

HALF OF MY HEART

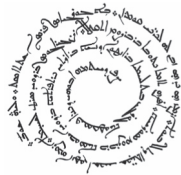
The Narratives of Zaynab, Daughter of 'Alî



Christopher Paul Clohessy

GORGAS ❖ PRESS

Half of my Heart



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Half of my Heart

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Christopher Paul Clohessy

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*Dedicated to the memory of
Martin Derek Clobessy
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The seeds of this work began were sown in a discussion among a group of Catholic priests, sitting around a table in the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome, lamenting the fact that few Islamic scholars are writing anything substantial about the great women of Islam. We challenged each other to choose one character and write about her, and this reading of the life of Zaynab, daughter of ‘Alī and Fâṭima, is the result. While I await the books from my confereres, I thank them for the pleasure of living and working with them, forming a new generation in a solid, academic understanding of Islam and promoting an authentic and ongoing dialogue between religions. I am ever indebted to my family and to my fellow clergy in Cape Town, who bear so patiently with my long absences and my enthusiasm for all things Shī‘ī. I am no less grateful to numerous, cherished Shī‘ī friends, in Italy, England, South Africa and America, who have unreservedly supported this work: in a special way, Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali, whose unbounded enthusiasm for interreligious harmony gladdens the heart, and whose generosity gave me access to the most crucial Shī‘ī sources; and Zameer Hussein, who daily teaches his London pupils to live respectfully and reverently before the religious experience of others, and all the while kept a critical eye on my theology. To these, and so many others, my thanks for making this work possible.

PREFACE

As Abû ‘Abd Allâh al-Ḥusayn, son of ‘Alî and Fâṭima and grand-son of Muḥammad, moved inexorably towards death on the field of Karbalâ’, his sister Zaynab was drawn ever closer to the centre of the family of Muḥammad, the ‘people of the house’ (*ahl al-bayt*). There she would remain for a few historic days, challenging the wickedness of the Islamic leadership, defending the actions of her brother, initiating the commemorative rituals, protecting and nurturing the new Imâm, al-Ḥusayn’s son ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn b. Abî Tâlib, until he could take his rightful place. This is her story.

Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the Qur’ân are taken from the English interpretation of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall.¹ At times, I have compared his translation with that of other English interpreters of the Qur’ân, and these will be named in the text when they occur.

The system of transliteration, given below, has been followed throughout the text, except in instances in which other authors have been quoted, in which case the said author’s system of transliteration has been respected.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations of the Arabic texts are my own. All Arabic texts have been reproduced exactly from their sources, even when mistakes are extant in the said texts.

Except when quoting from other works, all dates are given according to the Islamic calendar (*hiğra*), followed by a backslash and the Gregorian equivalent.

¹ PICKTHALL M.M., *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur’ân*, Dar al-Kitab Allubnani, Beirut and Dar al-Kitab al-Masri, Cairo (n.d.).

SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

ء - '	ض - d
ب - b	ط - ṭ
ت - t	ظ - ẓ
ث - ṭ	ع - '
ج - ğ	غ - ğ̣
ح - ḥ	ف - f
خ - ḫ	ق - q
د - d	ك - k
ذ - ḏ	ل - l
ر - r	م - m
ز - z	ن - n
س - s	ه - h
ش - sh	و - w
ص - ṣ	ي - y

Short Vowels

أ - a, u
إ - i

Long Vowels

آ - â
و - û
ي - î

PRIMARY ARABIC SHĪ'Ī AND SUNNĪ SOURCES

3rd/9th century

Sunnī

Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mâlik Hishâm b. Ayyûb al-Ḥimyarī Ğamâl al-Dîn (d. 218/834: cf. GAS I: 297) in his *Sīrat Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh* (2 vols., Maṭba'at Muṣṭafâ al-Bâbî al-Ḥalabî, Cairo 1955).

Muḥammad b. Sa'îd Kâtib al-Wâqidî (d. 230/845: cf. GAL I: 136, GAL S. I: 208) in his *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr* (11 vols., Maktab al-Ḥangî, Cairo 2001).

Abū 'Abd Allāh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybânî al-Duḥlî (d. 241/855: cf. GAL S. I: 309) in his *Musnad* (12 vols., Dâr al-fikr, Cairo 1995).

Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismâ'il b. Ibrâhîm b. Muġîra b. Bardizbah al-Buḥârî al-Ġu'fî (d. 256/870: cf. GAL S. I: 260) in his *Ṣaḥîḥ* (9 vols., al-Maktaba al-salafiyya, Medina) and his *al-Adab al-mufrad* (Maktaba dâr al-salâm, Riyadh 1997).

Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥaġġâġ al-Qushayrî al-Nisâbûrî (d. 261/875: cf. GAL S. I: 265) in his *Ṣaḥîḥ* (5 vols., Maktaba dâr al-salâm, Riyadh 2007).

Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Yazîd b. Mâġa al-Qazwînî (d. 273/886: cf. GAL S. I: 270) in his *Sunan* (2 vols., Dâr ihyâ' al-kutub al-'arabiyya, Cairo 1952).

Abū Dâwûd Sulaymân b. al-Ash'at al-Azdî al-Siġistânî (d. 275/889: cf. GAL S. I: 270) in his *Sunan* (5 vols., Maktaba dâr al-salâm, Riyadh 2008).

Abū 'Îsâ Muḥammad b. 'Îsâ b. Sahl al-Tirmidî (d. 279/892: cf. GAL S. I: 267) in his *Sunan* (6 vols., Maktaba dâr al-salâm, Riyadh 2007).

Abū al-'Abbâs Aḥmad b. Yaḥyâ b. Ğâbir al-Balâḍurî (d. 279/892: cf. GAL S. I: 216, GAS I: 320) in his *Kitâb ansâb al-asḥraf* (vol. I, Dâr al-ma'ârif, Egypt 1959, vol. IVa, University Press, Jerusalem 1971, vol. V, Magnes Press, Jerusalem 1936).

Abū Ḥanîfa Aḥmad b. Dâwûd al-Dînawarî (d. 282/895: cf. GAL S. I: 187) in his *Kitâb al-ahbâr al-timâl* (E.J. Brill, Leiden 1888).

Shiʿi

Abû Ğaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ğarîr b. Rustam al-Ṭabarî (c. 224/839: cf. GAL S. I: 217 and GAS I: 540) in his *Dalâʾil al-imâma* (CRCIS, Qum 2012), and his *Kitâb al-mustarshid fî imâmat ʿAlî b. Abî Tâlib*, (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Abû al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Abî Ṭâhir Ṭayfûr (d. 280/893: cf. GAL S. I: 210) in his *Balâġât al-nisâʾ* (CRCIS, Qum 2012)

Aḥmad b. Abî Yaʿqûb b. Ğaʿfar b. Wahb b. Wâḍih al-Kâtib al-ʿAbbâsî al-Yaʿqûbî (d. 284/897 or 292/905: cf. GAL S. I: 405) in his *Târîḥ* (2 vols., E.J. Brill, Leiden 1969).

4th/10th century*Sunni*

Abû ʿAbd al-Raḥmân Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmân b. Shuʿayb al-Nasâʾî (d. 303/915: cf. GAL S. I: 269) in his *Kitâb al-ḥaşâʾis fî faḍl ʿAlî b. Abî Ṭâlib* (Maktab al-âdâb, Cairo 1986).

Abû Ğaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ğarîr b. Yazîd al-Ṭabarî (d. 310/923: cf. GAS 1: 232 and GAL S. I: 217) in his *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk* (39 vols., in English translation, State University of New York Press, New York 1989).

Shiʿi

Muḥammad Yaʿqûb b. Ishâq al-Kulaynî al-Râzî (d. 328/939: cf. GAL S. I: 320) in his *al-Kâfî fî ʿilm al-dîn* (8 vols., Dâr al-kutub al-islâmiyya, Tehran 1968).

Abû al-Ḥasan ʿAlî b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî al-Masʿûdî (d. 345/956: cf. GAS I: 333) in his *Murûġ al-dahab* (4 vols., Publications de l'Université Libanaise, Beirut 1965).

Abû ʿAbd Allâh al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî b. al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdân al-Ḥaşîbî Zayn al-Dîn (d. 346/957 or 365/968: cf. GAS I. 584) in his *al-Hidâya al-kubrâ*

Abû al-Farağ ʿAlî b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Qurashî al-Işfahânî (d. 356/967: cf. GAL S.I: 225 and GAS I: 378)¹ in his *Maqâtil al-tâlibîyyîn*, (Maṭbaʿ dâr iḥyâr al-kutub al-ʿarabiyya, Cairo 1949).

