loathe the war, not when he and the Syrians were on the verge of being routed.

The Call for Arbitration and the Appointment of Arbiters

Desperate for deliverance from crushing defeat, Muʿāwiya asks ʿAmr for his advice. ʿAmr comes up with the brilliant and devious plan to raise aloft the Qurʾān and call for arbitration based upon it. ʿAlī's army is split, with some wanting to keep fighting, and some wanting to end the bloodshed and accept the offer. Those who wish to accept the

offer force their will on ʿAlī, and then force him to appoint Abū Mūsā as his arbiter. Muʿāwiya appoints ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ.

Ibn ʿAsākir:

> [*Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān*]: [When] the people grew war-weary and loathed the fighting, the people of Syria raised up the copies of the Qurʾān, and said, "We call you to the Book of God and arbitration based upon what is contained in it." This was a strategem of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. [The Iraqis] agreed, and they wrote letters in which the agreed to settle the matter at Adhruḥ.[429] They appointed two arbiters to look into the matter before the people and to come to a judgment on it. ʿAlī appointed Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, and Muʿāwiya appointed ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. ʿAlī returned to Kūfa, unhappy with the situation, and some of his companions disagreed with what he had done. That is when the Khawārij left his company, denying the validity of the arbitration, and saying "*lā ḥukma illa lillāh.*"" Muʿāwiya returned to Syria.[430]

Ibn al-ʿAdīm:

> [Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ]: ʿAwāna ibn al-Ḥakam said that there were actually forty battles at Ṣiffīn in all, in all of which the people of Iraq were victorious over the people of Syria. When ʿAmr was afraid for the people of Syria, he suggested the raising of the *maṣāḥif* to Muʿāwiya, and this caused the Iraqis to let up. They were called to judgment based upon the book, and then the two arbiters arbitrated.[431]

Discussion

Once again, a thorough search of the texts of *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* and *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* for applicable selections, in this case for the call for arbitration and the appointment of arbiters, yields scanty results. Unlike the sections on

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[429] Most of the time, the place is Dūmat al-Jandal.
[430] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq, Vol. 55,* p. 116-7.
[431] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, vol. 1, p. 319.

the journey to Ṣiffīn of the two armies and on *laylat al-harīr*, one might have expected more detail regarding the call for arbitration. The brevity of this section's bare-bones, practically bullet-point retellings of this famous moment stands in stark contrast to its verbose and detailed counterparts amongst the *akhbārīs* and the *muʾarrikhīs*. By rushing through quickly, the historians do nothing to support the Syrian cause, particularly, but neither do they do anything to criticize it. This quick and uncritical treatment of this moment is remarkable only in that the vast majority of their colleagues view with utter cynicism the actions of the Syrians at this juncture.

It may be surmised that the story was so well-known that neither Ibn ʿAsākir nor Ibn al-ʿAdīm felt the need to include its details; however, given the level of detail allotted to Dhū al-Kalāʿ's attempt to ascertain the status of the elderly ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir in a previous section, it is surprising that a more detailed version of this story did not appear in ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir's entry for ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who came up with the stratagem, or in his entry for ʿAlī and al-Ashtar, both of whom saw it for what it was. As for Ibn al-ʿAdīm, it is possible that a more detailed description of this most important moment in the *Bughya* may be among the approximately three-quarters of the work that is now, lamentably, lost.[432]

Negotiation, Ruling and Reneging

Ibn ʿAsākir:

> [*Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān*]: After a while, the two arbiters met at Adhruḥ
> in Shaʿbān of the year 38. The people thronged to them. They had drafted
> an agreement in secret, and then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ disavowed it in public.

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[432] Morray, "Egypt and Aleppo in Ibn al-ʿAdīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab*," p. 13.

> Abū Mūsā went up and spoke, and he deposed ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, then ʿAmr ibn al-Āṣ spoke and deposed ʿAlī, but confirmed Muʿāwiya. The two arbiters disagreed about what they had agreed on, and the people of Syria gave the *bayʿa* to Muʿāwiya and pledged allegiance to him as Caliph in Dhū al-Qaʿda of the year 38.[433]

Ibn al-ʿAdīm:

(None)

Discussion

Once again, it is quite possible, and even likely, that Ibn al-ʿAdīm included this absolutely critical moment in the story of Ṣiffīn and in Islamic history at some point in the *Bughya,* and that his account of it is lost. It would have been most interesting to see if he drew the same conclusion and made the same argument as Ibn Kathīr does, a point which will be discussed in the next section. With the same caveat we have just allowed Ibn al-ʿAdīm, namely, that not all of his work survives, ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir maintains his minimalist approach to this moment, which, like the battle over the water (and, indeed, most of the Ṣiffīn story) presents the Syrians in an extremely unfavorable light. ʿAlī Ibn ʿAsākir's and Ibn al-ʿAdīm's enterprise is to rehabilitate Syrian history to conform to a proper Sunnī orthodoxy, and the Ṣiffīn story is—at best—inconvenient without some considerable literary massaging. While Ibn ʿAsākir only alters the story a little relative to the earlier accounts (saving the thrust of his venture for other episodes), and Ibn al-ʿAdīm takes quite a few more, it will fall to the 8th/14th century Shafiʿī jurist Ibn Kathīr fully to develop the rehabilitation of the Umayyad image.

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[433] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq, Vol. 55,* p. 119.

Conclusion: Ibn al-ʿAdīm's True Enterprise—Sunnī Defense Against Charges of Apostasy

The point that Ibn al-ʿAdīm made through his discussion of the death of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, emphasizing that the Syrians were "rebels" against the rightful imamate of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, must be understood in the context of the following argument, repeated several times, which makes up the vast majority of Ibn al-ʿAdīm's discussion of Ṣiffīn:

> I read in the Book of Ṣiffīn which was compiled by Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Hāshimī,[434] known by the name of his mother, who said on the authority of …Abū Ṣādiq: The Messenger of God (God's prayers and peace be upon him) said that "three nations will come to Ṣiffīn. One nation will be in the right, not degraded by error in anything they believe. One nation will be in manifest error, into which no element of rightness will enter. The third nation will be stubborn in their statement that these are more correct than these, but these are the most correct. They are like sheep who will continue to lie down with their chests to the ground, sheep blinded by night and sent to pasture. They will leave and form a new group, blinded and wandering, and they will only understand what they are if the wolf comes and eats them. So it will be for those who die without an Imam over them, and they will die a Jāhilī death in the eyes of Islam. Then another group will split off from them and you will be four groups. One, fully right with no aspect of error, and their like will be like gold shining in the light; another, fully in error with no aspect of the right, and their like will be like a slab of iron, dull and ashen in the light, and they will be the furthest gone in the pursuit of error; third, a stubborn nation, and fourth an apostate nation, searching for *dīn* and becoming apostates from it, as sadness is an apostate from joy. They will not return until sadness returns to joy." He said, "It was said to him: "O Messenger of God, where will be the believers on

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[434] This is the same Abū Jaʿfar mentioned by Eddé in "Les Sources de L'Histoire Omeyyade Dans L'œvre d'Ibn alʿAdīm." All that is known of him is his name.

that day, will they be fighting?" He said, "Yes, and they will shake the earth strongly."[435]

He also includes the following:

2. The Messenger of God (God's prayers and peace be upon him) said, "In my *umma* there will a schism of two parties, from whom another party of apostates will split off, and this will be fought by the more right of the two parties.

    In the last chapter, we discussed the schism among the Muslims, and the schism among the Muslims was characterized by a split between the companions of ʿAlī and the companions of Muʿāwiya. In this story, the two parties came from his *umma*, and neither of them ever ceased to be within the *umma* of [Muḥammad] (may God's prayers and peace be upon him), nor did either lose the right to call themselves Muslims in this schism that occurred. The apostates were the Khawārij, whom ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) fought at the Battle of the River (*Yawm Nahr*), and it becomes clear from this that Muʿāwiya and his companions never left Islam when they fought against ʿAlī, nor left the *umma* of Muḥammad (may God's prayers and peace be upon him). ʿAlī is clearly identified as the more right of the two parties, for he fought the apostates. It follows that those Muslims who fought against him were rebels [but not apostates]."[436]

3. Abū Hurayra said, "The Messenger of God (God's prayers and peace be upon him) said, "The time will come when two great hosts will fight, and they will both be of one *daʿwa*."[437]

4. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Abī ʿAwn said, "'ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with him) passed by the position of al-Ashtar on the day of Ṣiffīn, and he passed Ḥābis al-Yamānī, who was a servant of God. Al-Ashtar said, "O Commander of the Faithful, Ḥābis is with them, and I have always considered him a believer." Then ʿAlī said, "And he is a believer today."[438]

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[435] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya,* vol. 1, p. 291.
[436] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 294.
[437] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 295.
[438] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 295.

5. Saʿd ibn Ibrāhīm said, "ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib went out that day with ʿAdī ibn Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī, and they came upon one of his dead kinsmen who had been killed by one of ʿAlī's companions. ʿAdī said, "O woe for this one, for yesterday he was a Muslim and today he is a *kāfir*!" Then ʿAlī said, "No, he was a believer yesterday, and he remains a believer today."[439]

6. Hudhayfa ibn al-Yamān said, "The Messenger of God (God's prayers and peace be upon him) said, "Those of my companions who remain after me will have a lapse, which God, great and mighty, will forgive on account of their *sābiqa* with me. Another group will come after them, which God, great and mighty, will consign to hellfire for their corruption."[440]

Ibn al-ʿAdīm's clear goal, at least in this passage, is to defend the Syrians against charges of apostasy. We may surmise from this that, although in general it was not suggested in previously examined works that Muʿāwiya had left the community and led his people into apostasy, rather than simply into error, somebody (probably an Imāmī) had made such charges, and Ibn al-ʿAdīm felt compelled to respond. In terms of the developing historiographical picture, what is compelling in these arguments is the extent to which Ibn al-ʿAdīm was concerned with defending the honor of his countrymen. It may reasonably be surmised, given everything that has appeared in all of the histories heretofore examined, that nobody has questioned who was in the right and who was in the wrong at Ṣiffīn. Even so, Ibn al-ʿAdīm takes the defense of the Umayyad cause to a new extreme; his partisanship, and the novelty of his endeavor, must be understood in the context of the amount of energy he expends in defense of the Syrians, in proportion to the relatively small amount of time he spends retelling the same story that has already been told, whatever the differences in the details. This defense of Muʿāwiya was seized upon

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[439] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 298-9.
[440] Ibid., vol. 1, p. 295.

in a short, untitled treatise by Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), the famous Ḥanbalī who was born in Harran, near modern-day Syria, the year after Ibn al-ʿAdīm's death. This treatise of Ibn Taymiyya's,[441] written in response to a number of questions about Muʿāwiya, touches very relevantly upon the battle of Ṣiffīn, the rights and responsibilities of both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, and the death of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir. In it, Ibn Taymiyya defends Muʿāwiya, arguing that it is not permissible to curse Companions of the Prophet, that Muʿāwiya, like the other *ṭulaqāʾ*, was a true believer and deserved honor as the scribe of the Prophet, and that whatever errors he made do not invalidate his faith nor consign him to hell. Thus, neither side at Ṣiffīn ever deviated from the faith and all were believers. Even regarding the death of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, Ibn Taymiyya argues that *baghy* does not exclude faith, and that the term *bāghiya* referring to the band that would kill ʿAmmār in the famous Ḥadīth might not refer to Muʿāwiya, but rather to the specific group of soldiers that attacked and killed him.[442] The debate surrounding the legal status of rebels in Islam touched on this point. The implication that Muʿāwiya was the *bāghy,* or rebel, was that it was right to fight against him. It was this implication that motivated Ibn Taymiyya to go so far as to question the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* that ʿAmmār would be killed by the "rebel band."[443] It may be that Ibn Taymiyya was looking at Ibn al-ʿAdīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* for his information on the battle; it is certain that both

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[441] *Suʾāl fī Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān Raḍiya Allāh ʿanh*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1979). This treatise was first published within the collection *Kitāb Majmūʿat Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya al-Ḥarrānī al-Mutawaffā Sanat 728* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Kurdistān al-ʿIlmiyya, [1911]), 4: 216-227 (*masʾala* 410). It was then republished by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim in *Majmūʿ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya* ([Mecca]: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥukūma, [1966]), 35: 58-79. See also the introduction by al-Munajjid, pp. 7-8. Al-Munajjid based his edition on a manuscript in his collection that bore the title *Majmūʿ Rasāʾil* in which the epistle in question was the ninth of the collection (see the introduction by al-Munajjid, p. 9).

[442] Shahin, "In Defense of Muʿāwiya," pp. 28-32.

[443] Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 40; See also Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā,* III: 456, 458.

men have a similarly strong, ardently Sunnī opinion on the question of whether or not Muʿāwiya was, in fact, an apostate, or simply a believer who acted in error. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-ʿAdīm thus shared a general theological outlook, and both had a similar view of the meanings behind the events at Ṣiffīn, as well. In fact, the matter of *baghy* in Islamic law had developed slowly, and reached a critical point by the time Ibn al-ʿAdīm was active. As Abou El Fadl puts it,

> "It took the legal process about two hundred years to produce a coherent and systematic position on rebels and rebellion, and to respond to the early Islamic experience with civil wars….Beyond legitimacy, the legality of the govermnent's conduct is a legal issue, and this is exactly what caught the attention and interest of the jurists. It would take, however, at least another hundred years before the field of *aḥkām al-bughā* became firmly established, and a few hundred more before the field was revised and re-argued in order to respond to the Fāṭimid challenge at the end of the third/ninth century, the Buwayhid threat in the fourth/tenth century, and especially the Mongol invasion in the seventh/thirteenth century."

By the time of the Mongol invasions—a series of events which had profound effects on the lives of Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Ibn Taymiyya both—the definition and responsibility of rebels had developed significantly. The base of the discussion was the three types of combat: fighting apostates, fighting brigands, and fighting rebels (fighting unbelievers requires little discussion, according to Islamic law). Apostasy and brigandage are very serious crimes to be punished harshly; rebellion, however, is to be treated with relative leniency.[444] The early argument of al-Shāfiʿī was that a rebel was "one who refuses to obey the just ruler (*al-imām al-ʿādil*), and intends to rebel by fighting him."[445] "Just ruler," in this case, could mean either one who rules justly or the legitimate or rightful ruler. The punishment for rebellion was not usually death, according to the debate about rebellion; al-Shāfiʿī, al-Ashʿarī and other juridical and theological scholars even point to

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[444] Ibid., p. 32.
[445] Ibid., p. 148.

the example of Muʿāwiya as evidence of the fact that Muslim rebels (i.e., those who rebel but do not renounce Islam) should be treated with a degree of tolerance and with clemency. The argument developed over time, and is detailed elsewhere.[446] When the Mongols sacked Baghdad in 656/1258, Ibn al-ʿAdīm was 58 years old, and only four years away from his death. Much if not all of the *Bughya* had certainly been written by then, although we do not know the exact dates of the work, nor do we know whether he ever revised it. The Sunnī response to this development was "neither uniform nor dogmatic. Sunnī jurists did not lend unrestrained support to whoever happened to be in power, and did not unequivocally condemn rebellion against unjust rulers."[447] The lines separating the four main *madhhab*s on the matter of rebellion that had formed over the previous four hundred years began to break down; this is because the doctrines of rebellion of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries were still formulated in response to the political dynamics of the scond/eight and third/ninth centuries, and the Mongol invasion revealed "the disparity between the inherited legal doctrines and the political realities."[448] It was, in fact, Ibn Taymiyya, who argued that the entire discussion of *aḥkām al-bughā* encouraged rebellion, and, although he accepted the traditional rules pertaining to the treatment of rebels for the most part, he was highly critical of earlier jurists, who were, he felt, too eager to label *any* ruler a "just" ruler. In the matter of the first *fitna,* he insisted that "most of the Companions refused to get involved, and that it would have been better not to fight for or against ʿAlī, and that even ʿAlī himself eventually regretted his decision to become involved in these wars."[449] By the

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[446] For the development of the legal discussion surrounding the idea of rebellion, see Ibid., pp. 100-294.
[447] Ibid., p. 234.
[448] Ibid., p. 235.
[449] Ibid., p. 272.

fourth/tenth century, the general consensus seems to have been that Muʿāwiya was, indeed, a rebel, and not an apostate. Apostates are those who relinquish Islam after either converting to it or being born into it. Apostasy can happen explicitly if a Muslim unambiguously renounces Islam, or implicitly if he claims that certain religious duties are unnecessary. For example, if a Muslim refuses to pay the alms tax (*zakat*) out of a conviction that it is not obligatory, he is an apostate; whereas, if he refuses to pay out of miserliness (or any other reason) but acknowledges the obligation, he is a rebel.[450] Analogously, Ibn al-ʿAdīm would argue, Muʿāwiya refused to take the *bayʿa* to ʿAlī out of principle that ʿAlī was undeserving of his obedience until he achieved justice for ʿUthmān by killing his killers. Muʿāwiya did not reject the *bayʿa* altogether, nor apparently did he forswear any aspect of the *dīn*.

Shahin states the matter succinctly: "'ʿAlī held that, as the Muslim ruler, he should be obeyed by Muʿāwiya; but the latter retorted that, as next of kin of the slain ʿUthmān, he is required to seek his killers. Each had his position, but neither deviated from faith because of this."[451]

However, none of the historical sources examined in this study ever makes an explicit charge of apostasy against Muʿāwiya. Furthermore, if it was universally held that Muʿāwiya was a *bāghī,* a rebel, and not a *murtadd,* an apostate, Ibn al-ʿAdīm would likely not have chosen to spend such energy defending Muʿāwiya against a charge that had never been made. As Abou El Fadl points out, the intellectual debate over definitions of apostates, rebels and brigands was in full swing during Ibn al-ʿAdīm's

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[450] Joel L. Kraemer, "Apostates, Rebels and Brigands," in Joel L. Kraemer and Ilai Alon, eds., *Israel Oriental Studies X: Religion and Government in the Wold of Islam* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 1983), p. 37.
[451] Shahin, "In Defense of Muʿāwiya," p. 30.

lifetime. In the context of that debate, it is certain that the charge of apostasy against Muʿāwiya appeared somewhere, likely in a Shīʿī-composed legal text or a text by a member of the ʿulamāʾ concerning the imamate, and Ibn al-ʿAdīm felt compelled to respond to it. The question that arises, then, is whether Ibn al-ʿAdīm's enterprise to defend the Syrians in his *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* was motivated by his Syrianness or his fervent Sunnism. Both were obviously motivating factors. His orthodox Sunnism, however ardently believed, shaped the contours of his argument about Muʿāwiya and Ṣiffīn. His Syrian pride-of-place spurred him to write the biographical dictionary focusing upon the history of Aleppo.

Ibn al-ʿAdīm's defense of Muʿāwiya, therefore, defends the Umayyad ruler's faith, but stops short of advocating any of his actions at Ṣiffīn, even acknowledging his error. Ibn Kathīr's version of the Ṣiffīn story, similar in the details, yet fully realized in the intention—to legitimate even what most Muslims would view as the worst of the Syrians' actions at Ṣiffīn—will be explored in Chapter V.

Chapter V

The Battle of Ṣiffīn in the work of Ibn Kathīr

Historiographical Perspective

The picture of Ṣiffīn that has emerged in the developing accounts examined so far has varied according to time and historiographical style. Like changes in historiographical style and developments in theological and historical perspectives, political events, too, can shape the way history is written. The twelfth- and thirteenth-century Islamic world saw the coming of the Crusades and the invasion of the Mongols. The shift, in this milieu, from chronography to local history and biographical dictionaries (represented in this study by Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm is best explained by Robinson, who argues that by the tenth century AD (and as late as the thirteenth), the local chronography and non-Prophetic biography had supplanted the universal chronicle of the ninth- and tenth- century as the genre emblematic of the political world order.[452] The weakening of a centralized Islamic authority continued in ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir's time with the Crusades, and its dramatic death blow—Hülegü's sack of Baghdad—occurred during the life of his fellow biographer, Ibn al-ʿAdīm. Furthermore, the threat posed to Sunnism by the by now well-established Shīʿī identity in Syria was profound. Both of these were surely powerful motivators for these two men each to emphasize the virtues of his locale, and to cast his locale in a central and, more significantly, *righteous* role in the early history of Islam. These motivators were likely based upon the Syrian-based Umayyad dynasty's less-than-stellar, but slowly improving, reputation and legacy. The battle of

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[452] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography,* p. 138-9.

Ṣiffīn, to be sure, was not the most effective way for them to accomplish their goal of rehabilitating that reputation and legacy, and the two men did, indeed, focus the bulk of their attention elsewhere, such as on the period of Muʿāwiya's rule; however, where Ṣiffīn did appear, it diverged rather significantly from the *muʾarrikhī* and *akhbārī* accounts in favor of Muʿāwiya and the Syrians, although Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm stopped short of making any claims to the rightness of their countrymen in the famous battle.

Writing in the fourteenth century, however, Ibn Kathīr took Ibn al-ʿAdīm's defense of the Syrians at Ṣiffīn a step further. Writing stylistically like the *muʾarrikhīs,* he does not go so far as to criticize ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, his followers (always excepting, of course, those who became Khawārij thereafter), or his cause; however, even the most immoral and deceitful acts of the Syrians are, at worst, placed in a positive light and, at best, defended outright as right and proper.

An important difficulty arises, given the fact that both *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* and *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* have survived only with large lacunae. Because of these lacunae, we cannot tell whether Ibn Kathīr is indeed the first historian to promote his particular perspective about Ṣiffīn through the medium of historical writing, or whether he simply borrowed directly from some missing piece of either work, or even of another work, now lost. This problem, it should be noted, is not unique to this particular situation; a glance through the *Fihrist*, as was discussed previously, underscores just how many books about Ṣiffīn alone have been lost. The answer to the question is that, to some extent, it is not important whether the specific arguments of Ibn Kathīr are his original thoughts or those of a like-minded predecessor. Their appearance in his work,

however, certifies that by the time he wrote, the purpose of the Ṣiffīn story within this particular Syrian strain of Islamic historiography had fundamentally shifted, becoming a site for explicit apology for the Umayyad dynasty, even as the details of the story remained more or less consistent. When this particular argumentative strain developed is nowhere near as critical as the fact of its development.

Ibn Kathīr

ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar ibn Kathīr (700/1301-774/1373) was a Syrian historian, traditionist, jurist and exegete who flourished in Damascus under the Baḥrī Mamlūk dynasty.[453] Born to a family of Sunnī religious scholars who claimed Shīʿī ancestry in the Syrian town of Buṣrā, Ibn Kathīr moved to Damascus at a young age with his family. He studied law with the Shāfiʿī Burhān Dīn al-Fazārī, under whose tutelage he produced some sizable commentaries;[454] he also attended lectures of some famous jurists, including the Shāfiʿī Kamāl al-Dīn al-Iṣbahānī (d. 1348) and Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣbahānī (d. 1348). However, despite his early interest in law, it was the Qurʾān, and especially the *ḥadīth*, that captivated Ibn Kathīr. In addition to being a "direct heir to the legacy" of the scholars Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 1342) and Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 1348),[455] he also studied closely with the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya.

Ibn Taymiyya's influence on Ibn Kathīr's thought was clear not only in his *Tafsīr,*[456] but also in his historical writing. Under the influence of Ibn Taymiyya, he had

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[453] *GAL* Supplementband 2, pp. 48-9.
[454] Erik S. Ohlander, "Ibn Kathīr," in Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart, eds., *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), p. 150.
[455] Ibid., p. 149.
[456] Ibid., p. 149.

developed a sense of hostility to non-Orthodox perspectives on law, *ḥadīth,* and history, to the extent that, in composing *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya,* Ibn Kathīr stated that he carefully avoided sources like the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* (stories of the propehets) and the *Isrāʾīliyyāt* (extra-biblical prophetic legends) when they were not corroborated by the Qurʾān or the *ḥadīth,* particularly if potential sources were deemed to be the result of *taḥrīf* (deliberate Jewish and Christian corruption of their respective scriptures) or posed theological challenges to Qurʾānic doctrine.[457]

Given his background, one would expect harsh views of Shīʿism; that, and his life in Damascus, probably accounts for some of the sympathy he shows Muʿāwiya's camp (specifically the character and actions of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ). Most relevently, "despite his commitment to the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah on many levels, Ibn Kathīr approached politics with a certain measure of caution, displaying an attitude which privileged conciliation and compromise along lines typical of the *jamāʿī-sunnī* ideal that a bad ruler was better than anarchy and that as long as the ruling powers made effort to ensure the continued rule of *Sharīʿah* they were due loyalty and respect."[458] This ideal would play a critical role in shaping his presentation of the denoument of the Ṣiffīn story.

His great history, *al-Bidāya wa-ʾl-Nihāya fī al-Taʾrīkh*, is was one of the principle works of history composed during the Mamlūk period. It is very similar to the works of Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm in terms of its tone, and reliant upon the nearly ubiquitous line of the vulgate of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn al-Athīr for its perspective on the historical course of events. Although he also wrote a very famous *tafsīr*, he is best

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[457] Ibid., p. 154.
[458] Ibid., p. 156.

known for this historical work. As the title suggests, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya*[459] covers the story of the creation of the world, a Prophetic biography based upon both the *sīra* and *ḥadīth*, the Umayyads, the ʿAbbasids, up through his time, and then even speculates about the future, up to the Day of Judgment. The coverage of Islamic history from the time of Muḥammad's death onward tends be very heavily focused upon the territory of Syria.

The Journey of ʿAlī from Baṣra to Kūfa to Ṣiffīn and Muʿāwiya's Journey to Ṣiffīn

ʿAlī dispatches Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī to Muʿāwiya, against the better judgment of al-Ashtar. Emissaries are exchanged. Muʿāwiya wins the support of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. The key arguments of both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya are made clear.

> As for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with him), when he left the Battle of the Camel and came to Baṣra he sent ʿĀʾisha, Mother of the Faithful, back to Mecca in accordance with her wishes. Then he left Baṣra and headed for Kūfa, according to Abū al-Kanūd ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUbayd, and ʿAlī entered it on Monday, the twelfth of Rajab, in the year 36. It was said to him, "Stay in the White Palace." But he said, "No! For truly ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb refused to stay in it, and I refuse for that reason." He stayed in the public square and prayed two *rakʿa* prayers in the great Mosque. Then he addressed the people and urged them to do good and to shun evil. The people of Kūfa praised this speech of his. Then he turned to Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh, who had been governor over Hamadhān during the time of ʿUthmān, and al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, who was viceroy of Adharbayjān during the time of ʿUthmān, that they pledge allegiance by taking the *bayʿa* under the auspices of all those who were there, and they did so. When ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) wanted

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[459] The second edition of *al-Bidāyā wa-al-Nihāya* (used here) was published in Beirut by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya in 2005, and edited by Dr. Aḥmad Abū Mākim, Dr. ʿAlī Najīb ʿAṭawī, Professor Fuʾād al-Sayyid, Professor Mahrī Nāṣir al-Dīn and Professor ʿAlī ʿAbr al-Sāʾir.

to contact Muʿāwiya (may God be pleased with him) to order him to pledge allegiance to him, Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh said, "I will go to him, O Commander of the Faithful, for between him and me there is amity, and I will bring his allegiance to you." Al-Ashtar said, "Do not send him, O Commander of the Faithful, for I fear that he thinks like them (*hawāhu hawāhum*)!" ʿAlī said, "Go and order him," and he sent him with a letter that he had written to Muʿāwiya, informing him of the consensus of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār in taking the *bayʿa* and pledging allegiance to him, and relating to him the story of what happened at the Battle of the Camel, and ordering him to enter into the allegiance to which all the people had entered. When Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh finally came to him, he gave him the letter. Then Muʿāwiya requested the presence of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and the leaders of the Syrians, and requested their counsel. They refused to take the *bayʿa* until ʿUthmān's killers were killed or sent to them, and they said they would neither fight him nor take the *bayʿa* until the killers of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (may God be pleased with him) were killed. Jarīr returned to ʿAlī and informed him of what they said, and al-Ashtar said, "O Commander of the Faithful, did I not caution you against sending Jarīr? Had you sent me, Muʿāwiya would not have opened any door that I would not have closed." Jarīr said, "If you had been there, they would have killed you for the blood of ʿUthmān." Al-Ashtar said, "By God, Muʿāwiya would not have dared give me such an answer, and I would have argued with him and given him your arguments until this whole matter was set aright." Jarīr left furiously and traveled to Qarqīsīya, and wrote to Muʿāwiya informing him of what he said and what was said to him. Muʿāwiya wrote back to him and commanded him to come to him. Then Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib left Kūfa resolved to enter Syria; he gathered his army in al-Nakhīla and left Abū Masʿūd ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir al-Badrī al-Anṣārī in charge of Kūfa.

The news that ʿAlī had set out himself from Kūfa came to Muʿāwiya after many had come to him informing him of the many people who had pledged allegiance to ʿAlī. He requested the advice of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who came to him and said, "Go out yourself." Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ got up before the people and said that the nobles of Kūfa and Baṣra had died on the day of the Camel, and ʿAlī had nothing left with him but a small band of people, among whom were the killers of the Caliph, Commander of the Faithful ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. "God, God for you should you let him slip through your fingers!" he said. He wrote to the best of the people of Syria and they gathered…and they traveled to the banks of the Euphrates in the vicinity of Ṣiffīn, where they arrived before

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with him). ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) traveled straightaway to the land of Syria with those soldiers whom he had gathered in al-Nakhīla.[460]

Discussion

There is nothing unfamiliar in this section. It is clear that Ibn Kathīr draws heavily from the nearly-identical accounts of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim—al-Ṭabarī—Ibn al-Athīr (it hardly matters which). There is nothing novel in this section relative to those earlier, "standard" accounts. However, the lack of a discernable religio-political perspective in this section is not so significant, as Ibn Kathīr saves his argumentation for the denouement of the Ṣiffīn story, and this section is all just background and context. Long gone for Ibn Kathīr are the days when the lists of names of Muhājirūn and Anṣār would carry weight as implicit arguments for ʿAlī's legitimacy; as we have seen, those lists seem to have disappeared by the tenth century, when the *muʾarrikhī* historians wrote in the dominant historiographical genre.

<u>The Battle by the Water</u>

ʿAlī and his men arrive at the Euphrates to find Muʿāwiya's men blocking their access to the drinking water. After diplomatic efforts to secure drinking water for his men fail, ʿAlī authorizes them to fight for the water. A battle ensues, and ʿAlī's men are victorious. After they achieve control of the water supply, ʿAlī allows both armies to drink.

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[460] Ibn Kathīr., *Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihaya,* v.7 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1971), p. 233.

On the third day [after a series of skirmishes between advance troops] ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) came with his army, and Muʿāwiya (may God be pleased with him) came with his soldiers, and the two parties faced off against each other for a long time. This was in a place known as Ṣiffīn, and it was on the first of Dhū al-Ḥijja. Then ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) stopped and ordered his army to set up camp, but Muʿāwiya had preceded him to the spot with his army, and they set down on the path to the water (of the Euphrates), on the smoothest and widest spot. When ʿAlī made camp, he was forced to do so far from the water. The people of Iraq came quickly to go down to the water and drink from it, but the people of Syria prevented them. There was a skirmish between them for this reason. Muʿāwiya had given the command to guard the road over to Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī; there was no other road to travel [to the water]. ʿAlī's companions were fiercely thirsty. ʿAlī sent al-Ashʿath ibn Qays al-Kindī to entreat for their access to the water, but they prevented them, saying, "Die thirsty, as you prevented ʿUthmān from water," and they loosed an hour's worth of arrows, and fought with lances for another hour, and battled the balance of the day with swords. Both parties fought hard for the whole time, until al-Ashtar al-Nakhaʾī came for the Iraqis and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ came for the Syrians, and the war between them was fiercer than it had been previously….