Abû al-Qâsim Ğaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Ğaʿfar b. Mûsâ b. Qûlûya al-Qummî (d. 369/979: cf. GAL S. I: 953) in his *Kâmil al-ziyârât* (Muʿassasat al-nashr al-islâmî, Qum n.d.).

ʿAlî b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlî al-Ḥazzâz al-Râzî al-Qummî (d. 381/991: cf. GAL S. I: 322 and GAS I: 543) in *Kifâyat al-aṭar fî-l-nuşûs ʿalâ al-aʿimma al-iṭnâ ʿasharî* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Abû Ğaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlî b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mûsâ b. Bâbüya al-Qummî al-Şadûq (d. 381/991: cf. GAL S. I: 321 and GAS I: 544) in his *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-aḥâdîṯ wa-l-aḥbâr* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Abû ʿAbd Allâh al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî b. al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdân al-Ḥaşîbî Zayn al-Dîn (d. 346/957 or 365/968: cf. GAS I. 584) in his *al-Hidâya (al-Kubrâ)*, (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

5th/11th century

Sunni

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allâh b. Muḥammad al-Ḥâkim al-Nîsâbûrî b. al-Bayyîʿ (d. 404/1014: cf. GAL S. I: 276)² in his *Kitâb (Talḥîs) al-mustadrak ʿalâ al-şahîḥayn* (5 vols., Dâr al-ḥarmîn, Cairo 1997).

Abû Ishâq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrâhîm al-Taʿlabî al-Nîsâbûrî al-Shâfiʿî (d. 427/1035: cf. GAL S. I: 592) in his *Kitâb ʿarâʾis al-mağâlîs fî qiṣaṣ al-anbiyâʾ* (al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿâmira al-sharafiyya, Cairo 1954).

Abû Nuʿaym Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allâh b. Aḥmad b. Ishâq al-Işbahânî (or al-Işfahânî) al-Shâfiʿî (d. 430/1038: cf. GAL S. I: 616) in his

¹ Modarressi notes that he was a Zaydî (cf. MODARRESSI H., *Tradition and Survival. A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shiʿite Literature*, vol. 1, Oneworld, Oxford 2003: 276).

² Brockelmann incorrectly reports his death at 404/914 and names him al-Nîsâbûrî as opposed to al-Naysâbûrî, found in other texts.

Ḥilyat al-awliyâ' wa-ṭabaqât al-aşfyâ' (11 vols., Dâr al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, Beirut 1967).

Abû Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlî b. Tâbit al-Ḥaṭîb al-Baġdâdî (d. 463/1071: cf. GAL I: 329) in his *Târîḥ Baġdâd* (14 vols., Dâr al-kitâb al-ʿarabî, Beirut n.d.).

Abû ʿUmar Yûsuf b. ʿAbd Allâh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Barr al-Namarî al-Qurṭubî (d. 463/1071: cf. GAL S. I: 628) in his *al-Istʿâb fî maʿrifat al-aşḥâb* (4 vols., Maṭbaʿat Nahḍat Mişr, Cairo n.d.).

Shîʿî

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Nuʿmân al-Baġdâdî al-Karḥî al-Mufîd (d. 413/1022. cf. GAL I: 188 and GAL S. I: 322) in his *al-Irsbâd fî maʿrifat ḥuġaġ Allâb ʿalâ al-ibâd* (CRCIS, Qum 2012) and in his *al-Amâlî li-l-Mufîd* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Abû Ğaʿfar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlî al-Tûsî *Shayḥ* al-Tâʾifa (d. 458/1066: cf. GAL I: 405 and GAL S. I: 706) in his *al-Amâlî fî-l-ḥadîṯ*, (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

ʿAlî Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlî al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî al-Farisî (c. mid-5th/11th century: cf. GAL S. I: 708) in his *Rawḍat al-wâʿiẓîn wa-tabṣirat al-muttaʿiẓîn* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

6th/12th century

Sunnî

Abû al-Muʿayyad Muwaffaq Aḥmad b. Abî Saʿîd Ishâq al-Ḥawârizmî (d. 568/1172. cf. GAL S. I: 623) in his *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn* (Dâr anwâr al-hudâ, Qum n.d.).

Abû al-Qâsim ʿAlî b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibat Allâh Tiqat al-Dîn b. ʿAsâkir al-Shâfiʿî (d. 571/1176: cf. GAL S. I: 566) in his *Târîḥ madînat Dimashq* (80 vols., Dâr al-fîkr, Beirut 1995).

Shîʿî

Raḍî al-Dîn Abû ʿAlî al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan Amîn al-Dîn al-Ṭabarsî (d. 548/1153: cf. GAL S. I: 708) in his *Kitâb al-iḥtiġâġ ʿalâ abl al-lġġâġ* (CRCIS, Qum 2012), in his *Taġ al-mawâlid* (CRCIS, Qum 2012) and in his *Iʿlâm al-narâ bi-aʿlâm al-hudâ* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Quṭb al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥusayn Saʿīd b. Hibat Allāh b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Rāwandī (d. 573/1177: cf. GAL S. I: 624) in his *al-Ḥarāʾiḡ wa-l-ḡarāʾib fī-l-muʿǧīzāt* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Abū Ğaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Shaḥrāshūb al-Māzandarānī al-Surrī Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 588/1192: cf. GAL S. I: 710) in his *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib* (5 vols., Manshūrāt dawī al-qurbā, Tehran 2012, CRCIS, Qum 2012).

7th/13th century

Sunnī

Abū al-Faḍāʾil Ğamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faraḡ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1200: cf. GAL S. I: 914, GAL I: 500) in his *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa* (Daiʾratuʾl-maʾrifil-Osmania, Hyderabad 1968).

Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Abī al-Karam Aṭīr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Aṭīr al-Shaybānī (d. 630/1233: cf. GAL I: 345) in his *al-Kāmil fī-l-tārīḡ* (9 vols., al-Ṭabāʿa al-munīriyya, Cairo 1934) and in his *Usd al-ḡāba fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba* (5 vols., al-Maṭbaʿat al-islāmiyya, Tehran n.d.).

Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Muzaffar Yūsuf b. Qizogʻlū b. ʿAlī Sibṭ al-Ġawzī (d. 654/1257: cf. GAL S. I: 589) in his *Tadkīrat al-ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣāʾiṣ al-aʿimma*, (Amīr, Qum 1998)

Muḥib al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās (Abū Muḥammad Abū Ğaʿfar) Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭabarī al-Makkī al-Shāfiʿī (d. 684/1295: cf. GAL 1: 361) in his *Dahāʾir al-ʿuqbā* (Dār al-maʿrifa, Beirut 1974).

Shīʿī

ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Hibat Allāh al-Madāʾinī b. al-Ḥadīd (d. 655/1257: cf. GAL S. I: 497) in his *Sbarḥ naḡ al-balāḡa* (20 vols., Dār iḥyāʾ al-kutub al-ʿarabiyya, Cairo 1959–1964).³

³ While some hold him to have been a Shīʿa, it is not utterly certain that Ibn al-Ḥadīd was. Modarressi mentions him tentatively in a passage concentrating on his brother, noting in passing that he transmitted from

Rađî al-Dîn Abû Mûsâ Abû al-‘Abbâs ‘Alî b. Mûsâ b. Ğa‘far b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭâ’ûs al-Ṭâ’ûsî al-‘Alawî al-Fâṭimî (d. 664/1266: cf. GAL S. I: 911) in his *Kitâb al-iqbâl bi-l-a‘mâl al-ḥasana* (CRCIS, Qum 2012) and in his *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qutlâ al-tufûf* (Dâr anwâr al-hudâ, Qum 2002).

Nağm al-Dîn Ğa‘far b. Muḥammad b. Ğa‘far b. Hibat Allâh b. Namâ al-Ḥillî (d. 680/1281) in his *Muṭîr al-aḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashğân* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Bahâ’ al-Dîn Abû al-Ḥasan ‘Alî b. ‘Îsâ al-Irbilî b. al-Faḥr (692/1293: cf. GAL S. I: 713) in his *Kashf al-ğumma fî ma‘rifat al-a‘imma* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

8th/14th century

Sunnî

Abû ‘Abd Allâh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uṭmân b. Qaymâz Shams al-Dîn al-Ḍahabî (d. 748/1348: cf. GAL S. II: 45) in his *Siyar a‘lâm al-nubalâ’*,⁴ (Mu’assat al-risâla, Beirut 1996).