The Iraqis continued pushing the Syrians off the water until they pushed them off completely. Then they agreed on a path to the water, and the people descended on the road in such density that it was impossible to tell one man from another, and nobody harmed anybody else. A story was told that, when Muʿāwiya gave the command to Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī to guard the road, he set up the defense with outstretched spears and drawn swords. ʿAlī's companions came to him and told him this, and he sent Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān to Muʿāwiya, and he said to him, "We have come prepared to fight you until we achieve our objectives, but you have still made war upon us before we began with you, and now, finally, you have prevented us from the water!" When this came to Muʿāwiya, he said to the people, "What should we do?" ʿAmr said, "Release it, for it is neither just nor seemly that we should be well-watered and they should be thirsty." Al-Walīd said, "Rebuff them, let them taste of the thirst they gave to Commander of the Faithful ʿUthmān when they besieged him in his quarters, and they denied him food and water for forty mornings." ʿAbd Allāh ibn Saʿd ibn Abī Sarḥ said, "Deny them the water until the night. Perhaps they will return to their country." Muʿāwiya said nothing, so Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān said to him, "What is your answer?" Muʿāwiya said

to him, "My opinion will come to you hereafter." When Ṣaʿṣaʿa returned and informed his party of this news, the horses and men rode, and they did not stop until they had conquered the water decisively, agreed on arrangements for the path to the water, and nobody denied anybody any water thereafter."[461]

Discussion

Ibn Kathīr's account contains the story of Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān, whom ʿAlī sends to Muʿāwiya as an emissary, which originally appeared in the account of Naṣr ibn Muzāhim as retold in al-Ṭabarī. Whereas Ibn Kathīr retells the story in greater detail, he alters it ever so slightly, giving directly to Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān the threatening request to release the water for all to drink, whereas in the Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim/al-Ṭabarī/Ibn al-Athīr version, the entreaty is recorded as ʿAlī tells Ṣaʿṣaʿa what to say. The change serves to maximize the drama by placing this discussion in the context of a threatening argument between adversaries, rather than a set of instructions given from a commander to his loyal soldier. The change also gently reduces ʿAlī's role in the story. Ibn Kathīr's perspective as a fiercely anti-Shīʿī Syrian historian might explain the change, when otherwise the exchange is recorded more or less as al-Ṭabarī recorded it.

Given the perspectives sympathetic to the Umayyads that Ibn Kathīr brings to bear on later parts of the Ṣiffīn story, particularly on the subject of the arbitration and the reneging of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, it is, at first glance, surprising that Ibn Kathīr does not make use of Ibn al-ʿAdīm's account of the battle by the water, which relieves Muʿāwiya from some—indeed, most—of the responsibility for the Syrians' cynical denial of the water of the Euphrates to ʿAlī and his men. It is also possible that Ibn Kathīr simply had no access

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[461] Ibn Kathīr., *Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihaya,* v.7, p. 246-7.

to Ibn al-ʿAdīm's work, or did not know that he existed. However, either way, it is not Ibn Kathīr's intent to present Muʿāwiya as any kind of saint, nor make additions or alterations to the story that, though casting the Syrian leader in a decidedly better light, undermine the literary *verisimilitude* of the narrative and its structure. Muʿāwiya, in order to emerge from this story in an orthodox fashion, must retain control over the actions of his men. As will be seen, particularly with Ibn Kathīr's explication of the permissibility, and indeed the propriety, of the deception played upon Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, Ibn Kathīr is making certain to present Muʿāwiya (as a symbol for the Umayyad dynasty as a whole) as a legitimate caliph, whose assumption of power is both legal and right; there is no indication that he is trying to present Muʿāwiya as being on the right side of Ṣiffīn itself. Ibn Kathīr, like Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm before him, is seeking to justify the rule of a dynasty (not incidentally, a Syrian dynasty) that among Shīʿīs especially, and mainstream Sunnīs as well, was regarded is having illegally exercised authority. This venture does not require that they be saints, nor, indeed, always right. However, to legitimize his authority, Muʿāwiya must *retain* authority. This requires no change to the story on Ibn Kathīr's part. It only requires that he avoid the tempting slippery slope of weakening Muʿāwiya's authority, as Ibn alʿAdīm did in the *Bughya,* for the short-term payoff of increasing his righteousness.

Descriptions of the Armies and Early Skirmishes

The armies are described in terms of soldiers, their positioning in the ranks, and the identities of their commanders. Violent hostilities begin in earnest in the form of single-combat duels.

1. The year 37 set in, and Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with him) was fighting Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (may God be pleased with him). Each of them had their armies with them in a place known as Ṣiffīn, on the banks of the Euphrates in the eastern part of Syria. For the span of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja they fought every day, sometimes twice each day. There passed between them battles too numerous to mention; that is to say, when the month of Muḥarram came the people harbored a wish to commence with truce negotiations, the first matter of which would be peace amongst the people and the sparing of their blood. Ibn Jarīr [al-Ṭabarī] mentioned, by way of Hishām, on the authority of Abū Mikhnaf, from Mālik, that Saʿīd ibn al-Mujāhid al-Ṭāʾī, related on the authority of Maḥall ibn Khalīfa, that ʿAlī sent ʿAdī ibn Ḥātim and Yazīd ibn Qays al-Arḥabī, as well as Shabath ibn Rubʿī and Ziyād ibn Ḥafṣa to Muʿāwiya. When they came to him, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ was by his side, and ʿAdī, after praising God and extolling him, said, "Now to our subject, O Muʿāwiya. We have come to you to call you to obey the command of God."[462]

2. Ibn Dayzīl narrated, on the authority of ʿAmr ibn Saʿd by way of his standard *isnād*, that the *qurrāʾ* of the people of Iraq and the people of Syria, who gathered at Naḥiya, were close to thirty thousand. The *qurrāʾ* of Iraq included ʿUbayd al-Salmānī, ʿAlqama ibn Qays, ʿAmmar ibn ʿAbd Qays, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUtba ibn Masʿūd, and others, and they came to Muʿāwiya and they said to him, "What is it you demand?" He said, "I demand revenge for ʿUthmān." They said, "Whom do you demand for this?" He said, "ʿAlī." They said, "What, did he kill him?" He said, "Yes!" And they made their way to ʿAlī and mentioned to him what Muʿāwiya had said. He said, "Lies! I did not kill him, and you know that I did not kill him." They returned to Muʿāwiya, and he said, "If he did not slay him with his own hands, he ordered men to kill him." They returned

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once again to ʿAlī and he said, "By God, I did not kill him, and I did not command him killed."[463]

3. They came to the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja, still skirmishing, and every day ʿAlī would command a man to fight—al-Ashtar was the man who fought more than anyone else. Similarly, Muʿāwiya commanded one of his lieutenants to fight, and so they fought for the entire month of Dhū al-Ḥijja. Sometimes, they fought twice in a day. Ibn Jarīr said that the exchange of letters between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya continued, and the people were tiring of battle and forswore it, until Muḥarram of that year came and went, and there was still no peace. ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib commanded Yazīd ibn al-Ḥārith al-Jushamī to yell out to the people of Syria at sunset that "the Commander of the Faithful says to you: 'I have waited patiently for you to return to righteousness, I have set the matter before you and you have failed to answer. Truly, I have renounced you on the grounds that God does not love the treacherous!'" The people of Syria sought refuge from their commanders, and let them know what they had heard the caller cry out. At these words, Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr arose and mobilized the army, right and left flanks, and ʿAlī began to mobilize his army that night. He placed al-Ashtar al-Nakhāʾī over the Kufan cavalry and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir over their infantry, and Sahl ibn Ḥanīf over the Baṣran cavalry and Qays ibn Saʿd and Hāshim ibn ʿUtba over their infantry. Over the *qurrāʾ* he placed Saʿd ibn Fadakī al-Tamīmī. ʿAlī commanded the people that not one of them should fight until the Syrians start fighting.[464]

Discussion

In this section, we see that Ibn Kathīr is once again employing the *khabar* to relate history; we see the two versions, the first on the authority of al-Ṭabarī and the second on the authority of the traditionist Ibn Dayzīl, of the skirmishes which take place, sometimes twice a day. Beyond the relatively late appearance of the *khabar*, however, there is still little to distinguish the narrative of Ibn Kathīr from those of, in this case, Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim and al-Ṭabarī. With the exception of the light changes made to his section

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[463] Ibid., p. 249.
[464] Ibid., p. 250.

narrating the battle by the water, Ibn Kathīr has, thus far, for the most part created a wholly unremarkable and unoriginal account.

Laylat al-Harīr—"The Night of Clamor"

There is a great battle.

> Then ʿAlī invited to Muʿāwiya to settle the issue by duel between them, and ʿAmr endorsed the idea. Muʿāwiya retorted to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "Surely you know that nobody fights ʿAlī and survives! You seek to provoke this battle in the hopes of taking my place." Then he sent his son Muḥammad to ʿAlī with a large band of people, and they fought a fierce battle. Then ʿAlī sent a large band of people after, and this band attacked the other, and a group of people from both camps fought there whose identities are known only to God, may God have mercy upon them. The time came and went for the evening prayers…and the battle stretched on through the night, one of the most calamitous nights ever to befall the Muslims. This night was known as *laylat al-harīr:* "the night of clamor." Lances were snapped and arrows loosed that Thursday night, and then the people turned to their swords. ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) was exhorting the tribesmen on, riding before them and urging steadfastness and faithfulness; he was the imam of the people in the hearts of his soldiers. Over the right flank was al-Ashtar, who had been placed in charge of that side after the death of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Budayl, who had been killed on the fifth night of fighting, and over the left flank was Ibn ʿAbbās. The people fought each other on every side, and not one of our *ʿulamāʾ* has mentioned that even the *ʿulamāʾ* of this campaign fought each other with lances until they snapped, with arrows until they ran out, and with swords until they shattered, and then they began to fight hand-to-hand, throwing stones and casting dirt in faces, then they bit each other with their teeth, fighting with the intent of massacring the enemy, and then sitting and resting….And the tireless fighting did not cease, as Friday morning broke to find them still engaged, even as the people began the morning prayers. As the day broke, victory was beginning to turn to the Iraqis over the Syrians, led by al-Ashtar and his command of the right flank. He launched an attack against his Syrian counterparts, and ʿAlī

followed him, and most of their ranks were demolished. ʿAlī and his followers were on the verge of slaughtering them, and at that point the people of Syria raised the *maṣāḥif* over their lances and called out, "This is between us and you! For if the people die, who shall guard the frontiers? Who shall wage the Holy War against the pagans and the heathens?"[465]

Discussion

While Ibn Kathīr's presentation of *laylat al-harīr* is certainly an engaging read, the derivative account that was evident in previous sections continues unabated in *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya*. Once again, his main sources are Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn al-Athīr.

However, all is not entirely original; the observant reader will note the ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir has yet to be mentioned in any context beyond the descriptions of the armies, and seems to have survived Ibn Kathīr's version of *laylat al-harīr* unscathed. Given that his death has been presented in the past as one of the traumatic events of *laylat al-harīr*, and one which caused the Muslim combatants to pause and question whether their actions, which had brought about the death of a companion of the prophet, its absence is certainly noteworthy.

<u>The Call for Arbitration and the Appointment of Arbiters</u>

Desperate for deliverance from crushing defeat, Muʿāwiya asks ʿAmr for his advice. ʿAmr comes up with the brilliant and devious plan to raise aloft the Qurʾān and call for arbitration based upon it. ʿAlī's army is split, with some wanting to keep fighting, and

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[465] Ibn Kathīr., *Al-Bidāya wa-a-Nihaya,* v.7, p. 261.

some wanting to end the bloodshed and accept the offer. Those who wish to accept the offer force their will on ʿAlī, and then force him to appoint Abū Mūsā as his arbiter. Muʿāwiya appoints ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ.

1. Ibn Jarīr [al-Ṭabarī] and other historians have mentioned that the one who came up with that idea was ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, when he saw that the Iraqis were on the verge breaking through at that place. He wanted to disrupt the flow of the situation and delay the matter, so that both the contending parties would hold its own against the other, while the people were killing each other. So he said to Muʿāwiya, "I have just come upon something right now, something that can contribute to us nothing but unity, and can contribute to them nothing but division. I believe that if we raise the *maṣāḥif* and call them to arbitration based upon the Qurʾān, either they will all agree and it will end the killing, or they will differ, and some will say, 'let us answer them,' and some will say, 'no, let us not answer them.' It shall paralyze them and bring about their woe." Imām Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] said that he was told by Yaʿlā ibn ʿUbayd, on the authority of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Siyāh, on the authority of Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit, that he came to Abū Wāʾil in his family's mosque. "I asked about about the people whom ʿAlī killed at Nahrawān, regarding what requests of ʿAlī's they complied with, and what requests they did not, and what they regarded as permissible in battle. Then he said, "We were at Ṣiffīn, and when the fighting was going against the Syrians, they stopped the fighting out of desperation. Then, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said to Muʿāwiya, "Send to ʿAlī with a copy of the Qurʾān, and call him to the book of God. He shall not reject you." A man came to him and said, "The book of God between us and you!" Then he quoted: "Have you not regarded those who were given a portion of the Book, being called to the Book of God, that it might decide between them, and then a party of them turned away, swerving aside?" [466] And ʿAlī said, "Yes! I accept that, the book of God between us and you." And the Khawārij came to him, as did we of the *qurrāʾ*, that day, with their swords upon their shoulders, and they said, "O Commander of the Faithful, what can these cowards intend other than to prevent us from charging them with our swords, and letting God judge the matter between us and them?" Then Sahl ibn Ḥanīf spoke, saying, "O you people! You are deluding yourselves. For you know what happened to us at the battle of Ḥudaybiyya—that is the peace that was made between the

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[466] Qurʾān, 3:23 (Arberry, trans.)

Messenger of God and the pagans, and even as we were fighting ʿUmar came to the Messenger of God and said, "O Messenger of God, are we not in the right, and are they not manifestly mistaken?" and then he told the remainder of that *ḥadīth*.[467]

2. When the *maṣāḥif* were raised, the people of Iraq said, "We answer the book, and turn in repentance to it." Abū Mikhnaf said, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Jandab al-Azdī told me on the authority of his father, that ʿAlī said, "Servants of God! Continue on for the sake of your correctness in this matter and the sake of your righteousness, and battle your enemies, for Muʿāwiya, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, Ibn Abī Muʿayṭ, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama, ibn Abī Sarḥ, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays are no companions of *dīn* nor of the Qurʾān. I know them better than you all do, for I was their companion in childhood, and I was their companion in manhood, and they were evil as children and are evil as men. Woe unto you all! For by God, they would not have raised them without reading them and knowing what is contained within them, and they could not have raised them but deceitfully, shrewdly and treacherously." They said to him, "It is enough for us that we are called to the Book of God, and we insist on accepting the call." He said to them, "When I fight them, truly, they are subject to the judgment of the Book, and they are defying God when they use it in this manner, ignoring his command, and disregarding his Book."

Then Misʿar ibn Fadakī al-Tamīmī, Zayd ibn Ḥuṣayn al-Ṭāʾī, and the others who along with them thereafter became Khawārij, said to him, "O ʿAlī, answer the Book of God when you are called to it, or else we will present your dead body to the people or we will do to you what we did to Ibn ʿAffān, who tried to overstepped the bounds of what we know is permissible in the Book of God and so we killed him. So, by God, you will do it, or we will do it to you." He said, "Remember my intentions, and O! beware to remember what you have said to me. Remember that I told you to obey me, and to keep fighting, and that you defied me and chose a path that was acceptable to you." Then they said to him, "Send to al-Ashtar, and stop him from fighting." So ʿAlī sent to him to stop him from fighting. Al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī, in his book that he composed about the Khawārij,[468] said that Ibn ʿAbbās said, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn al-Muntashir al-Hamadānī, on the authority of some of the participants

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[467] Ibn Kathīr., *Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihaya*, v.7, p. 261-2. The conclusion of the story of the *ḥadīth* referenced here is that Muḥammad, secure in his faith and the righteousness of his cause, continued the fight and earned a great victory.

[468] For ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās in the work of al-Haytham ibn ʿAdi, see Stefan Leder, *Das Korpus al-Hayṯam ibn ʿAdī* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991), p. 237.

of Ṣiffīn and some of the people who were the leaders of the Khawārij whom ʿAlī did not consider liars, that ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir found this repugnant, and denounced it, and told ʿAlī the extent to which it disgusted him. Then he said, "Who shall look to God before seeking the wisdom of those other than he?" Then he fought until he was killed, may God have mercy upon him.