Abû al-Fidâ’ Ismâ‘îl b. ‘Umar b. Kaṭîr ‘Imâd al-Dîn b. al-Ḥaṭîb al-Qurayshî al-Buṣrawî al-Shâfi‘î (d. 774/1373: cf. GAL S. II: 48) in his *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya* (14 vols., Cairo 1930).

Shi‘a

Ğamâl al-Dîn Ḥasan b. Yûsuf b. ‘Alî b. Muṭahhar al-Ḥillî al-‘Allâma (d. 726/1325: cf. GAL S. II: 206) in his *Kashf al-yaqîn fî fađâ’il amîr al-mu‘minîn* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

his uncle Abû Muḥammad Murâzim b. Ḥakîm al-Madâ’inî, who in turn transmitted from the fifth and sixth Imâms, but does not name the nephew’s work (MODARRESSI H., *Tradition and Survival. A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi‘ite Literature*, vol. 1, 2003: 308, 319, 353). Brockelmann is no less imprecise. Others believe that Ibn al-Ḥadîd was a Mu‘tazila. Notwithstanding the dearth of evidence, I have chosen to retain him among the Shi‘a, even though on a number of occasions, he carries *aḥâdîṯ* that are out of line with the Shi‘î stance.

⁴ Brockelmann does not record this work.

9th/15th century*Sunnî*

Nûr al-Dîn Abû al-Ḥasan ʿAlî b. Abî Bakr b. Sulaymân b. Ḥaġar al-Haytamî (d. 807/1405: cf. GAL II: 91, GAL S. II: 82) in his *Maġmaʿ al-zawâʿid wa-manbaʿ al-fawâʿid* (10 vols., Maktab al-qudsî, Cairo n.d.).

Abû al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. ʿAlî b. Muḥammad b. Ḥaġar Shihâb al-Dîn al-ʿAsqalânî al-Kinânî al-Shâfiʿî (d. 852/1449: cf. GAL S. II: 72) in his *al-Iṣâba fî tamyiz al-ṣaḥâba* (4 vols., al-Maktaba al-ġâriyya al-kubrâ, Egypt 1939) and in his *Tabdîb al-tabdîb* (12 vols., Dâr Şâdir, Beirut 1968).

Shiʿî

Zayn al-ʿÂbidîn ʿAlî b. Yûnus al-Bayyâḍî al-Nabâtî al-ʿÂmilî (d. 877/1472: cf. GAL S. II: 133) in his *al-Şirâṭ al-mustaġim ilâ mustaḥaqq al-taqdîm fî al-imâma* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Ḥasan b. Abî al-Ḥasan al-Daylamî (d. 840/1437: cf. GAL S. I: 261, although Brockelmann provides no dates) in his *Irşâd al-qulûb* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

11th/17th century*Sunnî*

ʿAbd al-Malik b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-ʿIṣâmî (d. 1111/1699: cf. GAL S. II: 516) in his *Simṭ al-nuġûm al-ʿawâlî* (4 vols., al-Maṭbaʿa al-salafiyya, Cairo 1961).

Shiʿî

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥasanî b. ʿAlî b. Ḥusayn al-Ḥurr al-ʿÂmilî al-Mashġarî (d. 1099/1688: cf. GAL S. II: 578) in his *Tafsîl wasâʾil al-shiʿa ilâ taḥṣîl masâʾil al-sbariʿa* (CRCIS, Qum 2012), in his *al-Ġawâbir al-saniyya al-aḥâdîṯ al-qudsiyya* (CRCIS, Qum 2012) and in *Iḥbât al-hudât bi-l-nuṣûṣ wa-l-muʿġizât*, (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Hâshim b. Sulaymân b. Ismâʿil b. ʿAbd al-Ġawâd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmân al-Ḥusaynî al-Bahrânî (d. 1107/1695: cf. GAL S. II: 506) in his *al-Burbân fî tafsîr al-qurʾân* (4 vols., Muʿassasat al-wafâʾ, Beirut 1983).

12th/18th century*Sunnî*

‘Abd al-‘Irfân Muḥammad b. ‘Alî al-Şabbân (d. 1206/1792: cf. GAL S. II: 399) in his *Is‘âf al-râğibîn* in the margins of *Nûr al-abşâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr* (al-Maṭba‘a al-‘âmira al-sharafîyya, Cairo 1898).

Shî‘a

‘Abd Allâh b. Nûr Allâh al-Baḥrânî al-Işfahânî (d. 1110/1698: cf. GAL S. II: 504) in his *‘Awâlim al-‘ulûm wa-l-ma‘ârif al-aḥwâl min al-âyat wa-l-aḥbâr wal-aqwâl* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Muḥammad Bâqir b. Muḥammad Taqî b. Maqşûd ‘Alî Akmal al-Mağlisî al-Işfahânî (d. 1110/1700: cf. GAL S. II: 572) in his *Bihâr al-ammâr* (110 vols., Dâr al-kutub al-islâmiyya, Tehran 1924–1935).

13th/19th century*Sunnî*

Mu‘min b. Ḥasan Mu‘min al-Shablangî (d. c. 1301/1883: cf. GAL S. II: 737) in his *Nûr al-abşâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr* (al-Maṭba‘a al-‘âmira al-sharafîyya, Cairo 1898).

14th/20th century*Shî‘a*

al-Ḥâğğ Mîrzâ Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Taqî al-Nûrî al-Ṭabarsî (d. 1320/1902: cf. GAL S. II: 832) in his *Ḥâtimat mustadrak al-wasâ’il* (CRCIS, Qum 2012).

Muḥsin b. ‘Abd al-Karîm al-Amîn al-‘Âmilî (d. 1371/1952: cf. GAL S. II: 808) in his *A‘yân al-Shî‘a*, (CRCIS, Qum 2012)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.D.	<i>Anno Domini</i>
b.	<i>bin</i> (son)
bb.	<i>bâb</i> (chapter)
B.C.	before Christ
bt.	<i>bint</i> (daughter)
c.	<i>circa</i>
CE.	common era
cf.	confer
ch.	chapter
CRCIS	Computer Research Centre of Islamic Sciences
d.	died
ed.	editor
edn.	edition
edns.	editions
eds.	editors
eg.	for example
EI ²	Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2 nd Edition
et al.	and others
etc.	<i>etcetera</i>
ff.	following
GAL	<i>Geschichte der arabischen Literatur</i>
GAS	<i>Geschichte der arabischen Schrifttums</i>
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i>
lit.	literally
MOD.	Tradition and Survival. A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shī'ite Literature
n.	number
NCE ²	New Catholic Encyclopaedia, 2 nd Edition
n.d.	no date
nn.	numbers
n.n.	no number

n.p.	no publisher
nt.	footnote
op.cit.	work cited
pl.	plural
Q.	Qur'ân
SEI	The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam
sic	thus
trans.	translator
v.	verse
vol.	volume
vols.	volumes
vv.	verses

INTRODUCTION

And so we must begin to live again,
We of the damaged bodies and assaulted minds
Starting from scratch, with the rubble of our lives
and picking up the dust
of dreams once dreamt¹

The Karbalâ' event, as evocative and emblematic now as it ever was, has left an inefaceable mark on the Islamic world; on the way that world prays, the way it narrates its past, the way it does its politics, deeply enmeshed even within the waxing and waning of the various reform movements to which, intermittently, it gives birth. As an historical event, Karbalâ' is perpetually engraved upon the memories of those who are devoted to al-Ḥusayn; for devout Shī'ī Muslims, and in particular the *īṭnâ 'asharī* or 'Twelver' Shī'a,² it is the bedrock of their worship and their sorrow, an inextinguishable echo that resonates through their history, their theology and their religious identity as the very blood that through their veins. For the the *īṭnâ 'asharī* Shī'a, Karbalâ' is a central moment in their foundational story and the catalyst of all their subsequent history. Even if al-Ḥusayn is not the most important figure in the Shī'ī faith, it is patently clear that the memorialization of his life and death, conveyed by so many diverse rituals, is deeply enfolded into the spirit of the community, revitalising and impelling it, urging it to fashion

¹ From the poem 'Pockets Shaken' by Anna Mckenzie in CASSIDY S., *Good Friday People*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY 1991.

² As distinct from the Zaydī (sometimes referred to as 'Fiver') and Ismâ'īlī (sometimes referred to as 'Sevener'), the *īṭnâ 'asharī* or 'Twelver' are those Shī'a who follow the twelve Imâms.

a world devoid of all that Yazîd³ and the model of Islamic leadership he represents. Karbalâ' becomes the prototype around which faithful devotees are invited to shape lives for themselves, the whetstone against which they could test the mettle of everything – thoughts, philosophies, belief systems, morals and ethics and basic common sense. Al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom begins to form them into a new kind of people, and that new identity is solidified by every remembrance of Karbalâ'.

Al-Ḥusayn dies on the field of battle and the day of Karbalâ' passes into Islamic history forever, because Karbalâ' has barely ever been understood as a once and for all event, but on the contrary, as an occurrence that people inhabit and constantly renew; in this way, the killing of the third Imâm endures as an extant and immediate calamity for Shî'î Islam. As one author notes, the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn, who on the Karbalâ' field stands before God on humanity's behalf, has become the prototype of every struggle for justice, of every strain of suffering. This is where the Shî'î heart lies; in that agony which is at one and the same time a devastating loss and a sign of hope.⁴ To be a Shî'î Muslim is to be found standing wherever al-Ḥusayn stood; building justice with him, waging peace with him.

The Karbalâ' incident is conceptualized in numerous ways by Shî'î devotees; for some, it roughs out a space in which believers can live prolific, constructive, meaningful lives before God and with each other. For others, God has, in a sense, written Karbalâ' onto the hearts of the faithful, written it into their lives, into their consciousness, has used Karbalâ' as the pen by which He has inscribed into humanity the capacity for justice and courage. Seen through the through the prism of Karbalâ', it becomes possible for people to step back and assess their lives, even in the worst moments, not as futile and desultory, but as decisive and potentially fruitful. What is ostensibly a resounding defeat possesses numerous glimpses of a final victory, so that to treat Karbalâ' as no different from any other battle people learn about in their schoolbooks

³ Yazîd b. Mu'âwiya (d. 63/683), the second caliph of the Umayyad dynasty and a chief antagonist in the Zaynab story.

⁴ NEVILL A., (trans.), *Shi'ite Islam*, Blackwell, Oxford 1995: 29.

would be to ignore the way it has stitched itself through the fabric of Shī'ī life and devotion, and to discount the quality of life that it has birthed in a faith community over fourteen hundred years. Karbalā' pulls and shapes Shī'ī believers as the moon pulls and shapes the tides.

Shī'ī faith is a lived conviction, so that the faith of the Shī'ī Muslim ought to pulse with change and growth and movement as those devoted to al-Ḥusayn constantly rethink loyalty, rethink justice, rethink hope, rethink what life ought to look like on this side of Karbalā'. For some Shī'ī Muslims, the Imām's death beckons them into the endless process of working out how to live as they were created to live. They envisage Karbalā' as the place where injustice and iniquity come undone, as it invites believers to live more intensely, more deeply engaged with justice, to stand before any example of inequality or iniquity with a sadness that runs deep and goads them into action. Karbalā' becomes for them an orientation, a way of walking through life, not merely an affair of history, but a constant bending, a curving toward righteousness and integrity and justice. Karbalā' veers toward hope, interrupting the ordinary and counselling Shī'ī Muslims to cast a glance backwards in order to move forwards.

Karbalā' and its remembrance are, in truth, an atonement. The verb 'atone' originally meant 'to reconcile' or 'to make at one'. From this, it came to signify the action by which such reconciliation was realised; for example, some form of satisfaction made for an offense or an injury, the action of making amends for something wrong. The word was borrowed by Christian scholars to articulate the theology of reparation or expiation for sin; specifically, in Christian thinking, it became synonymous with the reconciliation of God and humankind through Jesus Christ. To call Karbalā' and the actions by which it is remembered 'atonement' is to remove from the word its Christian accretions and return it to a more elemental sense. As such, those who grieve over Karbalā' are 'at one' with al-Ḥusayn and attempt, by their mourning and ritual action, to make amends for his murder and for an Islam distorted by everything epitomized by the caliph Yazīd.

Karbalā' and its remembrance are an ongoing reproach to all who, like Yazīd, have convinced themselves that without military force and coercion, without wealth and weaponry, a better world can never be shaped, a different ending to the story never forged.

Ultimately, it is not within the Yazîd paradigm that real power lies, but within the ideal offered by al-Ḥusayn. Karbalâ' is the point where Yazîd and all he represents comes unstuck, as his version of life and history is confronted by the version lived by Muḥammad's grandson, the point where his own past – years of disobedience, years of dodging God, years of short cuts and fudging the moral and social demands of the Qur'ân – catches up with him, his life and his juvenile theology interrupted by the God whom Islam calls *al-Ḥâfîd* ('the Abaser') and *al-Muntaqim* ('the Avenger').

Karbalâ' is full of voices. The only voices worth listening to are those of people who comprehend what it means to be crushed, those who have been through adversity, have endured agony, who understand what destitution and privation are, but who have found a way to draw on a certain inner strength and live through these things. They have an acumen, an estimation of life that fills them with compassion and tenderness. Voices like that are alluring and forceful. They do not arise by chance. One of those voices is Zaynab's, whose story begins as her brother al-Ḥusayn dies.

There are numerous female characters in the Karbalâ' accounts and memorials; among those who appear most frequently are al-Ḥusayn's immediate relatives, including his mother Fâṭima and his grandmother Ḥadîġa, both present in spirit rather than in person, since Fâṭima had died in 11/632 and Ḥadîġa thirteen years before that. There are recurrent mentions too of his sisters Zaynab and Umm Kulṭûm,⁵ Layla bt. Abî Murra (one of his wives) and his daughters Umm Kulṭûm, Sukayna, Fâṭima and Ruqayya.⁶ A few women, some of them very young, actively fought at Karbalâ' and died there, although women attempting to take the field were mostly forbidden to do so by al-Ḥusayn himself; physical fighting was envisaged as a male activity, while the women were expected to lend moral and logistical support from the sidelines. Islam generally holds it unlawful for women to fight in battle, except under excep-

⁵ Held by some, as will be noted later in this work, to be one and the same person, but who are almost certainly two distinct sisters.

⁶ Their names and number are, as we shall see, strongly disputed.

tional circumstances.⁷ This in itself serves to highlight the nature of the struggle in which Zaynab would later engage.

⁷ In principle, *ġihād* in the sense of military conflict is not obligatory for women except in the cases of necessity, a principle that would later come to be defined by Islamic Law. So, for example, Ibn Ḥanbal records Muḥammad as saying that *ġihād* for the women consists in *ḥaġġ* rather than fighting (Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. XI, *Musnad ‘Ā’isha*, n. 25400: 223), while in *al-Muġnī* the Ḥanbalī Ibn Qudāma names being male as one of the conditions that make it obligatory, with reference to a *ḥadīth* from ‘Ā’isha carried by Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Māġa: “It was narrated that ‘Ā’isha said: Messenger of God, is *ġihād* obligatory for women? He replied: Yes, upon them is a *ġihād* in which there is no fighting: *al-ḥaġġ* and *al-‘umra* (Ibn Māġa, *Sunan*, vol. IV, bk. 25 (*Kitāb al-ġihād*), n. 2901: 126). The possible role of women in battle is recorded in another transmission from Ibn Māġa: “It was narrated that Umm ‘Aṭīyya al-Anṣāriyya said: I fought alongside the Messenger of God in seven campaigns, looking after their goods, making food for them, tending the wounded and looking after the sick (Ibn Māġa, *Sunan*, vol. IV, bk. 25 (*Kitāb al-ġihād*), n. 2856: 97–98). In al-Buḥārī, al-Rubayyī‘ bt. Mu‘awwid narrates a similar *ḥadīth* of women assisting practically on the battlefield (al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. IV, bk. 56 (*Kitāb al-ġihād*), bb. 67, n. 2882: 92). The Ḥanafī Muḥammad al-Saraḥsī (d. 483/1101) reiterates these points, listing the reasons why women ought not to fight (such as physical weakness, or mockery by the enemy), but concludes that it would be obligatory upon them in case of extreme necessity (al-Saraḥsī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-siyār al-kabīr li-Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī*, vol. I, bb. 35: 129–30). Certainly, al-Ḥusayn makes sure that the women and children on the field of Karbalā’ remain as far from the conflict as possible; at least one of the reasons for this, as will be noted later, is his need to protect his progeny, specifically in his son who will become the fourth Imām. In one instance, when Umm Wahb seizes a tent pole and advances on those killing her husband, al-Ḥusayn orders her back to the women’s tent, insisting, in spite of her pleas, that fighting is not obligatory for women (HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. IX, 1990: 131). However, the issue of women actively involved in combat remains a moot point, not only because there have been well-known female warriors in the history of Islam, such as Ḥawla bt. Azwar, but also by reason of the presence of women in the armed forces in a number of Islamic countries (including Saudi Arabia).