One of those who had called for [arbitration] was one of the leaders of the Syrians, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who stood up in front of the Iraqis and called them to meet, to stop fighting and to leave the battle in favor of what was to be found in the Qurʾān….One of those who enjoined upon ʿAlī to accept and enter into this arrangement was al-Ashʿath ibn Qays al-Kindī, may God be pleased with him. Abū Mikhnaf narrated, on another matter, that when ʿAlī sought out al-Ashtar, he said to him, "Say to him that he does not want to abandon me at this hour by virtue of his position on this. Say that 'I anticipate that God will grant success to ʿAlī,' and 'Do not let your fighting get ahead of the situation.'" The messenger, who was Yazīd ibn Hāniʾ, returned to ʿAlī and informed him of al-Ashtar's situation and of what he had said. Al-Ashtar was determined to fight in order to take advantage of the auspicious moment. A tumult arose, and the voices of those people rose, saying to ʿAlī, "By God, we have seen you do nothing but command him to fight!" He said, "And did you see me cheering him on? Did I not send for him in frank terms, and did you all not hear what I said?" And they said, "If you send for him and he comes, by God we will separate and stand apart from you!" Then ʿAlī said to Yazīd ibn Hāniʾ, "Woe unto you! Say to him, 'Come to me, for truly the divisions have set in!'" When Yazīd ibn Hāniʾ returned to him and said that the Commander of the Faithful demanded that he withdraw from the battle and come to him, he came hurriedly and cried, "Woe! Do you not see what our position is, and how close we are to victory? Nothing remains for us to do but the smallest part!" And the group said to him, "O you two, do you want to accept, or shall the Commander of the Faithful be killed as ʿUthmān was killed? What shall be your victory then?" So al-Ashtar came to ʿAlī and left the battle. He said, "O people of Iraq! O people of disgrace, of weakness, they know that you would be the victors, and they raise the *maṣāḥif* calling you to abide by what is contained in it, they who have left behind what God has already commanded in it, and the *sunna* of him to whom it came down! Do not answer them; rather, forbear for my sake, for just a short while, for I have already felt conquest!" They said, "No!" He said, "Forbear, allow me time to deal with the enemy, for I have already tasted victory!" They

said, "Then we would enter into error with you." Al-Ashtar looked closely at these *qurrāʾ* who were demanding a favorable answer to what the Syrians had called for, and said, "If at first you fought these men rightly, you must continue; and if it was an error, you will at least witness your enemies in the hellfire!" They said, "We have heard your call; we will not obey and forswear you as a companion forever. We fought these men by the will of God, and we have stopped fighting them for the sake of God." Al-Ashtar said to them, "You are cheating God and letting yourselves be deceived. You were called to start war, and you answered, O you evil people, your prayers will be considered small in the world and wanting, until you meet God! I see nothing but your attempt to flee from death into this world, you cowardly old she-camels! You will be banished, just as the group of evildoers[469] was banished." They insulted him and he insulted them, they smacked the face of his mount with their whips. A long quarrel passed between them, and most of the people of Iraq, as well as the people of Syria, were alarmed by the scope of the uproar over the potential ceasefire, but at last al-Ashtar agreed to a proposal that would prevent the spilling of Muslim blood. Truly, a great number of people had died in the meantime, especially in the three prior days, the last of which was that Thursday night, which was *laylat al-harīr*—the night of clamor. In each army there was bravery and steadfastness, whose like is not found in the world.[470]

3. The parties haggled after exchanging letters and correspondence too long to mention regarding the arbitration, but the conclusion was that each of the commanders—ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya—would appoint a man as his arbiter. The two arbiters agreed on what was most beneficial for the Muslims. Muʿāwiya appointed ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and ʿAlī wanted to appoint ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās—his real second-in-command—but according to what we have been told, the *qurrāʾ* rejected him, and said, "We will accept none but Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī. Al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī said, in his *Kitāb al-Khawārij*, that the first to suggest Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī was al-Ashʿath ibn Qays, who was followed by the tribesmen of Yaman. They described him as being the last of the people to join the *fitna* and the fighting, and Abū Mūsā had stayed apart from the fighting, passing the time in the Ḥijāz. ʿAlī said, "I shall appoint al-Ashtar as my

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[469] See Wensinck, *Concordance,* vol. IV, *al-Qawm al-Ẓālimūn*, p. 83; Qurʾān, 9:66. The *aya* in question refers to this group of evildoers specifically as apostates; this is the charge that al-Ashtar is leveling against the *qurrāʾ*. Wensinck lists a number of *ḥadīth* collections in which this appears, including in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and the collections of Muslim and Tirmidhī.

[470] Ibid., p. 262-3.

arbiter," and they replied, "And who was it who started the war and set fire to the land, other than al-Ashtar?" He said, "Do what you want." Al-Aḥnaf said to ʿAlī, "By God, this whole community has already thrown unworthy stones, save one man alone, who stayed away from the fighting until it stopped, and stayed away until the star appeared above his house. I refuse that you will appoint an arbiter over me, and I will demand a second and a third, and you will appoint none but your cousins, or others like them." He said, "I reject all but Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī." The message was sent to Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, who had already withdrawn, and when it was told to him what the people had agreed upon, he said, "Praise God!" It was said to him, "You have been appointed as arbiter," and he said, "We are for God and to him we shall return." Then they took him to ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) and they began to compose a letter, which is as follows.[471]

Discussion

In this section, Ibn Kathīr begins to separate himself from his colleagues. ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir finally meets his fate—but not before offering his opinion on the call to arbitration, his disgust for which causes him to charge the field, at which point he is slain. But it is the various presentations of ʿAlī's reactions to the call for arbitration that truly show Ibn Kathīr's enterprise. In his description of the events surrounding ʿAlī's ultimate acceptance of the call to arbitration—an acceptance which, in every other account, has been reluctant to the extreme—Ibn Kathīr sees fit to present two different perspectives on the issue. His own perspective is presented second, and it stands in agreement with the presentation of ʾAlī's acceptance of the arbitration as a reluctant and grudging agreement present in the other accounts. However, he also includes the anecdote in which ʿAlī accepts the call for arbitration, and the Khawārij reject it. Not only does he invoke the *khabar* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, but in doing so presents an

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[471] Ibid., p. 265.

apology for the Khārijī position. Thus far, his is the only such foray into the Khārijī perspective. Heretofore, the Khawārij have been treated with little more than disdain, "exposed" as hypocrites for allegedly demanding that ʿAlī accede to the call for arbitration, then forcing Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī on him as his negotiator, while they would later adopt the slogan *la ḥukma illā lillāh* as one of the prime tenets of their sect, and abandon ʿAlī's cause, even to the point that one of their number assassinated him four years after Ṣiffīn. Among these historians, Ibn Kathīr excepted, the Khawārij are unanimously derided for such hypocrisy. This unanimity is likely because the allegation that al-Ashʿath ibn Qays and the rest of "those who would become Khawārij" thereafter were the strongest (*ashadd*) in their demands that ʿAlī do the very thing they would later abandon him over first appeared in Naṣr ibn Muzāhim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn,* and nary a mention of Ṣiffīn occurred thereafter wherein it did not appear. Naṣr himself drew from pro-ʿAlid sources such as ʿUmar ibn Saʿd and Abū Mikhnaf, and was well known to have ʿAlid sympathies himself; and even the most fervent of supporters of ʿAlid claims, like al-Yaʿqūbī, saw no reason to defend the behavior of the Khawārij and chose to let the allegation stand. Even in the Ibn Kathīr version of the Ṣiffīn story, the Khawārij do not escape criticism altogether; later, he writes:

> Then Misʿār ibn Fadakī al-Tamīmī, Zayd ibn Ḥuṣayn al-Ṭāʾī, and the others who, along with them, thereafter became Khawārij, said to him, "O ʿAlī, answer the Book of God when you are called to it, or else we will present your dead body to the people or we will do to you what we did to ibn ʿAffān, who tried to overwhelm us with what is permissible in the Book of God and so we killed him. So, by God, you will do it, or we will do it to you." He said, "Remember my intentions, and O! beware to remember what you have said to me. Remember that I told you to obey

me, and to keep fighting, and that you defied me and chose a path that was acceptable to you.[472]

His inclusion of the ḥadīth from Ibn Ḥanbal, and the presentation of the Khārijī perspective therein, shows Ibn Kathīr to have a relatively balanced approach by modern standards in that he presents all sides. Most likely, he was working with the intent to undermine some of the heroic mythologization of the character of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. By allowing the Khawārij their voice, even if it is criticized, Ibn Kathīr weakens ʿAlī by implying the possibility of variant perspectives. In so doing, he opens the door for his interpretation of the legality of ʿAmr's deception of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī at the end of his account.

On the other hand, his invocation of Ibn Ḥanbal was an implicit validation of ʿAlī's legitimacy against those whose fervent Sunnism caused them to deny his legitimacy altogether. Ibn Ḥanbal makes explicit statements that ʿAlī was the fourth caliph and the fourth best, but this ardently Sunnī perspective never contradicts the fact that ʿAlī was a legitimate and righteous caliph, certainly worthy of the term *rāshid*.[473] As will become clear in the next section, Ibn Kathīr, like Ibn Ḥanbal, is not interested in arguing against ʿAlī's legitimacy as imam. Rather, his focus is on the necessity of an imam for the community's health and salvation and this focus meshes very well with the Ḥanbalī perspective presented above. With no assertion that Muʿāwiya was *more* valid than ʿAlī, but an argument that an imam at all times is essential, he is able to legitimize Muʿāwiya's subsequent supremacy over the Islamic Empire from the moment of ʿAmr's

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[472] Ibid., p. 262.
[473] Christopher Melchert, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006). p. 95.

deception of Abū Mūsā, while avoiding any controversial disavowal of ʿAlī's validity as imam.

Negotiation, Ruling and Reneging

The ground rules for the arbitration are set, with some disagreement over ʿAlī's title, Commander of the Faithful. The arbiters meet, argue the points, and fail to come to an agreement immediately. Abū Mūsā suggests deposing both men, and electing a third party, a suggestion which ʿAmr accepts. When they go to tell the people of their decision, Abū Mūsā speaks first and deposes ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya both, as was agreed; ʿAmr, however, deposes only ʿAlī, and confirms Muʿāwiya as caliph. A scuffle breaks out.

> 1. They [the arbiters] began the composition of a letter, which is as follows:
> "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is what has been agreed upon by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the Commander of the Faithful," and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said, "Write his name and the name of his father, for he is your Commander, not mine." Al-Aḥnaf said, "Write nothing but *Amīr al-Muʾmīnīn,* Commander of the Faithful." ʿAlī said, "Erase '*Amīr al-Muʾmīnīn*' and write, 'This is what has been agreed upon by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib,'" and then ʿAlī related the story of Ḥudaybiyya, in which the people of Mecca had objected to the phrase, "This is what has been agreed upon by Muḥammad, the Messenger of God.' The pagans prevented this, and he said, "Write, 'This is what has been agreed upon by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh." So, the scribe wrote, "This is what has been agreed upon by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, ʿAlī being the commander of the people of Iraq and the Muslims and supporters of his, and Muʿāwiya being the commander of the people of Syria, and those believers and Muslims were with him. We submit to the wisdom of God and his Book, and we shall live as God commanded us to live and die as

he commanded us to die, and according to what the two arbiters—Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ—find in the Book, and only what is contained therein, and in the accepted Sunna."[474]

2. [The meeting of the arbiters] took place in the month of Ramaḍān as was stipulated at the time of the call for arbitration at Ṣiffīn, but al-Wāqidī said that they met in the month of Shaʿban.[475] At the onset of Ramaḍan, ʿAlī (may God be pleased with him) sent four hundred cavalry with Shurayḥ ibn Hāniʾ, accompanied by Abū Mūsā and ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās (blessings unto him). Muʿāwiya sent ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ with four hundred of the Syrian cavalry, including ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, and they met up at Dūmat al-Jandal by way of Adhruḥ, a place that is equidistant from Kūfa and Damascus (al-Shām). A group of notables was witness to them there, a group which included ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, Mughīra ibn Shaʿba, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām al-Makhzūmī, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn ʿAbd Yaghūth al-Zuhrī, and Abī Jahl ibn Ḥudhayfa. Some of the people claim that Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ witnessed them as well, but others deny his presence. Ibn Jarīr [al-Ṭabarī] reported that ʿUmar ibn Saʿd [ibn Abī Waqqāṣ] went to his father, who had withdrawn, and said, "O father, news has come to you of what happened with the people at Ṣiffīn, and how the people appointed Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ as arbiters, and how a number of men of the Quraysh witnessed them. Indeed, you were a companion of the Messenger of God, and one of the members of the *shūrā*, and you took no part in any of the disasters that befell this people, and they said that you were the most deserving of the people to be Caliph." Then he said, "Do not do it! For I heard the Messenger of God say, 'Indeed there will be a *fitna*, and the best of the people will remain unknown and pious.' By God, I shall never profit from this affair, ever."[476]

3. Abū Mikhnaf said: Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq related to me, on the authority of Nāfiʿ, from Ibn ʿUmar, who said that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ said, "This matter should only be given to a man with a wisdom tooth that eats and tastes [i.e. a mature man of the world]." Ibn ʿUmar was heedless, so ibn al-Zubayr said to him, "Be clever and aware." Ibn ʿUmar said, "No, by God, I shall never accept any bribe from him, ever." Then he said, "O

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[474] Ibn Kathīr., *Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihaya,* v.7, p. 265-6.

[475] The work referenced here is probably *Futūḥ al-Shām,* but it has long been shown that this work is actually of later origin, and al-Wāqidī cannot be the author. See for example Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography,* p. 186-93.

[476] Ibid., p. 270-1.

Ibn al-ʿĀṣ, the Arabs have already fought against your position after the way they slashed with swords and brawled with lances; do not plunge them into another *fitna* like it, or worse." Then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ tried to get Abū Mūsā to confirm Muʿāwiya himself over the people, and he rejected him; then he tried to get his own son, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr, established as Caliph, and this Abū Mūsā rejected as well. Abū Mūsā requested from ʿAmr that the two of them give authority to ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, but ʿAmr rejected this idea, as well. Then they agreed that the two of them would depose both Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī, and they would put the matter to a *shūrā* amongst the people, who would agree on someone they would select for themselves. Then they came before the crowd where the people were gathered. ʿAmr did not go before Abū Mūsā in anything, but on the contrary deferred to him in all matters, politely and reverentially. He said to him, "O Abū Mūsā, get up and inform the people what we have both agreed upon." So Abū Mūsā stood up and spoke in front of the people, praised God and extolled him, and then the Messenger of God, and then he said, "O you people! We have just looked into the matter facing this *umma*, and we did not see any option better than the one agreed upon by ʿAmr and me. That is, that we depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, and put the matter to a *shūrā,* for which the people will take responsibility to appoint over themselves whom they choose. I hereby depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya." Then he stepped aside, and ʿAmr climbed up to the stage. He praised God and extolled him, and then he said, "Indeed, this one has just said what you have all heard, and deposed his master! I, likewise, depose him, just as he has. But I confirm my master, Muʿāwiya, for he is the *walī* of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, the claimant of his blood, and the most righteous of the people in his position!" For ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ had seen that the people would be left without an imam, and this situation would lead to a long period of corruption, exceeding the disagreements that the people had just experienced. He thus confirmed Muʿāwiya out of necessity, as *ijtihād* confirms and holds true (*faʾaqarra Muʿāwiya lamā rāʾa dhālika min al-maṣlaḥa, wa-al-ijtihāḍ yukhṭiʾ wa-yuṣīb*). It is said that Abū Mūsā spoke to him uncouthly, and that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ answered in kind.[477]

Discussion

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[477] Ibid., p. 272.