For our purposes, the chief of these women is the Pietà-like Zaynab, co-heroine of Karbalâ' with her brother al-Ḥusayn, and who plays a significant role on the night of the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram, the day of 'Āshūrâ. Within hours of the killing of al-Ḥusayn and his companions, the women of the now vulnerable and inconsolable household find themselves led by the venerable and attentive Zaynab, who stands over the survivors with an unwavering vigilance and a courage that eclipses any natural fear and timidity; among them, as they are taken as captives first to the court of the governor 'Ubayd Allâh b. Ziyâd in Kûfa and then to the palace of the caliph Yazîd b. Mu'âwiya in Damascus, is al-Ḥusayn's only surviving son and the fourth Imâm, 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn b. Abî Ṭâlib. As it turns out, before this youthful Imâm assumes his rightful position, Zaynab will become her brother's chief apologist, the defender of his actions before the governor and the caliph, and a theologian, wary matriarch and protector of the children of that 'tendency' (*tashayyu'*) that, fusing itself to the Karbalâ' event would evolve into the *imnâ 'asharî* Shi'î expression of Islamic faith.

Between Karbalâ', Kûfa and Damascus, in spite of hugely traumatic physical and psychological suffering, Zaynab delivers some discomfiting and impassioned words in support of the dead they have left behind, hurriedly buried in the sand. These appeals and protests form, in a very rudimentary sense, the beginnings of what would later develop into the *ta'ziya-maḡlis* genre.⁸ In reality,

⁸ The verbal noun from the Arabic verb *'aẓẓâ-yu'aẓẓû*, which means, amongst other things, 'to comfort', 'to console', 'to offer one's condolences', 'to express one's sympathy. Many English translators render *ta'ziya* as 'passion play' or 'mystery play' and even 'miracle play': but chiefly, it is, as Dabashi notes, "a performance of mourning...that has historically spread over a whole constellation of dramatic and ritual performances" (DABASHI H., "Ta'ziyeh as Theatre of Protest" in P Chelkowski (ed.), *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, New York University Press, New York 1979: 179). These are theatrical performances or dramas, which, making use of stark and powerful imagery, such as a riderless, bloodstained horse, re-enact, recount, and recollect the lives of the family of Muḥammad specifically during the month of Muḥarram. The *ta'ziya*, called by Negar

these rites of anamnesis and mourning developed over an extended period of time, into what today are politico-religious phenomena, profusely ritualistic and prized by their ardent participants. For the Imâms and their devotees who came after al-Ḥusayn and who lived in secrecy because of persecution, there was little chance of insurrection. Weeping and other ways of remembrance soon developed into ‘commemorations’ (*mağâlis*), which were given a powerful impetus by the fourth Imâm who had survived Karbalâ’. These active memorials were often held in the home of the Imâm, until (especially after the ‘Abbâsids) their manifestation became more public. Even then, some leaders felt threatened by the display of popular piety and attempted to suppress such commemorations. As the month of Muḥarram ends and that of Şafar begins,⁹ Zaynab finds herself standing before Yazîd in his Damascus palace, where she becomes his most vociferous critic. As one of the popular elegies in her honour reads:

Do not call her a woman, she is above a man, she is more
faithful than a man. Do not call her a woman, there is no one

Mottahedeh “a twist of history in everyday life” (cf. AGHAIE K.S., (ed.), *The Women of Karbala*, University of Texas Press, Austin 2005: 25), provides a sacred space for the spectator-participants to reaffirm through the ritual their engagement with the religious and moral stance taken by al-Ḥusayn, and with which they, as members of the Shi‘a, are an integral part. The word *mağlis*, with its plural *mağâlis*, and which in its origins meant a place of meeting or social gathering, comes from the Arabic root meaning ‘to sit’. It refers to the commemorative accounts of the Karbalâ’ event, replete with narrative and lamentation poetry, and told in such a way as to evoke a grief and weeping that is often frenzied. Weeping is a reminder, and remembrance is more important than the actual weeping. Cf. CLOHESSY C., “Some Notes on mağlis and ta‘ziya” in *Encounter*, vol. 41/1 (2016), Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d’Islamistica, Rome.

⁹ For this reason, the cycle of mourning continues throughout Muḥarram and the following month, Şafar, to commemorate the fate of the women and children, brought as hostages to Damascus.

more courageous than Zaynab. Do not call her a woman, there is no one more knowledgeable than Zaynab.¹⁰

If, because of al-Ḥusayn's sacrifice, Karbalā' is inexpungible, durably ingrained upon the Shī'ī psyche, it is Zaynab's compelling voice in the halls of despots and bullies, in the streets and gathering places of Kûfa and Medina, that has secured that imperishability. "There was no other more eloquent woman than Zaynab," reads one elegy, "when she spoke, men held their breath...the fiery tongue of Ali could be heard in her speech."¹¹ It is not hard to understand how she has become inextricably woven into the imagery and language of Karbalā'.

In her decisive role as spokesperson for her brother's cause, she became the first to drive the adversity of Karbalā' into perpetuity by moving her brother's creed and conviction off the battlefield and into the palaces of Kûfa and Damascus, not only completing al-Ḥusayn's *ġibād*, but becoming the agent through whom Karbalā' would become undying. Zaynab's last protest, reproaching Yazīd in his own residence by delineating the ethical and political issues that led to her brother's death, continues to buoy and buttress the Shī'a, as she assures him:

By God, who honoured us with Revelation and the Book and the Prophethood and the election, you will not overtake our span of time or reach our objective or efface our memory.¹²

Zaynab's crucial legacy is her role as the catalyst for the *ta'ziya-maġlis* tradition, by which, in lament and bereavement, the foundational story of Shī'ī Islam is vocalized. This is perhaps seen best of

¹⁰ AGHAIE K.S., (ed.), *The Women of Karbala*, 2005: 109. In spite of the honour it gives to Zaynab, the elegy is disappointingly censorious in its view of women generally.

¹¹ Op. cit.: 127.

¹² Cf. al-Ṭabarsī., *Kitāb al-iḥtiġāġ 'alā abl al-lġġġ*, vol. II: 308–309, Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-tuġġf*: 105–108, Ibn Namā al-Hillī., *Muṭīr al-abḡān wa munār subul al-ashġān*, Part 3: 101–102, al-Maġlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 133–135, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 157–160. Among the Sunnī, cf. al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 71–4.

all by her unwavering demand in Damascus that the traditional mourning rites, neglected in Karbalâ', now be permitted. It was Zaynab who carried the message of rebellion to others and who made 'Âshûrâ possible. One poet says of her:

Touched by the shadow of purification, she is the reflection of sanctification, the aim of Muḥammad, the voice and embellishment of her father, the prayer and cloak of her mother, the anguished heart's cry, the Imâm's guidance.¹³

For a few brief historical days, she took centre stage as leader of the 'people of the house' (*ahl al-bayt*), protector and guarantor of the next Imâm and preeminent champion and advocate for Karbalâ'. She is clearly important in the Sunnî texts, in the articulation of the chief Karbalâ' moments; but these instances are powerfully elaborated and embellished in the Shî'î texts precisely because she is a member of the *ahl al-bayt* and, if not one of those counted as immaculate and impeccable (*ma'sûma*), then raised and trained by those who are.

Zaynab offers a womanly courage to a society that hides behind the force of military power, her integrity unbowed by convenience, her humility undeterred by power, her truth untainted by lies. She represents an authentic, vibrant, courageous human being breaking through all the opposition, refusing to be content with a life that is less than real, less than honest, less than true, a woman of uncommon character and substance, resolute in her quest for a valid Islam against those who claim to know the mind of God and who are prepared to use coercion, if necessary, to make others conform; those who cannot tell God's will from their own, those who wear their certainty and assurance like a cloak. For her adherents, the Zaynab of the Karbalâ' narratives leaves her fingerprints on every struggle for justice and for an authentic expression of Islam, on all the places where people refuse to collude with corruption, or show a willingness to sacrifice for a great cause, or are persistent in the quest for righteousness despite the odds. Zaynab meets the

¹³ D'SOUZA D., "The Figure of Zaynab in Shî'î Devotional Life" in *The Bulletin of The Henry Martyn Institute*, Volume 17/1, January-June 1998: 47.

needs of the hour, advancing her brother's principles and so altering the course of history, assuring devotees that they can face the future with strength, courage, and wisdom.