Without question, the most remarkable piece of text to date is the explanation offered for ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ's deception of Abū Mūsā—an explanation for which there appears to be no obvious precedent in Arabic historical writing. This event has been the most universally derided episode at Ṣiffīn in all of the histories heretofore examined. As a Syrian, it is not surprising to see Ibn Kathīr expressing a soft spot for Muʿāwiya and his cause, as did ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, although he has until now been careful to avoid expressing anything overt to that effect. Perhaps it is simply the Shīʿism, Shīʿī sympathy, or at the very least, pro-ʿAlidism, of most of the earlier Arab historians, but it is only here that ʿAmr's reneging on the agreement, publicly denouncing Abū Mūsā after tricking him into an agreement negotiated in poor faith, is not only explained or excused, but almost extolled, as Ibn Kathīr defends its legality. Ibn Kathīr is unambiguously correct, on one point, at least: in the intervening period, while the *shūrā* met to elect a new imam, the *umma* would have been left leaderless, and thus with no path to salvation for the time being. Such a situation, argues Ibn Kathīr, would have been worse than the troubles leading to Ṣiffīn, and could easily have led to something much worse.

The idea that "a bad imam is better than no imam" was already extant, even in Ḥadīth. It finds expression in the Creeds of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, whom Ibn Kathīr cited in the previous section, in the idea that the ruler, whether good or bad, should always be obeyed;[478] since a view of individual leadership was not so prominent in Ibn Ḥanbal's creeds and since Sunnism was largely independent of the ruler—that is to say, the community was meant to unite around one scheme of law and belief—clearly the Ḥanbalī perspective was that the identity and righteousness of the ruler were umimportant relative to his authority. The medieval *locus classicus* of the idea was Abū al-Ḥasan al-Mawardī

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[478] Melchert, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal,* p. 93.

(974-1058/364-450), the son of a Baṣran rose-water merchant. Al-Mawardī lived in a period of ʿAbbasid decline, with the Fāṭimids ruling over Egypt providing the first real challenge to ʿAbbasid legitimacy, while to the east the Buyids, a family of Shīʿī army commanders from Daylām, were in the ascendancy. His book *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* is a central, if not the central, formulation of a Sunnī theory of government.[479] Al-Mawardī states, "Without rulers, men would exist in a state of utter chaos and unmitigated savagery… the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him salvation, said, 'You will be ruled after me by some who are benign, and some who are depraved. Listen to them and obey them in all that is right. The good they do will be for your benefit and theirs; the bad they do will be for you and against them.'"[480] This idea was widespread in Sunnī political thought in the later middle ages.

It is fascinating to see the most famous deception in early Islam praised for its legality and correctness within Islam, when it is otherwise universally derided. To most of the writers, this chicanery is the most inexcusable act committed by the Syrians at Ṣiffīn. The decision to bar ʿAlī and his companions from the waters of the Euphrates River, while certainly cynical and wicked, was ultimately nothing more than a military tactic and, from a literary standpoint is presented a way to demonize Muʿāwiya and the Syrians early in the Ṣiffīn narrative. ʿAmr's deception of Abū Mūsā, on the other hand, had far-reaching consequences for the Islamic empire and its politics. The choice of a leader and the method of his election had been of paramount political and theological importance since the Prophet Muḥammad had died without a universally agreed-upon

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[479] For an in-depth discussion of this book's importance, see the introduction to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Mawardī (Wafaa H. Wahba, trans.), *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya wa-al-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyya: The Ordinances of Government* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Ltd., 1996), esp. pp. xiii-xiv.
[480] Ibid., p. 3.

successor, and the election of the proper imam touched upon the very fate of the souls of every believing Muslim, who, without a proper imam, could not achieve salvation. ʿAmr's deception spelled the beginning of ʿAlī's political downfall and marked the beginning of the rise of Muʿāwiya's caliphate and the Umayyad dynasty's reign; one need look no further than the fact that ʿAlī was and is considered by posterity the very last of the *rāshidūn*, the rightly-guided caliphs, to understand what a falling off Islamic posterity perceives in the transition to the Umayyad dynasty. To see this moment not only *defended*, but actually *praised*, is extremely surprising, at least until one recalls the Sunnī idea that, to the community, a having bad imam is a better state of affairs than lacking one altogether. Ibn Kathīr does not condone deception or trickery; indeed, his response to the Syrian call for arbitration is much like that of his anti-Umayyad predecessors. That is, he sees it, as did the other historians, as little more than a trick designed to buy time for the Syrians' lines, bending and breaking under the strength of the Iraqi assault. However, once that point was reached, and once he and Abū Mūsā could come to no agreement regarding the Qurʾān's guidance in settling the matter, Ibn Kathīr argues that he had no choice. To leave the community leaderless would have been a worse fate than continued fighting, and, he would argue, he was commanded to confirm Muʿāwiya lest the community be without a leader to be obeyed. ʿAlī had implicitly abdicated (or, at least, his appointed arbiter had actively caused him to abdicated against his wishes), and Muʿāwiya, to the minds of both ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Ibn Kathīr, was the only other choice available.

Conclusion

As for the legacy of the Ṣiffīn story, as is so often the case with "well-known" stories, one version of the story—the "vulgate," Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*—emerged as the dominant narrative within the wider epic of Islamic history, despite the existence of at least one contemporary, competing text, Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. The emergence of a vulgate did not, however, preclude a wide variety of perspectives on the battle. The *akhbārīs*—al-Dinawārī, al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Ṭabarī—were primarily concerned with the relation of past events, and so their versions of the story were dry and factual, but not without a certain degree of argumentativeness; their varying degrees of support for ʿAlid legitimacy (or that of their sources) meant that in each case there was an element of distaste (to say the least) for the Umayyads, Muʿāwiya, and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. The *muʾarrikhīs*—al-Masʿūdī, al-Maqdisī, and Ibn al-Athīr—clearly either used the *akhbārīs* as sources or used the same sources as the *akhbārīs*, and the conventions of their genre allowed them to adapt and expand the story, as they did away the *akhbār* as the primary unit of narration and the tedious repetition of the same episode in favor of a more fluid, and ultimately much more readable account. Concurrent with this shift in Arabic historiographical style, anti-Shīʿī sentiment began to creep into some of the histories, particularly in third/ninth century Syria, in order to "extend an image of orthodox dominion to earlier eras."[481] Although this trend began with some of these men and their contemporaries, the representation of the Umayyads in their eras ultimately remained predominantly unfavorable; and, when it was sympathetic, it tended to be so more out of a sense of distaste for the developing Shīʿī identity. It was only with the advent of the

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[481] Pellat, "Le culte de Muʻāwiya au IIIe siècle de l'hégire," *Studia Islamica,* p. 255.

local history, specifically the works of Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm, that Ṣiffīn was used as a site for explicit argumentation in favor of certain Umayyad positions, and within the framework of each man's larger enterprise; for the former, it was to rehabilitate Syrian Umayyad history to conform to a proper brand of Sunnī orthodoxy, and for the latter, it was to confirm that notion and to argue specifically against the charge that their political differences with ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib made Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, and the rest of the Syrians, non-believers. Finally, it was Ibn Kathīr who took the mission of those two men and combined it with a dose of specifically focused scholarship to attempt to make the Ṣiffīn story the beginning of Umayyad legitimacy.

Ibn Kathīr's message was much more concentrated than those of Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm. Although the story itself remained the same, a few specific passages demonstrate how he used the Ṣiffīn story to argue that ʿAlī was a legitimate imam and that Muʿāwiya and the Syrians were on the wrong side of the battle; however, once the decision was made to depose ʿAlī, and he was deposed by his arbiter, Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ was left with no legal choice but to confirm Muʿāwiya. ʿAmr was thus constrained by the notion that a bad imam is better than no imam, for no imam means a hiatus from the order set down by the Prophet's example, historical precedent, and *ijtiḥād*.

Ibn Kathīr's argument could not have been made without the foundation of the *akhbārīs*, the story's enlargement, and perhaps embellishment, by the *muʾarrikhīs,* and the argumentative enterprises of the Syrian composers of the biographical dictionaries, Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm. One by-product of this study has been the the specific documentation in the evolution in styles of historical writing, focusing on the Ṣiffīn story.

Although the conclusions drawn here cast Ibn Kathīr as the "culmination" of this trend, in fact it is the content of his work, rather than his style of writing, that places the focus of this study's exploration of the development of the Ṣiffīn story upon him. The evolution in style is evident in the ways in which Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim used the tradents relative to the methods employed by the *akhbārī*s in making use of his *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* (or the tradents, directly); the enlargement of the narrative in the works of the *muʾarrikhī*s (as well as *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* of the *akhbārī* Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, a *muʾarrikhī* style work nearly a century ahead of his time, and Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya*); and the enormously different position of the story within the structure of the local histories of Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-ʿAdīm. The present study, therefore, in addition to its primary focus on the historiographical use of the Ṣiffīn story as a literary space to elaborate some of the most important points of disagreement in developing Sunnī and Shīʿī theological, legal, and political identities, also provides a snapshot of the evolution of historiographical style through the lens of the battle of Ṣiffīn.

Ṣiffīn remains an important part of the story of the first *fitna* and the resulting emergence of theological schism within Islam. However, despite its evident use as a site for explicit argumentation on the subjects of the Umayyad legacy and the proper nature of the imamate, after Ibn Kathīr it was no longer used in this matter; nor is it used as such in modern times (see Appendix III). Perhaps the absence of a caliph since the death of Abdülmecid in 1924, and the lack of either an imamate or a dynasty in Islam, has rendered such discussions entirely academic and obsolete. Furthermore, despite the historiographical genealogy traced in this dissertation, there was, over the course of Islamic history, a general acceptance, on the parts of both Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, of the

perspectives implicit in the widely-used work of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn al-Athīr—namely, the rightness of ʿAlī, the wrongness of Muʿāwiya, the foolishness of Abū Mūsā, the slyness of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and the hypocrisy of the Khawārij. Nobody today seems interested in arguing for the legitimacy of Muʿāwiya and his dynasty; even Ibn Kathīr did not argue against the legitimacy of ʿAlī and his imamate.

When it comes to Ṣiffīn, it is possible that there is no reason left to pursue these arguments. However, it is important to remember that in the story of Ṣiffīn, like many stories of Islamic history, and particularly during contentious times such as the first *fitna,* there is room for interpretation, and that interpretation on the part of historical writers can be a window into Islamic history and the development of Muslim sectarian identities, and that, while one narrative may come to dominate historical memory, there are always other versions, now lost or pushed aside, that may tell another story altogether.

Appendix I

Shīʿī, Khārijī, and Other Perspectives

Shīʿī Perspectives

The first five chapters of this dissertation traced the battle of Ṣiffīn from the earliest historical accounts, starting chronologically with Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's vulgate *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, down a specific line of historiographical development. An attempt was made to show how the story developed from one in which Muʿāwiya and the Syrians were categorically the "villains," into one in which they were, for a variety of reasons, excused for their errors or even lauded for their controversial actions. This changing trend towards sympathy was not unique to the Ṣiffīn story, but rather, as both Pellat and Shahin show, part of a larger move away from the early ʿAbbasid narrative of history. This move is implicit in the appearance of accounts and essays sympathetic to Muʿāwiya, beginning in the eighth century, but truly picking up steam a couple of centuries later, as ʿAbbasid power truly began to wane. In the accounts examined in this dissertation, this movement towards a rehabilitated view of Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads in accounts of the battle of Ṣiffīn—exemplified here by Ibn al-Athīr, ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and Ibn Kathīr—also had in common the nationality of their authors, all of whom were Syrian.

The specific motives of these authors have already been discussed; it is clear, too, that they had very little impact upon the way Ṣiffīn is currently presented and remembered. Despite the imaginative, and often well-argued, positions of these Syrian

men, the story in modern scholarship is much as it was for those in the earliest epoch of Islamic historical writing. Although traces of a historiographical tradition sympathetic to the Umayyads would emerge later, the overwhelming trend throughout all our sources is support for ʿAlī's claims and his predicament. Given ʿAlī's subsequent importance to the Shīʿīs, this "Umayyad" resurgence must be understood not as a genuine longing for the disfavored regime, but rather as a trend in historical, legal, and theological writing that saw in the Umayyads a convenient counterpoint to an increasingly defined, and, to Sunnīs, increasingly hostile, Shīʿī identity. The fervent Sunnism of the Syrian authors examined in this study encouraged them to recast what had become the "standard" version of Syrian history within Islam into a role more properly conforming to their own Orthodoxy.

Beyond the well-known studies *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* of Fuat Sezgin and *Theologie und Gesellschaft* by Josef van Ess, there have been a number of notable contributions to the field of Shīʿī literature and historical writing, including Hossein Modarressi's *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shīʿite Literature,* an encyclopedia of early Shīʿī historical figures (starting, of course, with ʿAlī himself), litterateurs, theologians, traditionists, historians, and jurists, their works and importance to the Shīʿī historiographical tradition.[482] Of course, Petersen's critical study *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in Early Arabic Tradition* contains a full section on Shīʿī writings relating specifically to the conflict between the two Caliphs, thus making it far more useful in the construction of this study. However, since neither of the two works really goes beyond the tenth century—at which point the historiographical branch traced by this

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[482] Hossein Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shīʿite Literature* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2003).

study had not yet split off, or was perhaps only beginning to split off, into the new directions of the Syrians examined in chapters IV and V, neither is particularly helpful in discussing the advent of a specifically Shīʾī perspective of Ṣiffīn.

In fact, it would be fair to say that no such early perspective truly exists, apart from the already essentially Shīʿī version presented by those historians in chapters I II, and III, with the possible exception of Ibn al-Athīr, who was Sunnī. The generally accepted course of events at Ṣiffīn, and the meanings and implications of those events, already fit into a Shīʿī schema, and thus had no need for modification, explanation or contextualization. However, the Ṣiffīn story became a site for the discussion of some of the key elements behind a unique, early Shīʿī identity, most especially its treatment of the concepts of *imāma* and *walāya*. The two concepts both regard the right to rule; *imāma* refers to spiritual authority, whereas *walāya* refers a right of action (or rulership) based upon closeness to another. The role of the concept of *imāma* in the story of Ṣiffīn is clear; one gets the sense, reading the back-and-forth correspondence between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, that the two characters (and all that they represent) have radically different concepts regarding the nature of the imamate. ʿAlī feels that his election as Caliph, being legal and binding, obligates Muʿāwiya to take the *bayʿa* and enter into his service; Muʿāwiya feels that ʿAlī's election was completed under suspicious circumstances, and that his imamate is not valid unless the community can have some form of justice for the murdered Caliph, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. This discrepancy becomes clearest as they are setting down the ground rules for the arbitration, and Muʿāwiya or someone in his camp objects to the use of the term *Amīr al-Muʿminīn* for ʿAlī, usually with a comment that can be paraphrased as, "He is your caliph, not ours; if we thought he was the caliph, we

would not fight him." There is thus a distinction given between competing concepts of legitimacy and leadership, represented by the characters of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya.

With these themes in mind, it is profitable to look elsewhere for distinctly Shīʿī perspectives that emerged somewhat later. The early universal historians already seem to have, in general, a pro-ʿAlid perspective. Perspectives on Ṣiffīn, however, are not limited to universal historians. One later, decidedly Shīʿī source that spends a fair amount of time on Ṣiffīn is ʿImād al-Dīn Idrīs al-Qurashī's (794/1392-872/1468) history of the Ismāʿīlī imams (including, naturally, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib) through the Fāṭimīd dynasty, *Uyūn al-Akhbār*. The last great exponent of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*, Idrīs' presentation of Ṣiffīn is a highly detailed, near word-for-word reprinting of Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, with some interjections from the *Nahj al-Balāgha,* the *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, a very few citations from al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab* and Balādhūrī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf,* and various collections of poetry, but, interestingly, adds a fair amount of his own predictably vitriolic commentary. For example, after the interaction between Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī and Muʿāwiya, Idrīs comments, "Muʿāwiya and his company seem to ignore the fact that it was his own father who led those who gathered in enmity against the Messenger of God…and that he and his father did not submit to Islam except in surrender, when they realized that the Messenger of God would be victorious."[483] *Uyūn al-Akhbār* is full of such comments; every aspect of the first section of the Ṣiffīn story is accompanied by commentary. One example is a section, in the discussion of the approach of the armies to Ṣiffīn, entitled "Muʿāwiya and his ignorant hatred:"

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[483] ʿImād al-Dīn Idrīs ibn Qurashī, *Uyūn al-Akhbār wa-Funūn al-Athār*, ed. A. Chleilat (Damascus: IFPO, forthcoming), 17. All page numbers for *Uyūn al-Akhbār* refer to the draft manuscript kindly provided by Avraham Hakim and Ahmed Chleilat.