The chronicles we will examine, carried both by Sunnî and Shî'î transmitters, record specific incidents, either directly or indirectly involving Zaynab, in the days immediately preceding Karbalâ', during the course of the battle itself, and in the days of imprisonment and interrogation directly after the death of al-Husayn and his companions. Quite patently, the Zaynab presented in the classical sources grows in awareness of the ultimate outcome of the hostilities; she is almost certainly not entirely convinced from the beginning that it is here, at Karbalâ', that her brother will be killed and the predictions of his death fulfilled. While there is a definite change in Zaynab's character, until the moment when she takes a final stand before Yazîd, and a clearly defined growth in courage and eloquence, she remains a frail and frightened woman rather than some sort of undaunted super heroine. The key to her sanctity and her excellence as a model lies precisely in that weakness, so prized particularly by those Shî'î adherents who construct their lives and spirituality around Karbalâ', rather than in what seems to be a false construct to suit a particular ideological narrative; that of the unflinching revolutionary.

This concept of 'weakness' needs prudent definition. Quite patently Zaynab, as one brought up by those deemed to be 'infallible' (*ma'sûm*) and therefore as one who shares a secondary or minor infallibility, is not, in the eyes of her Shî'î devotees, any ordinary woman. Nevertheless, nor is she *de facto* shielded from a substantial amount of suffering, both physical and mental, anymore than her mother Fâṭima had been immune to such things. The physical weakness and suffering of Fâṭima, both in her grief and in the rigors of her daily life, are well documented. Such a phenomenon is clearly highlighted, for example, by some of the writings of *Shayḥ* al-Ṣadûq, in works such as *Ṣifât al-shi'â* and *Faḍâ'il al-shi'â*. Enfolded into the Shî'î corpus of *ahâdîth*, and in texts ranging from al-Kulaynî's *al-Kâfî* to *Shayḥ* al-Ṣadûq's *Ṣifât al-shi'â* and Ibn Shaḥrâshûb's *Manâqib*, is a set of distinct traits which distinguish and individuate the *itnâ 'asharî* devotees, and each of which assists in painting the portrait a life that is filled with mourning and sorrow. Prolonged night vigils have rendered their faces ashen and haggard, their stomachs ache from long fasts, unflagging prayer has

desiccated their mouths. They are a people covered with the dust of the humble, emaciated, slender and wasted; their backs bent from standing in prayer and their eyes unfocused from incessant weeping. Their faces sallow from long hours of worship, long nights of prayer have exhausted them and the heat of the midday sun has taken its toll on their bodies. Their tears, like their prayers and supplications, are unceasing. They grieve, while all around them people are happy.¹⁴

The whole infrastructure of *itnâ ʿasharî* Shîʿî spirituality is held together by a grief that is fierce and harrowing and conspicuous, for “God loves every grieving heart.”¹⁵ It is a sorrow

¹⁴ Cf. for example al-Kulaynî., *al-Kâfî fî ʿilm al-dîn*, vol. II, bk. 5 (*Kitâb al-îmân wa-l-kufî*), bb. *al-Muʾmin wa ʿalâmâtî-hî*, n. 10: 233, n. 10/2289: 591, al-Şadûq., *Kitâb al-hişâl*, vol. II, n. 40: 444, *Sjât al-shiʿa*, nn. 18–19: 10, nn. 20, 22: 11, n. 33, 17, n. 40: 29, *Kitâb al-amâlî fî al-aḥādîṯ wa-l-aybâr*, maḡlis 83: 561, *Faḍâʾil al-shiʿa*, n. 20: 26, al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî maʿrifat ḥuḡaḡ Allâh ʿalâ al-ʿibâd*, vol. I: 237–238, al-Ṭûsî., *al-Amâlî fî al-ḥadîṯ*, maḡlis 8: 216–216, maḡlis 23: 576, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâʿiẓîn wa-tabṣirat al-muttaʿiẓîn*, vol. II: 293–294, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Tâlib*, vol. II, bb. *al-Musâbaqa bi-l-yaqîn wa-l-khabr*: 120, al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. I: 100, 133, al-Daylamî., *Irshâd al-qulûb*, vol. I, bb. 29: 108, bb. 46: 145, al-Kafʿamî., *al-Balad al-amîn*: 334, al-Ḥurr al-ʿÂmilî., *Tafṣîl wasâʾil al-shiʿa ilâ taḥṣîl masâʾil al-shariʿa*, vol. I, bb. 20, n. 8–205: 87, n. 16–213: 91, n. 21–218: 92–93, vol. VII, bb. 5, n. 13–8997: 157, vol. XV, bb. 4, n. 16–20242: 189, al-Maḡlisî., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XXVII, bb. 4, n. 155: 144, vol. XXXIII, bb. 23, n. 597: 363, vol. XLI, bb. 99, n. 4: 4, vol. LXIV, bb. 12: 247, vol. LXV, bb. 19, n. 2: 149, nn. 4–5: 150–151, n. 30: 169, nn. 32, 34: 176–177, n. 43: 188, vol. LXVI, bb. 37, n. 30: 308, vol. LXXIV, bb. 15, n. 30: 403, vol. LXXV, bb. 15, nn. 90, 91: 25–26, vol. XCII, bb. 129: 382.

¹⁵ al-Kulaynî., *al-Kâfî fî ʿilm al-dîn*, vol. II, bk. 5 (*Kitâb al-îmân wa-l-kufî*), bb. *al-Shukr*, n. 30: 99, Ibn al-Ḥadîd., *Sharḥ nahġ al-balâġa*, vol. II: 193, al-Daylamî *Irshâd al-qulûb*, vol. I: 154, al-Ḥurr al-ʿÂmilî., *Tafṣîl wasâʾil al-shiʿa ilâ taḥṣîl masâʾil al-shariʿa*, vol. VII, bb. 29, n. 8771: 76, vol. XVI, bb. 8, n. 21626: 310; al-Maḡlisî., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. LXVIII, bb. 61, n. 25: 38, vol. LXX, bb. 125, n. 3: 157.

compounded by a number of factors: the usurpation of their power at the very beginning, the unwavering refusal to accord 'Alī and his descendants their rightful place, the ill-treatment of Fāṭima and the members of her family, and the persecution of those faithful to the 'people of the house' as a constant through Islamic history. Notwithstanding all of these factors, Shī'ī grief finds its culmination and summit in the death of al-Ḥusayn on the field of Karbalā' – the very name means 'land of sorrow and calamity' – and it is the Karbalā' event by which the grief is articulated and finds physical interpretation. All the suffering and grief of the 'people of the house' converges in the solitary figure of al-Ḥusayn, and all subsequent pain and sorrow is nothing more than a way of participating in his own grief.¹⁶

In his work on the possibility of a suffering in Islam that could be counted as redemptive,¹⁷ Mahmoud Ayoub goes to great length to underscore the suffering, poverty and privation of the *ahl al-bayt*, as a sign of their favour with God. To reinforce his argument, Ayoub references a number of *ahādīth* about the calamities inflicted upon the prophets and the pious, and all who suffer with them and who are thereby construed as members of the eternal and mystical 'house of sorrows' (*bayt al-abḡān*). This suffering of the *ahl al-bayt* is both material and political, the latter accentuated by the arrogation of their rightful power by others and their persecution (as well as the hounding of those who adhere to them). This is underscored especially by the martyrdom of all the Imāms, except for the twelfth; in spite of being understood as one of the divinely foreordained qualities of the Imāms, their killing is almost entirely for political motives – in this way, the divine in some sense interacts with the world of human beings. Notes Ayoub: "For the people of the Prophet's household, this meant the endurance of poverty and hunger, persecution and privation, and finally the cup of martyrdom as the seal of their struggle...in the way of God." The

¹⁶ CLOHESSY C.P., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 136.