"It is genuine enmity and ignorant hatred, and distaste for ʿAlī (peace be upon him) because of the way in which he helped the Messenger of God (may God bless him and his family) that led Muʿāwiya to fight him, his loved ones and his close ones. He has received a fair amount of censure for this, as [fighting against ʿAlī] was completely unauthorized in any and all of God's stipulations. It attacks the way of truth, enjoined by God upon his sincere servants. It was just as his father [Abū Sufyān] had done. The son [Muʿāwiya] did not follow ʿAlī (peace be upon him), for [Muʿāwiya] was a drinker of alcohol, but rather met him in enmity and sought to bring about his death. Even his cousin and brother ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān did not sin so in the days of his regime and ascendancy. How, then, did the matter conclude in his favor? It was God who made him king, and placed power in his hands.

"[His father] had been financed and provided with empowerment from the souls of his supporters out of their enmity to the Messenger of God (may God bless him and his family), a support which emerged out of their polytheism, until at last they were overwhelmed and entered into Islam, forced by the sword of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his defense of the Messenger of God (may God bless him and his family), and [Muʿāwiya] had no recourse for this except by demanding revenge for ʿUthmān and claiming the right for retribution for his blood. The people knew that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) was innocent of the blood of ʿUthmān, that he was sitting in his house, and that Muʿāwiya abandoned [ʿUthmān] to his fate and that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ fled the scene. Then Ṭalḥā and al-Zubayr fought him, even killing *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* and followers of goodness, whose virtue cannot be doubted, nor can the strength of their characters be impugned by anyone."[484]

In this case, Idrīs invokes Abū Sufyān's position within Muslim historical memory as the symbolic representation of Qurashī opposition to the Prophet to suggest that Muʿāwiya, far from being motivated by legitimate grievance, was motivated by petty personal grudges surrounding ʿAlī's apparent role in defeating his family and forcing conversion to Islam upon them at least as much as he was by megalomaniacal political ambition. His explanation of Muʿāwiya's ultimate victory over ʿAlī is in line with standard Shīʿī thought on the course of much of Islamic history: he concludes that Muʿāwiy'as victory and the Umayyad dynasty were the will of God. Such interjections appear throughout the text's presentation of his Ṣiffīn story, with the occasional speech of ʿAlī drawn from the

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[484] Ibid., p. 23-24.

Najh al-Balāgha and the *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha* (some of which are also included in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn),* including clearly pro-ʿAlid sections entitled, "Why the Muslims were angry at ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān,"[485] which is essentially a list of detractions about the third caliph; "Some of the shortcomings of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ,"[486] which criticizes Muʿāwiya's mastermind for his slyness, worldliness, and his low birth; "A list of some of the *Anṣār* who were with the Commander of the Faithful;"[487] "Mālik al-Ashtar's charge, in which he killed forty men;"[488] "The raising of the *maṣāḥif* and the resultant appearance of fitna;"[489] and, "On the appointment of Ibn al-ʿĀṣ as the arbiter for the Syrians and the Iraqis' betrayal of the Commander of the Faithful."[490] The aspect of the text most relevant to this study is that the story of Ṣiffīn itself comes directly from Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (an already pro-ʿAlid source), with a few snippets from the histories of other Shīʿīs, like al-Masʿūdī, or from devoutly Shīʿī texts like the *Nahj al-Balāgha* and the *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha.* Unlike the logical contortions performed by the Sunnī authors in chapters IV and V, Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Ibn Kathīr, in their effort to rehabilitate the Umayyad image and unify Islamic history through their historical writing, Idrīs, in his endeavor to present an Ismāʿīlī vision of early Islamic history, needs to do very little other than recycle the Ṣiffīn vulgate and heap emphatic and intuitive contempt upon the clear antagonists of the sole surviving version of the story.

One might wonder why it was necessary for Idrīs further to "pro-ʿAlidize" a story already heavily and clearly sympathetic to the first Shīʿī imam. It might be recalled that

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[485] Ibid., p. 24.
[486] Ibid., p. 48-9.
[487] Ibid., p. 112.
[488] Ibid., p. 211.
[489] Ibid., p. 220.
[490] Ibid., p. 227.

Idrīs was active about three-quarters of a century after Ibn Kathīr, and as an Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī* he would surely have been aware of rival Shīʿī claims and Sunnī counterclaims, like those found in Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and Ibn Kathīr. He may have felt it necessary to answer some of those creative Sunnī arguments by emphasizing what is plain in the text. However, it is also possible, and even more likely, that Idrīs was unthreatened by such counterarguments as Ibn Kathīr's, as he would likely have dismissed them as erroneous, and the process of *ijtiḥād* by which they were concluded as fundamentally flawed, and instead focused his attention on a goal similar to those men. Rather than unifying a darker period of Sunnī-dominated Islamic history with what is from their perspective a more positive narrative, however, Idrīs sought to cast that darker period into a role that fit into dominant Shīʿī narratives of oppression. For Shīʿīs, both early and late, there is no compelling reason to change or reinterpret the Ṣiffīn story to fit in with their extant perspective; there is reason to add commentary if the purpose of a story is propaganda, but this commentary takes the form of supplementation and augmentation, rather than argumentation.

Khārijī Perspectives

The Khārijī movement emerged out of the battle of Ṣiffīn. According to most of the narratives we possess, ʿAlī was first coerced into accepting the arbitration and then into engaging the unenthusiastic Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī as his arbiter. Then, when the delivery of the arbiters' decision at Dūmat al-Jandal went against him, the men who would become Khawārij dissented from ʿAlī and left his service, exhorting that there was

"no judgment but to God, alone" (*lā ḥukma illā lillāh*) and made their way to a place called Naḥrawān, where ʿAlī engaged them in battle and defeated them. They were not, however, destroyed; and as the first sect to crystallize within Islam beginning with Ṣiffīn, they would obviously have some unique perspectives. The fact that they are presented in the vulgate, as well as in other versions of the Ṣiffīn story we have seen, in such hypocritical terms—first demanding ʿAlī accept arbitration, then abandoning his cause for doing just that—is certainly a product of the strong pro-ʿAlid or anti-Shīʿī tendencies of the authors of the texts examined here. Khārijī thought stipulated that ʿAlī had apostasized for accepting the arbitration, and that their own acceptance of the arbitration amounted to a sin for which they had atoned. El-Hibri points out that many of the later stories involving ʿAlī and the Khawārij were meant to echo the story of Ṣiffīn itself. At Naḥrawān, for example, ʿAlī went against the Khawārij demanding they turn over the killers of his supporter ʿAbd Allāh ibn Khabbāb, which the Khawārij refused, in al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* claiming that they had all been responsible for the legitimate shedding of the man's blood, a perfect echo to their reply earlier in the same treatise that they had "all killed ʿUthmān."[491]

Unfortunately for posterity, although the Khawārij were relatively prolific when it came to the writing of political treatises, very few of them survive, and the details of early Khārijī political thought are famously obscure. An exception to the obscurity of Khārijī political thought is *The Epistle of Sālim ibn Dhakwān*,[492] an early Ibāḍī treatise directed against Khārijī extremism and Murjīʿism whose date is unknown, but it was

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[491] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics,* p. 248-9.
[492] Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmerman, *The Epistle of Salim ibn Dhakwan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

certainly written before about 800. The perspectives of the *Epistle* on Ṣiffīn are summed

up in a few paragraphs:

> "Then they went to meet the Syrians, Muʿāwiya and his party, who had
> declared for ʿUthmān and approved of his ways. The Muslims called
> them to what is right and implored them by God and Islam not to
> transgress against them and not to put them in the position of having to kill
> them. But they violated their right (to freedom from attack), and so they
> fought a fierce battle at Ṣiffīn until people were wounded and many were
> killed.
> "Then ʿAlī abandoned the path the Muslims had followed in the past by
> making somebody other than God the judge in a case already settled by
> God. God says, 'And God shall decide justly, and those that they call on,
> apart from Him, shall not decide by any means; surely God is the all-
> hearing, the all-seeing' (40:20). And: 'Is God not the justest of judges?'
> (95:8) God's judgement concerning their enemy was that they should
> fight them till they reverted to God's command and 'till there is no *fitna*
> and the religion is God's' (2:193, 8:39). But they suspended God's
> judgement in this case, shunning it, and they distorted God's word by
> taking it out of context and interpreted the Qurʾān in a sense other than
> that in which it was sent down….The enemy whose judgement they were
> so happy to accept as to make him their judge [i.e., Abū Mūsā], and thus
> to subordinate God's judgement to his, was among the most hostile to
> God, and most ben on the destruction of the Muslims….He claimed that
> those who clung to obedience to their Lord and who refused to let anyone
> but God be their judge of anything already settled by God were infidels
> who had forfeited their covenant of protection….When the Muslims saw
> how [ʿAlī] was making a mockery of God's judgement, shunning the path
> of those who had been rightly guided in the past, abandoning what they
> had fought for when the *fitna* broke out, appointing someone other than
> God to be a judge in God's religion, and betraying the cause in which they
> had given him their allegiance, namely to fight God's enemy and theirs till
> he perished or God's religion prevailed, then they deposed him and went
> out (to fight), making the Qurʾān their judge, satisfied with the judgement
> of God, who is the best of judges, and separating from ʿAlī because he was
> rejecting the judgement of God and accepting the judgement of a man he
> used to declare an infidel and enemy of God."[493]

As is evident from this excerpt, there is no narration of the story of Ṣiffīn present in the

Epistle, although it is clear that Sālim ibn Dhakwān expected his readers to be familiar

with something akin to the vulgate of the story; and, although its date is uncertain, the

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[493] Ibid., pp. 93-7.

Epistle was written well before there was a real chance for the story to develop in the manner examined here. This explains why this section of commentary on the events at Ṣiffīn concerns itself almost exclusively with ʿAlī, taking for granted the fact that Muʿāwiya and the Syrians were in error. The argument presented is simply the classical Khārijī argument. It is regrettable indeed that Sālim ibn Dhakwān did not present the story of Ṣiffīn itself. It was not, of course, necessary to his purpose, as his text was an essay of argumentation rather than a history; but we are left without a Khārijī historical version of the Ṣiffīn story.

Other Perspectives

The main focus of this dissertation has been the use of ʿAlid-sympathetic historical texts as sources for later Syrian Sunnī exercises in historical argumentation surrounding the battle of Ṣiffīn. As this appendix shows, there were other branches of thought on the Ṣiffīn story. Like much of Islamic history, the theological weight of the times in question, combined with the well-understood possibility of fitting early Islamic events into whatever schema a writer deems seemly, means that perspectives on Ṣiffīn are not only likely to vary, but indeed that such variance is inevitable. Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, and Ibn Kathīr are representative of the Umayyad-sympathetic, orthodox Sunnī perspective as it developed; we see in this appendix Ṣiffīn in a hyper-Shīʿī perspective in the form of Idrīs, and as one of the key arguments of the Ibādī *Risāla* of Sālim ibn Dhakwān.

The fact that the three Sunnī authors examined here were all Syrian, as was Ibn al-Athīr, who also had a Sunnī perspective, underscores the fact that there is more in play when gauging a text for its particular perspectives than the author's sect. As Avraham Hakim's recent study "Glorious Hamdān: A New Source for the Battle of Ṣiffīn" shows, tribal pride and pride of place can be equally critical in an author's shaping of written material. The manuscript for the text used by Hakim, *al-Iklīl min akhbār al-Yaman wa-ansāb Ḥimyar* by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Yaʿqūb ibn Aḥmad al-Hamdānī (d. 334/945) contains an anonymous description of several key glorious moments of the tribe of Hamdān, from the *Jāhiliyya* through Ṣiffīn. The section on Ṣiffīn highlights "the role of Hamdān and its leader Saʿīd ibn Qays, and the support they gave ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib against Muʿāwiya and their Yamanīte opponents supporting the Syrian groups."[494] The manuscript text, with a clear Shīʿī perspective, relates several episodes from Ṣiffīn, wherein the Hamdānīs are presented with material wealth by Muʿāwiya only to reject it for pious reasons, fight with their aforementioned Yamanīte opponents, the tribes of ʿAkk and Ashʿarī, or specific Hamdānīs fight in the duels before the battle (they are always victorious), or even have well-known moments addressed specifically to them:

> "The herald of al-Ashʿariyyūn called: 'O Hamdān, who will protect the women tomorrow when you (die and) decay? Fear God in respect to all that should be sacred and inviolable. Do you remember your wives and daughters? Or do you remember the Persians, the Byzantines and the Turks God will allow to annihilate you?"[495]

This moment, according to the text, is not even presented in the context of the call to arbitration, but in the context of a skirmish that is decisively won by the Hamdānīs.

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[494] Avraham Hakim, "Glorious Hamdān: A New Source for the Battle of Ṣiffīn," JSAI 34 (2008), pp. 421-458.
[495] Ibid., p. 431.

Another moment, a discussion between ʿAmr and Muʿāwiya, demonstrates the extent of the Hamdānīs' prowess:

> "ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ arrived and said, 'O Muʿāwiya, indeed, lions have met lions. I never witnessed a day (of battle) lie this. If ʿAlī had (under his command) a tribe such as Hamdān (only) and you had (under your command) a tribe such as ʿAkk (only), the result would have been total annihilation." [496]

The text continues extolling the virtues of the Hamdānīs, whether it be for their fighting prowess, their loyalty to ʿAlī, or their religious fervor and righteousness. It allows grudging respect to their Yamanīte adversaries, probably to increase their own impressiveness by apportioning them the greatest challenge over which to achieve victory. There is no specific mention of the key moments of the battle as described by this study; absent are the call for arbitration, the appointment of arbiters, and the denouement at Dūmat al-Jandal. After all, for the author of this text, Ṣiffīn was not a defining moment in the shaping of Islamic sectarian identities, but rather one of many battles where the glory of Hamdān outshone all others, as in the *Ayyām al-ʿArab* tales of pre-Islamic times.

Despite this, however, the text evidently shares the same pro-ʿAlid sympathies of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and, indeed, most of the corpus of works of history touching upon Ṣiffīn. The fact that ʿAlī was entirely in the right at Ṣiffīn is implicit in the text, and by the fact that the Hamdānīs fought on his side:

> "Hamdān returned to ʿAlī, peace be on him, and he said to them: 'O people of Hamdān, you are my shiled and my spear. By God, if I were the doorman on the threshold of Paradise, I would let you go before anybody else. You supported only God Almighty and responded to no one else.' Saʿīd ibn Qays and Ziyād ibn Kaʿb ibn Marḥab replied, 'We responded to

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[496] Ibid., p. 432.

God and to you and supported God and his Prophet, and then you. We fought with you against those who are beneath you; so, hurl us wherever you wish.'"[497]

Ṣiffīn once again provides fertile ground for the advancement of a particular intellectual agenda.

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[497] Ibid., pp. 436-7.

Appendix II

Ibn Khaldūn

Ibn Khaldūn (732/1332-808/1406) has become one of the most celebrated Arabic historians in history, and his *Taʾrīkh* is among the most well-known works of history to emerge from the Muslim world. However, his popularity is a relatively recent phenomenon; he was more or less ignored during his lifetime. Because he wrote roughly contemporaneously with Ibn Kathīr, whose work forms the backbone of the argument presented in this dissertation, Ibn Khaldūn's work is worthy of consideration regarding where it fits in the Ṣiffīn story's historiographical tree. However, while it is clear that he drew facts from Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn al-Athīr, and gained knowledge of the battle from Ibn Aʿtham and others, his work, like that of al-Maqdisī, is ultimately an historiographical dead end. It does not significantly advance any particular agenda, nor is it employed by later sources.

Ibn Khaldūn's section on Ṣiffīn is translated and presented below.