¹⁷ AYOUB M., *Redemptive Suffering in Islam. A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Ashura in Twelver Shi'ism*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague 1978.

ma‘šūmūn are not spared the ordinary run of human suffering – in fact, theirs is amplified, because suffering is understood as having its own merit with God, purifying the soul and testing the devotee. This is expressed by Muḥammad in a *ḥadīth* carried by Ibn Māḡa:

“On the authority of Muṣ‘ab b. Sa‘d, on the authority of his father Sa‘d b. Abī Waqqâṣ, who said: I said: Messenger of God, which people are most severely tested. He replied: The Prophets, then the next best, then the next best. A person is tested according to his religious commitment. If he is steadfast in his religious commitment, he will be tested more severely.”¹⁸

Consequently, Muḥammad himself was not spared various types of suffering: “The Messenger of God said: I have been tortured for the sake of God as no one else has, and I have suffered fear for the sake of God as no one else has.”¹⁹

Zaynab’s comportment in the hours leading up to Karbalâ’ reveals some very human traits. The classical sources, both Sunnī and Shī‘ī, do not shy away from portraying the human qualities of grief and fear in her as a reaction to her brother’s plight. To expunge these from her, or from any member of the *ahl al-bayt*, would be at once to pluck them from the realm of being exemplars and models for imitation. Herein lies the weakness so prized by the Shī‘a and the weakness experienced by Zaynab, since suffering, as a form of privation (of happiness, or peace, or material well-being, or health, for example) is a form of weakness.

The narratives comprise a number of definitive interventions by Zaynab before, during and after Karbalâ’; these interventions not only form the bulk of her biography in the classical sources, but also provide the groundwork of a theology and spirituality constructed around her life. Zaynab is quite clearly a woman whose heart beats in the places where al-Ḥusayn’s heart beats and breaks in the places where al-Ḥusayn’s heart breaks. In this, she is a consummate model of Shī‘ī Islam. I propose these accounts, therefore, in order to explore the content of a ‘Zaynabian’ theology and spir-

¹⁸ Ibn Māḡa, *Sunan*, vol. V, *Abnâb al-fitan*, bb. 23, n. 4023: 225.

¹⁹ Op. cit., vol. 1, *Kitâb al-sunna*, bb. 11, n. 151: 176–177.

ity that could be relevant, without the need of ideological reinterpretation, to any Shī'ī Muslim. We will examine Zaynab precisely as she is presented by the classical sources, allowing the texts to speak for themselves and so to give her a voice.

The narrations we will consider can be separated into three groups. They commence on the road to Karbalā', when on the night air Zaynab hears an unidentified voice crying out in lament and warning and turns to her brother for an explanation. Days later, on the edges of the Karbalā' field, she is alarmed by the noise of the enemy army drawing near and approaches al-Ḥusayn, as he sits in front of his tent, legs drawn up and dreaming of his grandfather Muḥammad. She suffers an emotional collapse as he sings a dirge about those who would be dead by the next day.

The second group of narrations begins after the start of battle as Zaynab, reinvigorated and 'like the sun rising', emerges from her tent to bewail the death of her nephew 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. She emerges a second time in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent a small boy, possibly another nephew, from entering the fray, a boy forever remembered for the cutting words he shouts at his killer. And she emerges a third time, in al-Ḥusayn's final moments, to challenge and shame his killers. This group of texts ends with Zaynab's tormented elegy as the survivors, herded in a dishevelled group from Karbalā' to Kûfa and then to Damascus, leave behind them the bodies of al-Ḥusayn and his companions.

The third group of reports starts as Zaynab's haunting lament is transformed a few days later into her first forceful protest directed at the citizens of Kûfa and continues with her verbal battles, initially with Ibn Ziyâd and then in Damascus with Yazîd. The epochal lecture she delivers before a chastened Yazîd marks her final intervention, the moment when Zaynab begins to take her leave, stepping back from the central drama of Shī'ī history while her nephew, the fourth Imâm, assumes his legitimate place.

In spite of numerous other aspects of her biography – specifically her childhood years and the last months of her life – being less well-documented and even disputed in so many of their aspects, these Karbalā' interventions recorded by the classical authors provide sufficient material for a 'Zaynabian' theology and praxis. The first stage in constructing such a theology and mode of spirituality is to attempt to retrieve the truest possible picture of Zaynab from the figure she has become; to liberate the genuine Zaynab,

imprisoned to a lesser or greater degree by hagiography and by some of the socio-political discourses and religious narratives of the last half a century or more, which fundamentally reinterpreted as her a fearless and intrepid activist. In doing so, such readings of her life have offered something of a false construct, in that such a reading is nothing more than another strand of hagiography. For one thing, pious stories, even if inspiring, do not help us to establish a rigorously academic biography. For another, there was no need for any mechanical reinterpretation of Zaynab using a revolutionary narrative; a careful reading of the classical texts already reveals quite distinctly the transformation from a confused and frightened woman into an articulate defender of the *ahl al-bayt* and a defender of her brother's cause. Defining her holiness by turning her into a courageous preacher of justice fails to take into account that in reality it is weakness, not strength, which lies at the heart of Shi'ī spirituality and power. As Dabashi writes so vividly:

Shi'ism, in the end, is a paradox. It thrives and is triumphant when it is combative and wages an uphill battle. It loses its moral authority and defiant voice the instant it succeeds and is in power. It is, paradoxically, only in power when it is not in power. When it is in power it lacks legitimacy, authority, audacity.²⁰

A solid Zaynabian theology begins, then, with situating Zaynab as she is presented in the classical sources; a terrified, grieving woman who has lost everything, but who at a particular instant summons all the strength God has given her to clarify and defend her brother's actions before the highest power in the land and establish the history and mourning rites of Karbalā'.

In two ways, the recent revisionist approach to Zaynab follows a similar recalibration of her mother, Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima. In the first instance, Rosiny²¹ writes of a contemporary

²⁰ DABASHI H., *Shi'ism: A religion of protest*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 2011: xiv.

²¹ ROSINY S., "The Tragedy of Fāṭima al-Zahrā' in the Debate of Two Shi'ite Theologians in Lebanon" in R BRUNNER and W ENDE (eds.), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times*, Brill, Leiden 2001: 207–219.

deliberation, between two distinct theological tendencies, about Fâṭima's life; the conservative 'historical school', represented by Ġa'far Murtaḍâ al-Āmilî, and the 'modern reformist' by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallâh. The debate centres on the incidents that would take place shortly after the death of Muḥammad and the succession to the caliphate of Abû Bakr, including some violent scenes at the house of 'Alî and Fâṭima. Determined to force 'Alî's allegiance, an armed group forced its way into the home, injuring Fâṭima in the process, and ostensibly causing the miscarriage of her unborn son.²² There are numerous disparate reports about this incident.

While Faḍlallâh does not deny some form of aggression, he insists that there are too many embellished and unsubstantiated legends, leading him to censure many of the texts about Fâṭima, especially those which present a more mystical and esoteric image of Muḥammad's daughter. He wants, instead, an accentuation of her political, religious and social activities, so that she could become a model for the modern activist female Muslim. Fâṭima's life demonstrates that it is possible for women to enter fully into the cultural and social *milieu*, offering to all Muslim women a paradigm that can be imitated. Faḍlallâh depicts the members of the *ahl al-bayt* as human beings with explicable reasons for their actions and habits and underscores the human traits of the Shî'î holy ones, so as to offer them as prototypes for contemporary life.

Al-Āmilî defends the more arcane aspects of the Shî'î approach to Fâṭima, insisting that the mystical aspects of her life are crucial to Shî'î belief, so that minimizing or denying them would in consequence seriously demoralize the faith. These elements include Fâṭima's creation from a fruit of paradise, her conversing with her mother from the womb, her preservation from menstruation, and her never having shed blood when giving birth.

²² This is the claim of the Shî'a: but cf. Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*, n. 769: 211–212, n. 953: 250–251, where his birth is recorded, and n. 1370: 335 where it is omitted.

In the second instance, best encapsulated in the book *Fatima is Fatima*,²³ its author, French-educated sociologist Ali Shariati, introduces Fâṭima as the archetypal woman, a role model for Muslim women and the woman that Islam would like every woman to be. Shariati's Fâṭima is entirely without supernatural attributes and although in some ways incomparable, she is, primarily, entirely human. By her own will and sound judgment she had chosen to be loyal, devoted, compassionate and ready to sacrifice herself for her family and her true fate. All women in Iran, posited Shariati, should adhere to her example and be, like her, an object of sacrifice. Shariati proposes his own very distinct vision of Muḥammad's daughter to every good Muslim woman, confused and disorientated, he thought, by the Iranian Pahlavî dynasty,²⁴ which he believed had created a class of women devoid of character or identity, a distorted genre, severed from its origins, heritage and fate.