The Journey of ʿAlī from Baṣra to Kūfa to Ṣiffīn and Muʿāwiya's Journey to Ṣiffīn

> When ʿAlī returned to Kūfa after the Battle of the Camel, he headed out straightaway for Syria. He sent for Jarīr ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Bajalī in Hamadān and for al-Ashʿath ibn Qays in Adharbayjān—they were governors of ʿUthmān's—in order that the two of them take the *bayʿa* for him and attend to him. When they came, he sent Jarīr to Muʿāwiya to inform him of the allegiance pledged to ʿAlī, the treachery of Ṭalḥā, al-Zubayr and their army, and demanding that he enter into and abide by that into which the people had entered and by which they had abided. When he came to him, Muʿāwiya delayed him a long time in his answer. He had the chance to see the people of Syria and their demand regarding blood revenge for ʿUthmān, so that he could inform ʿAlī of their interest in it. When Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr came to the people of Syria with ʿUthmān's blood-stained shirt, as we have discussed previously, and the severed

fingers of his wife Nāʾila, Muʿāwiya had placed the shirt upon the stage and the fingers above it. The people lingered, mourning, for a long time, and they took an oath not to perform ablutions and not to sleep upon beds until they avenged the blood of ʿUthmān upon those who had killed him. Jarīr returned with this to ʿAlī, and al-Ashtar rebuked ʿAlī for sending Jarīr, saying that he had tarried so long that the people of Syria had managed to convince him of their position. Jarīr became furious at this and left for Qarqīsīya. Muʿāwiya requested that he come to him, and so then he did.

It is said that Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Ṣimṭ al-Kindī came to Muʿāwiya in repudiation of Jarīr, for the two of them had been rivals since the days of ʿUmar. This was because ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb had sent Shuraḥbīl to Saʿd in Iraq to be with him, and Sʿd had grown close to him and introduced him to al-Ashʿath ibn Qays. At the time of Jarīr's courteous welcoming of ʿUmar, he had instructed Shuraḥbīl to pay him an honorarium, which he did, and when ʿUmar sent Shuraḥbīl to Syria, he resented Jarīr for this. Thus, when he came to Muʿāwiya, Shuraḥbīl prodded him and goaded him into confessing his agreement with the blood demand for ʿUthmān. Then ʿAlī went out and raised an army in al-Nakhīla, and left Abū Masʿūd al-Anṣārī over Kūfa. Then ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās came to him with the people of Baṣra, who were incited against Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr.

Muʿāwiya gathered the people of Syria, and he summoned ʿAmr, his two sons, and his servant Wardān. ʿAlī, similarly, summoned Ziyād ibn al-Naḍr al-Ḥārithī, and his eight thousand men, to him, as well as Shurayḥ ibn Hānīʾ and his four thousand. He then went from al-Nakhīla to al-Madāʾin, and he enlisted the fighting men there. He sent Maʿqal ibn Qays, along with three thousand of these fighting men, directly to Mawṣul, and they prepared for his arrival in al-Raqqa. ʿAlī appointed Saʿd ibn Masʿūd al-Thaqafī, the uncle of al-Mukhtār ibn Abī ʿUbayd as *walī* over al-Madāʾin, and left. When he got to al-Raqqa, a bridge was built for him and he crossed. Ziyād and Shurayḥ appeared across the river from him with news of Muʿāwiya's travels, and they feared that Muʿāwiya would overtake them and capture them, as the river remained between them and ʿAlī. They returned to Hīt and crossed the Euphrates there, and they met up with ʿAlī.

When they two came to Sūr al-Rūm, Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī met them with an army of Syrians and they contend with him, and they sent to ʿAlī, who dispatched al-Ashtar to shore up their flanks, and he said, "Do not fight them until they come at you!" And he wrote to Shurayḥ and

Ziyād for their obedience and they came to him, and they desisted from battle for about a day, until Abū al-Aʿwar set upon them in the evening, and they skirmished for an hour and then separated on the morrow. Hāshim ibn ʿUtba al-Mirqāl, one of al-Ashtar's companions, went out against him, and the masses fought for a day. Al-Ashtar sent out Sinān ibn Mālik al-Nakhaʿī to Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī, calling him to duel, but he refused. The night passed, and ʿAlī and his army appeared in the morning.[498]

The Battle by the Water

Al-Ashtar came at last to Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī met him there, but Muʿāwiya had already taken position over the road to the Euphrates, and the people complained to ʿAlī about their thirst. He sent Ṣaʿṣaʿa ibn Ṣūḥān to Muʿāwiya with the message, "We have traveled long and we are resolved to stop you, even if it means overpowering your army in battle. We have observed our determination to desist in fighting you until this point, and if we must we will take what we need from you. You have prevented us from water, and the people are not finished. Tell your people to move away from the water so that we may see it and go down to it. Or, if you wish for us to fight until we are victorious, then we shall do so." ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ suggested compliance and the releasing of the water to them, but ibn Abī Surḥ and al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba said they should prevent them from the water, and took up insulting[Ṣaʿṣaʿa], and Ṣaʿṣaʿa returned their insults and returned [to ʿAlī]. [Muʿāwiya] sent to Abū al-Aʿwar to prevent them from the water. Then al-Ashʿath ibn Qays came to the water and battled them upon it.

Muʿāwiya sent out Abū al-Aʿwar Yazīd ibn Abī Asad al-Qasrī, the grandfather of Khālid ibn ʿAbd Allāh, and then ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ after him. ʿAlī sent out al-Ashʿath and then al-Ashtar who, in their tenacity and the tenacity of ʿAlī's companions, reached the water and achieved control of it. They wanted to prevent [Muʿāwiya's comapanions] from the water, but ʿAlī denied this, and thus it remained [with the water accessible to all] for two days.[499]

Descriptions of the Armies and Early Skirmishes

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[498] Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʾrīkh ibn Khaldūn, Vol. 2* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), p. 597-598.
[499] Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʾrīkh ibn Khaldūn, Vol. 2*, p. 599.

1. They fought for the entirety of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja, skirmishes between an army of these and an army of those. The people of Iraq and the people of Syria were careful not to let matters get out of hand and not allow one to destroy the other completely. Then the month of Muḥarram began, and they started negotiations until they had a small taste of peace.[500]

2. When the month of Muḥarram ended ʿAlī ordered the people to fight, and he urged the ranks, "Do not fight them until they fight you! And if you are destroying them, do not kill those who flee, and do not slaughter the wounded, and do not expose their weakness. Do not maim them, nor take any money, nor incite them by insulting their women, even if they provoke you, for they are both the weaker and the stronger of souls." Then he called out them and roused them, and he placed al-Ashtar in charge of the Kūfan cavalry, Sahl ibn Ḥanīf over the Baṣran cavalry, Qays ibn Saʿd over the Baṣran infantry, and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir over the Kūfan cavalry, and Musʿir ibn Radakī over the Qurrāʾ. Muʿāwiya called out to his ranks, and placed Dhū al-Kilāʿ al-Ḥimyārī over the right flank, Ḥabīb ibn Muslima over the left flank, entrusted the vanguard to Abū al-Aʿwar, the Damascene cavalry to ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, and her infantry to Muslim ibn ʿUqba al-Murrī. Over the general mass of people, he gave the command to al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays….Al-Ashtar came out from the people of Kūfa, and Ḥabīb ibn Muslima came out from the people of Syria, and they fought for the better part of a day. Then, on the second day, Hāshim ibn ʿUtba and Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī came out and fought. On the third day, ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir and ʿAmr ibn al-Āṣ fought the fiercest battle, and ʿAmmār won the day and knocked ʿAmr from his place.

On the fourth day Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafīyya and ʿUbayd Allāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb were called out to duel, but ʿAlī dissuaded his son and they withdrew. On the fifth day ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās and al-Walīd ibn ʿUqba fought the same way. Then al-Ashtar and Ḥabīb came out for a second round on the sixth day, and they fought a fierce battle and then withdrew. ʿAlī spoke to the people in the evening of that day and commanded them to stand fast against the other side completely, and to make the night long with their resistance. The public call proliferated, and they beseeched God for victory and courage, and they flung stones until the morning, earnestly and determinedly.[501]

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[500] Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʾrīkh ibn Khaldūn, Vol. 2*, p. 599.
[501] Ibid., p. 601.

Laylat al-Ḥarīr—"The Night of Clamor"

1. The people spent the night putting their weapons in order, and ʿAlī spent the night urging the people on to the morning. He snuck up and spied the positions of the Syrian vanguard and knew all of their places, and the assignment of each tribe of the people of Syria….Muʿāwiya went out from the Syrians and on Wednesday fought a fierce battle the whole day, and then withdrew. At daybreak Thursday, ʿAlī advanced, with ʿAbd Allāh ibn Budayl ibn Warqāʾ over the right flank, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, along with the Qurrāʾ, ʿAmmār, Qays ibn Saʿd and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zayd over the left flank, with the mass of people in the center. ʿAlī was in the heart of the ranks, between the people of Kūfa and Baṣra; the people of Baṣra and Kūfa were with him, as were the people of Medina, the Anṣar, Khuzāʿa, and Kanāna.

 Muʿāwiya set up a protective detail, and most of the Syrians pledged their loyalty to him on pain of death, the remainder of the Damascene cavalry surrounded him, ibn Budayl advanced on the right and fought them until noon, as he spurred his companions on. Then he opened up with his cavalry and forced them to Muʿāwiya's protective detail. Those who had pledged allegiance to Muʿāwiya on pain of death rallied to him, and he sent them to Ḥabīb, and they charged against the Iraqi right flank. All but two or three hundred of the Qurrāʾ frighted, and shied away from the people of Budayl, and the defeat finished in sight of ʿAlī. ʿAlī reinforced his ranks with Sahl ibn Ḥanīf with the people of Medina, and a large group of the Syrians met them and obstructed them.

 Then the Muḍar on the left flank were revealed, and they stood fast, and ʿAlī came galloping up to help them. Aḥmar, a *mawla* of Abū Sufyān, opposed him, and Kaysān, his own *mawla,* came at him, and Aḥmar killed him. ʿAlī stripped Aḥmar of his armor and drew his weapon and broke both his shoulders, and then he approached his advancing squadron and told them to be patient and stabilized their boldness, and they called out to each other, "Lo! The Commander of the Faithful of the Arabs is among us!" Al-Ashtar was passing by racing towards the right flank. Then he confronted those people who had been defeated, and informed them of ʿAlī's speech. "Where is he among you who flees from death, who has not been crippled? What life would remain to such a one?" Then he cried out, "I am al-Ashtar!" and some of them returned to him and cried out, swept up, and he spurred them on and they answered him. The people proceeded straightaway, and they were confronted by a force from Hamadhān with eight hundred men or thereabouts. On that

day, eleven commanders perished and one hundred and eighty were killed. Al-Ashtar continued his advanced toward the right flank.

The people returned to one another and the battle intensified until the Syrians fell back, and they were pursued from Muʿāwiya, and ended up at ibn Budayl with two or three hundred of the Qurrāʾ dead on the ground. The Syrians fled from them and their brothers recognized them, and they asked about where ʿAlī was. It was said to them that he was on the left flank, fighting. Ibn Budayl yelled to him, "Come to us!" Then al-Ashtar restrained him, regusing to let him go, and headed towards Muʿāwiya with his best men around him, fighting everyone who came close to him until he reached Muʿāwiya. He was swarmed from all sides and surrounded, but was protected by his men. He fought, and some of his companions were killed, while others returned wounded, with the Syrians following hard upon….

Then ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir went out and cried, "By God! I have no work to do today that is more agreeable than struggling against these sinners!" Then he cried out while running of his joy in his creator, and he would not return either to his possessions or his children. ʿAṣāba came to him and said, "Pursue for us those who demand revenge for the blood of ʿUthmān, for they are using that as a deception to cover their own falseness!" There was not a single wādī around Ṣiffīn that he passed where he did not gain men to follow him. Then he came to Hāshim ibn ʿUtba, who was the standard-bearer, and he attacked him until the point that he came close to ʿAmr ibn-ʿĀṣ, and he said, "O ʿAmr! Did you find your *dīn* in Egypt? May evil befall you!" He said, "On the contrary, I demand revenge for ʿUthmān!" ʿAmmār said, "I bear witness to the fact that you will not find the face of God in your many clever words." Indeed, the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) said of ʿAmmār, "The rebel band will slay him."

When ʿAmmār was killed ʿAlī attacked, and Rabīʿa, Muḍar and Hamdān also launched a vengeful attack with him, and this demolished all the ranks of the Syrians. They came to Muʿāwiya, and ʿAlī called out to him, "Why are the people fighting each other, but for our sakes? Shall we not put the matter to God, you and I, and whosover kills the other takes the whole matter for himself?" ʿAmr said to him, "He treats you justly!" Muʿāwiya replied to ʿAmr, "And you do not treat me justly.[502]

2. The people fought all that night into the morning. This was a Friday night, and this night is called *laylat al-harīr*. ʿAlī was riding through the

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[502] Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʾrīkh ibn Khaldūn, Vol. 2*, p. 601-3.

ranks, exhorting all of the ranks when he came to them. Al-Ashtar was on the right flank, ibn ʿAbbās was on the left flank, and the people fought each other on all sides, that Friday. Then al-Ashtar rode up and urged the people on to take the battle to the people of Syria, and they attacked until they reached the center of their army and killed their standard-bearer, and ʿAlī reinforced the attack with his footsoldiers.[503]

The Call for Arbitration and the Appointment of Arbiters

1. When ʿAmr saw the strength of the Iraqis he feared for his companions and worried that Muʿāwiya would be definitively defeated, he passed by the people and instructed them to raise the *maṣāḥif* of the Qurʾān on their lances, and they did so, and said, "The Book of God between us and between you!" Truly, they did this in order to stop the battle, which was going against them, and though some refused, he said, "We have found respite in their divisions." When they did this, the people said, "We shall answer the Book of God." Then ʿAlī said to them, "O Servants of God! They are abusing your righteousness! For Muʿāwiya, ibn Abī Muʿīṭ, Ḥabīb, ibn Abī Surḥ, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk are not among the men of dīn nor of the Qurʾān. I know them better then you do, for I was their companion man and boy, and they were evil as children and they are evil as men. Woe unto you all, by God, for they have raised up nothing but trickery and deceit!" They said, "It will not go well for us if we are called to the Book of God and we do not answer." He said, "But we fought them, and our hands were with the Book of God, and they have forsworn it!"

Then Musʿir ibn Fadak al-Tamīmī, Zayd ibn Ḥuṣayn al-Ṭāʾī, and a group of the Qurrāʾ who became Khawārij thereafter said to him, "O ʿAlī, answer the Book of God, or else we will do to you what we did to ibn ʿAffān." He said, "You obeyed me and fought. Now you defy me. So do what you wish." They said, "Send to al-Ashtar and stop him from fighting." So he sent Yazīd ibn Hānī to that end, and al-Ashtar refused and said to him, "You are trying to take the victory God has granted me!"

When Yazīd returned with this news the ground shook with the outcry, and they said to ʿAlī, "What do you say to that! You commanded him to fight, so you go to him and tell him to come to you, or else we are abandoning you and your cause!" ʿAlī said, "Woe unto you, O Yazīd! Say to him to come to me." Then the strife died down.[504]

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[503] Ibid., p. 603.

[504] Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʾrīkh ibn Khaldūn*, p. 603.

2. Al-Ashʿath ibn Qays said to [ʿAlī], "Indeed, the people have decided favorably in the matter of that which they called us to, namely, the judgment of the Qurʾān. If you wish, I can go to Muʿāwiya and ask him what he wants." He said, "Do it." So he came to him and asked him, "For what purpose have you raised the *maṣāḥif?*" He said, "So that you and we may return to what God commanded in his Book. Select a man whom you trust, and we will select another, and we will enjoin upon them the duty to make a decision based upon what is in the Book of God, and nothing else. Then we shall all follow what they two agree upon." Al-Ashʿath said, "That is just." He returned to ʿAlī and the people and informed them what Muʿāwiya had said, and the people replied, "We view this favorably and accept." The people of Syria selected ʿAmr [ibn al-ʿĀṣ]. Al-Ashʿath, and those of the Qurrāʾ who would later become Khawārij, said, "We find favor in Abū Mūsā," but ʿAlī said, "Do not choose him!" Al-Ashʿath, Yazīd ibn al-Ḥuṣaynn and Misʿar ibn Fadakī said, "We will accept none but him." He replied, "He is not trustworthy! He has already opposed me and incited the people against me! He abandoned me for a month's time until I guaranteed his safety." They said, "We only want a man who sees equality between you and Muʿāwiya." ʿAlī said, "Why not al-Ashtar?" They replied, "Who has scorched the earth other than al-Ashtar?" He said, "Then do as you wish!" They sent word to Abū Mūsā, who had stood apart from the battle, and it was said to him that the people had stopped fighting, and he praised God. It was said to him, "They have appointed you as an arbiter, so they have requested that you return." Abū Mūsā came to the military. Al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays asked ʿAlī to allow him to go with Abū Mūsā, but the people rejected the proposal. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ came to ʿAlī in order to write up a draft agreement in his presence, and after the *Basmala*, they wrote:

"This is what has been agreed upon by the Commander of the Faithful," and there ʿAmr broke in and said, "He is no commander of ours!" Al-Aḥnaf said to him, "Do not erase that, for truly I see an evil omen in its erasure. Let it remain." Then al-Ashʿath said, "Erase it!" ʿAlī said, "Godu Akbar!" and he mentioned the story of al-Ḥudaybiyya, and said, "The same was asked of the Prophet, and he answered." ʿAmr said, "God forbid! Shall we be likened to infidels when we are believers?" ʿAlī said, "O ibn al-Nabīgha! When were you not a lord of hypocrites and an enemy of believers?" ʿAmr said, "I shall never sit with you again." ʿAlī retorted, "I hope that God will cleanse my circle from you and your like." And they wrote the letter of agreement.[505]

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[505] Ibid., p. 605.

Negotiation, Ruling, and Reneging

1. This is what has been agreed upon by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān. ʿAlī is commander of the people of Kūfa and those who are with them, and Muʿāwiya is commander of the people of Syria and those who are with them. We shall submit to the judgment of God and his book, and will shall not accept between us anything other than it. The Book of God, from beginning to end is between us. We shall live as it commands us to live, and die as it commands us to die, according to what the arbiters find within the Book of God. They are Abū Mūsā ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ. That which is not found in the Book of God and in the generally accepted *Sunna* will be inadmissible.

The two arbiters took upon themselves the obligations and the agreement from ʿAlī, Muʿāwiya, and the two armies, that they would be faithful to themselves and their two peoples, and the communities left them helpers to witness that which they agreed upon. Upon [Abū Mūsā] ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qays and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, God placed his trust and obligation that they would arbitrate for the sake of the *umma*, and that they would bring neither war nor division down upon it until such a time as they completed an agreement. The two arbiters met until Ramaḍān, and they could have met for even longer than that. They agreed to meet to deliver their decision at a just place, equidistant between the people of Kūfa and the people of Syria. Men from both the Kūfan camp and the Syrian camp observed them and wrote down their discussion. Al-Ashtar refused to ascribe his name to the document, and al-Ashʿath argued with him about that point, and the two men came to blows.

They wrote the writing for thirteen nights in the month of Ṣafar, of the year 37. They agreed that ʿAlī should appear to hear the judgment in Dūmat al-Jandal in Adhruḥ in the month of Ramaḍān. Then some of the people came to ʿAlī, goading him to return the people to war. They said, "There will be no turning back after the decision, and no changes after the settlement." Then the people returned from Ṣiffīn and the Ḥarūriyya (Khawārij) left him, rejecting the arbitration of men, and returned on a different road than the one they came on, until they came to al-Nakhīla and saw the houses of al-Kūfa."[506]

2. When the appointed time came, ʿAlī sent for Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī with four hundred men, including Shurayḥ ibn Hānīʾ al-Ḥārithī and ʿAbd Allāh

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[506] Ibn Khaldūn, *Taʾrīkh ibn Khaldūn*, p. 605-6.

ibn ʿAbbās. He told Shurayḥ to admonish ʿAmr. When he heard that, he said, "Since when are you ʿAlī's errand boy and since when do you adopt his positions?" He said, "What prevents you from accepting the chief of the Muslims?" He spoke an angry answer and fell silent. Muʿāwiya sent ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ with four hundred of the people of Syrians, and they met at Adhruḥ at Dūmat al-Jandal. The companions of ʿAmr were more obedient than the companions of ibn ʿAbbās were to ibn ʿAbbās, to the point that they did not ask to see the writing of Muʿāwiya when it came. The people of Iraq put their trust in ibn ʿAbbās, and depended upon him. The following people were present when the arbiters were having their discussion: ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Abī Bakr, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn al-Ḥarith ibn Hishām, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Yaghūth al-Zuhrī, Abū Jahm ibn Ḥudhayfa al-ʿAdawī, al-Mughīra ibn Shaʿba, and Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ….

When the two arbiters met, ʿAmr said to Abū Mūsā, "Do you believe that ʿUthmān was killed unjustly, and that Muʿāwiya and his people are his *walī*s?" He said, "Of course!" He said, "So what prevents you from accepting him, as he is, as you know, from the Quraysh? If his *sābiqa* leaves something to be desired, then you may know that he is a skilled politician, a relative by marriage to the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him), as well as his scribe and his companion. Furthermore, he is the one with the right to claim revenge for ʿUthmān's blood." Then he hinted at a position of authority for Abū Mūsā. Abū Mūsā said to him, "Fear God, O ʿAmr. I know that this matter is not about nobility, for it were, the rule would belong to Abraha ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ, for he is a man of religion and honor. If it were about the pride of place within the Quraysh, it would belong to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. And as for what you said about Muʿāwiya being the one responsible for taking vengeance for the blood of ʿUthmān, and that therefore I should accord the rule to him, I will not abandon the rights of the first *Muhājirūn*. And concerning your hinting at a position of authority for me, even if all of ʿUthmān's[507] authority devolved to me, I would not take it, and I would not be bribed in a matter concerning the authority of God.

He then suggested appoint ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar. ʿAmr said to him, "So then what prevents you from selecting my son, who is what you know him to be?" He said, "Your son is a righteous man, but you have soiled him by immersing him in this *fitna*." ʿAmr said, "Truly, this matter should go to none but a man with a wisdom tooth that eats and tastes"— for Ibn ʿUmar was stupid. Ibn al-Zubayr was opposite him, and gave him

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[507] This is likely an error; Abū Mūsā is referring to Muʿāwiya's hypothetical authority, not ʿUthmān's.

a warning when he said this. Ibn ʿUmar said, "I will never bribe him, ever!" Then Abū Mūsā said, "O Ibn al-ʿĀṣ, the Arabs have placed their matter upon you, after the battles and swords. Do not return them to *fitna*." Then he said, "So tell me, what is your opinion?" He said, "I think that we should depose both these men and place the matter before a *shūrā*, and the Muslims will choose for themselves." ʿAmr said, "What a good idea!"

Then the gathered the people to inform them, and ʿAmr had already flattered Abū Mūsā that he should speak before him, for he was older and wiser. He said, "O Abū Mūsā! Inform them of our opinion, that we have just agreed upon." He said, "We have decided in this matter to put it to God, for the good of the people." Then Ibn ʿAbbās said to him, "Woe unto you, for I fear he has duped you! Let him speak before you!" But Abū Mūsā rejected this, and said, "O you people! We have decided in the matter facing the *umma*, and we can think of no better solution for it than what we have agreed upon, which is that we shall depose ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya both, and the people will elect whom they wish. I hereby depose them both, so elect whom you wish!"

ʿAmr said, "This man has just deposed his master. I, too, depose him, just as he deposed him, and I confirm Muʿāwiya, for he is the *walī* of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, and the most deserving of the people for the position." Then ibn ʿAbbās and Saʿd attacked Abū Mūsā with reproach, saying, "God will not reward treachery!" and they said the same criticism to ʿAmr, saying, "God will not reward what you have done!" and they left. Shurayḥ attacked ʿAmr and hit him with a sword, as did ibn ʿUmar. The people stepped between them to stop the fight. Abū Mūsā went away to Mecca, while ʿAmr and the rest of the Syrians went straight to Muʿāwiya and conferred upon him the title of Caliph. Ibn ʿAbbās and Shurayḥ returned to ʿAlī with the news, and when they prayed they said, "Allāhuma, curse Muʿāwiya, ʿAmr, Ḥabīb, ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Mukhlid, al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays, al-Walīd, and Abū al-Aʿwar." News of this reached Muʿāwiya, and when he prayed he cursed ʿAlī, ibn ʿAbbās, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, and al-Ashtar.[508]

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[508] Ibid., p. 608-9.

Appendix III

Modern Perspectives

The importance of the Ṣiffīn story to Islamic posterity lies in its unique position within the sequence of events that first brought schism to the Islamic faith, known as the first *fitna.* That indicates that it should theoretically be ripe territory for argumentation. However, modern concerns in the Middle East seem to have rendered such argumentation passé. Despite the relative wealth of sources and perspectives about Ṣiffīn, most modern authors and scholars continue look to al-Ṭabarī, and of course to Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, as their primary sources.

Muḥsin al-Ḥusaynī al-ʿAmilī's *Ḥarb al-Jamal wa-Ḥarb Ṣiffīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr lil-Jamīʿ, 1969) uses the most sources, but he seems concerned mostly with determining an exact chronology of the battle, and comparing and contrasting the various reports. The following excerpt from his introduction to the section on Ṣiffīn demonstrates the point quite clearly:

> "The battle was in the year 37, and according to al-Masʿūdī the meeting of the two arbiters was in the year 37. Al-Ṭabarī, on the authority of al-Wāqidī, determined that the meeting of the two arbiters was in Shaʿbān of the year 37, or else the meeting of the two arbiters would have been a year after the battle. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, in *Kitāb Ṣiffīn*, said that they exchanged correspondence starting with the arrival of ʿAlī (peace be upon him) at Ṣiffīn for three months—Rabīʿ al-Thānī and the two Jumādīs—and he judged that they arrived at Ṣiffīn at the end of Rabīʿ al-Awwal. This does not fit with the idea that their arrival was at the end of Dhū al-Qaʿda, and this is inconsistent with the idea that the battle was in the year 36, but not with the idea that it was in the year 37."[509]

He goes on to parse the texts for differences in the details, but his focus is on writing a straight-on historical account. His discussion is heavily indebted to Naṣr ibn Muzāhim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, though he also mentions Ibn Dayzīl, Abū Miḥnaf and other sources of

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[509] Muḥsin al-Ḥusaynī al-ʿĀmilī, *Ḥarb al-Jamal wa-Ḥarb Ṣiffīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Jamīʿ, 1969), p. 75.

Naṣr's directly. It is a modern book, so there are obviously no *isnāds;* however, there is no modern-style citation, either, leaving the sources for specific episodes obscure. He includes the story of Dhū al-Kalāʾ al-Ḥimyarī and his discussion with his kinsman Abū Nūḥ regarding the Ḥadīth that the "rebel band" would slay ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, indicating that he used the biographical dictionaries of ʿAlī ibn ʿAsākir and ibn al-ʿAdīm. While he describes in detail very similar to that of Naṣr ibn Muzāhim and al-Ṭabarī the run-up to the battle and the skirmishes, he also seems to draw stylistic inspiration from the composers of the biographical dictionaries when he begins to list facts about notable men who died at Ṣiffīn.

He distinguishes himself only in his very light adaptation of the pace and word choice of the section of *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* related in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk:*

> "They raised two hundred *maṣāḥif* over their heads, thirty of which were tied to lances, and one of which was the *maṣḥaf* of the Masjid al-Aʿẓam, and yelled out, "O People of Iraq! The Book of God between us and you! O Assemblage of Arabs: God, God for your women and daughters, for who will fight against Rūm, against the Turks, and against the people of Persia tomorrow if you should perish today? God, God for your *dīn*." Then Abū al-Aʿwar al-Sulamī took a copy himself and raised it over his head, yelling, "O People of Iraq! The Book of God between us and you!" Then the Commander of the Faithful said, "O God! You know that they want nothing with the book (*mā al-kitāb yuridūn*), so arbitrate between us and them [in battle], for you are the true and righteous judge. But the companions of ʿAlī (peace be upon him) disagreed, and some of them were of the opinion to keep fighting and some were of the opinion to accept the offer for arbitration based on the book, saying, "We do not find war suitable, and we have been called to the judgment of the Book."[510]

One first notices the similarity in language between this and Naṣr's rendition of the same event. However, it is most interesting to note how quickly this key moment in the story passes. The arguments between ʿAlī and his newly-pacifist followers were some of the

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[510] Ibid., p. 331.

most interesting exchanges of the story in the earlier accounts. He also halves a rhymed couplet that appeared in Naṣr ibn Muzāhim's story, writing the sentence "they want nothing with the book" (*mā al-kitāb yuridūn*), but leaving out the finishing thought, "other than to attempt a trick" (*wa-lakin al-makr yuḥāwilūn*).

It is understandable, though, in light of the fact that argumentation on the topic of Umayyad legitimacy seems to have gone out of style, that al-ʿĀmilī does not make use of the more radical interpretation of Ibn Kathīr, and uses the dictionaries *Taʾrīkh Madinat Dimashq* and *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* only to round out the story and as a stylistic influence on certain sections.

Most of the books written today are not out and out histories; however, it is interesting to note that even a scholarly argument like Dr. ʿAbd al-Ṭayf al-Hamīm's *Ṣiffīn wa-Tadāʿiyyatuhā fī al-Ijtimāʿ al-Siyāsī al-Islāmī* (Amman, Jordan: Dār ʿAmār, 2003), also ignores the historiographical variety available to its author. He writes,

> "This book provides a contemporary political interpretation to political meetings in the time of the sovereignty and imamate of Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with him) through a consideration of his administration of the crisis at Ṣiffīn and his leadership of the struggle it caused, as well as the results of the war and the peace that followed Ṣiffīn, in view of the fact that Ṣiffīn was a battle unlike any other battle, but rather a radical historical event whose effects are active in the present day."[511]

This book could, theoretically, have benefitted from a perspective beyond those of al-Ṭabarī and the *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha* of ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, which he cites frequently and categorizes as his key sources of information; Ibn Kathīr's version of the story, especially, could have shed some light on the way ʿAlī administered the crisis, as Ibn

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[511] ʿAbd al-Ṭayf al-Hamīm, *Ṣiffīn wa-Tadāʿiyyatuhā fī al-Ijtimāʿ al-Siyāsī al-Islāmī* (Amman, Jordan: Dār ʿAmār, 2003), p. 257.

Kathīr is distinguished from his colleagues in his presentation of ʿAlī's quick acceptance of the call to arbitration. Dr. Hamīm could have strengthened his thesis by addressing this point; however, once again, the key point is the specific mission of the author.

Further books written in the modern era lead to similar conclusions; without any motivation to address the Umayyad role in Islamic history, or whether the Umayyads were or were not believers, or whether their regime was based upon a legitimate historical progression of events, modern writers turn to al-Ṭabarī and Naṣr ibn Muzāhim, two of the earliest writers examined here, for their overview. Al-Masʿūdī, Ibn al-Athīr, and ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd are also used, and not infrequently; once in a while, even Ibn Kathīr's words will show up in a modern text. However, it is never at a critical moment in the story, and the words are presented for their fluidity and poetry, rather than as a way to reference the mission of the author of the book from whence they came. The book *Shuhādāʾ Ṣiffīn wa-Ḥudūr al-Ṣahāba wa-al-Tābiʿīn* is perhaps the most useful to a modern audience; it is a biographical dictionary of the martyrs of Ṣiffīn, and is an excellent tool for the researcher. *Aṣḥāb Rasūl al-Thaqalīn fī Ḥarb Ṣiffīn* is a comprehensive list of the companions of the Prophet who were martyrs of Ṣiffīn, and a collection of stories about them. There is no citation in the text, and the bulk of the book is not about Ṣiffīn, but, like the biographical dictionaries examined in chapter III, it is mostly about their lives and anecdotes about them. What little there is about Ṣiffīn comes directly from al-Ṭabarī, and occasionally Ibn al-Athīr (although most of that appears in al-Ṭabarī, as well).

The story of Ṣiffīn also makes an appearance in novels, such as *Adhrāʾ Quraysh,* and in collections of poetry, like *al-Imāmān ʿAlī wal-al-Ḥusayn*, but in such cases the battle appears only tangentially.

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