Notwithstanding evident differences between the two – as Deeb points out, Fâṭima is perceived as more passive and docile than her daughter Zaynab, characterized as she is by stoicism, patience and maternalism²⁵ – an almost identical debate could be launched around the life of Zaynab; the 'ordinary' wife and mother in contrast to the woman imbued with heavenly virtues, the panic-stricken, anguished Zaynab on the field of Karbalâ' in contrast to the determined and courageous revolutionary and model for all women.

The revisionist interpretation of Zaynab, examined by a number of contemporary authors such as Hamdar, Ruffle, Pandyar and Deeb,²⁶ has taken place on a number of levels. The first is on the

²³ SHARIATI A., *Fatima is Fatima*, The Shariati Foundation, Tehran (n.d.).

²⁴ 1344/1925 – 1399/1979. Cf. BOSWORTH C.E., *Islamic Surveys 5. The Islamic Dynasties*, 1967: 180.

²⁵ DEEB L., "Emulating and/or Embodying the Ideal: The Gendering of Temporal Frameworks and Islamic Role Models in Shi'i Lebanon" in *American Ethnologist*, vol. 36, n. 2 (May, 2009): 252.

²⁶ HAMDAR A., "Jihad of Words: Gender and Contemporary Karbala Narratives" in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 39, n. 1/2, Literature and Religion (2009), Modern Humanities Research Association,

level of gender. If in the past it was the men of the *abl al-bayt* and their supporters who were the principle locus of the Karbalâ' accounts, while the emotional sufferings of women, although not ignored, remained on the fringes, such a narrative has been rewritten. The women of Karbalâ' have become heroines in the more contemporary retellings of the event, not so much in the appalling agony of seeing their men slain or even in their atrocious treatment at the hands of the authorities, but in the courage and strength they display, especially in front of a tyrannical leadership. In this, Zaynab, with her weighty verbal duels with Ibn Ziyâd and Yazîd, has become the chief protagonist.

Less and less is the struggle or *ġihâd* of the women envisaged as something subsidiary to the undaunted actions of their male counterparts; instead, the women have come to occupy a more salient place, engaging battle, as in the case of Zaynab, with intellect and eloquence as resolutely as the men engage it with force of arms. In the writings of scholars like Shariati, Zaynab, like her mother Fâtîma, is forged into a model for the contemporary Shi'î woman, be it in Iran, Lebanon or Bahrain. As she takes on the leonine qualities of her father, Zaynab becomes an innovative feminine marker, a paragon and inspiration who shapes new modes of behaviour. The Zaynab that Shariati presents in his *La Responsabilité de la femme*²⁷ takes on traditionally masculine characteristics; but, as Ruffle²⁸ is quick to point out, Zaynab is not transformed into a

Cambridge: 84–100, RUFFLE K.G., *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shi'ism*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2011, PANDYA S., “Women’s Shi’i Ma’atim in Bahrain” in *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, vol. 6, n. 2 (Spring 2010): 31–58, DEEB L., “Living Ashura in Lebanon: Mourning Transformed to Sacrifice” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 25, n. 1, Duke University Press, North Carolina 2005: 122–137, “Emulating and/or Embodying the Ideal: The Gendering of Temporal Frameworks and Islamic Role Models in Shi’i Lebanon, 2009: 242–257.

²⁷ SHARIATI A., *La Responsabilité de la femme*, Albouraq, Beyrouth 2011.

²⁸ RUFFLE K.G., *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shi'ism*, 2011: 76.

woman with masculine traits. Rather, the suggestion is that certain characteristics and virtues, once the domain of the males of the species, are embodied by Zaynab and, by association, any woman who patterns her life on such an exemplar. Less out of kinship with her brother and more because of her own socio-political commitment and religious devotion, Shariati's Zaynab plunges deeply into al-Husayn's revolution, and then stays with him to the end. Her subsequent battle, in which she sustains her brother's struggle, is accomplished against all odds, as by a proficient use of words she helps to defeat the oppressive powers. This, notes Shariati, is what it means to be like Zaynab; to take upon one's shoulders the enduring struggle for truth and justice and to do so with mettle and vigour. In Zaynab, qualities such as physical bravery and gallantry, which may once have been thought to be the province of the men, are seen to belong equally to women, without any loss of femininity; concomitantly, she and those who imitate her virtues can become a lesson to men who may be failing in these virtues. She is a woman of extraordinary valour, learned from her mother Fâṭima, but "whose spiritual and psychophysical capabilities are never determined in comparison with those of men",²⁹ and who never ceases at any instant to be quintessentially feminine.

A second level of the reshaping of Zaynab and the retelling of Karbalâ', already perceptible in the first, is the distinct movement of Zaynab from the fringes of the Karbalâ' event to a central role. This is less evident in the battle itself, although her interventions on the field are clearly noted by the classical sources; instead, it concerns the post-Karbalâ' Zaynab in her fierce and courageous engagement with the authorities, and the suggestion that she becomes, on a certain level, the saviour of Karbalâ' and of her brother's cause. Three things become patently clear at the level of the texts; the first is that her interventions saved the life of the fourth Imâm, winning time for him and creating a critical space in which he could regain his strength before assuming his rightful place. The second is that by her protests before the people of Kûfa, Ibn Ziyâd and Yazîd, she delineated clearly the political, moral and spiritual principles that impelled the actions of her brother. The third is that

²⁹ Op. cit.: 81.

she was the standard-bearer in the institution of memorial services, thus ensuring that the Karbalâ' event would survive for every generation. Hamdar goes even further, suggesting that Zaynab "shook the very foundations of Yazid's rule, set the scene for its collapse."³⁰

On a third level, intimately tied to the first two, there is a transfiguration of Zaynab the tearful woman into Zaynab the courageous and fearless exemplar. As Hamdar notes:

Present-day narratives revise earlier claims regarding Zaynab's reaction to the adversaries around her. These narratives stress that, contrary to popular belief, Zaynab never broke down or lost her edge, even as she witnessed the suffering unfolding.³¹

However, this reinterpretation of her behaviour does not represent an entirely faithful reading of the classical texts which, despite showing a growing boldness and eloquence, nonetheless reveal a Zaynab who even at her strongest moments was filled with fear and grief. At her most articulate and powerful before Yazid, she still breaks down; and while it would be incorrect, as in some earlier pieties, to make a benumbed grief the chief characteristic of Zaynab after Karbalâ', some of what Deeb³² calls the 'authenticated' (as opposed to the more 'traditional') forms of remembering the event have so accentuated her courage and valour as to forget her human sorrow and mourning. Both sets of characteristics – the fearlessness and the sorrow – should be of equal importance, and Zaynab's life appears to be a far more imitable fusion of both. Even so, as Deeb observes, this new construal of Zaynab's comportment during and after Karbalâ' is crucial for Shî'î women.³³ She becomes the model of a woman who takes a stand before injustice and tyranny, a protector and nurturer of those in her care. She is a woman of immense compassion, clarity of thought, dedica-

³⁰ HAMDAR A., "Jihad of Words: Gender and Contemporary Karbala Narratives", 2009: 91.

³¹ Ibid.

³² DEEB L., "Living Ashura in Lebanon: Mourning Transformed to Sacrifice", 2005: 124.

³³ Op. cit.: 123.

tion to justice, articulate in her arguments, coping in situations of crisis. Women, writes Deeb,

are utilizing the salient example of Zaynab as an outspoken, strong, and compassionate activist to push the boundaries of what is acceptable and expectable for pious Lebanese Shi'i women...Zaynab has become an idealized standard of behaviour.³⁴

Again, Hamdar goes further than this, positing that through her eloquent advocacy of her brother's cause, Zaynab

has come to be regarded as the major catalyst in the creation of a full-fledged Shi'i movement and keeping it alive amongst the public...an educator of the public, revealing the truth about the events of Karbala and exposing the atrocities of the Umayyad rule.³⁵

On a final level, Zaynab's devotees are themselves invited to a transformation, from memorial expressed in mourning and in tears to memorial expressed in action. This ties in with Shariati's activist 'Red Shi'ism' model, the call to move away from a passive remembrance to an active struggle against the forces of evil as the best way of emulating the heroes of Karbalâ'.³⁶ Mourning cannot be quietist and disengaged but should encompass an activist struggle against all that Yazid represents. The Zaynab to be emulated is the one who sacrificed herself and passed on the pattern of striving against iniquity and oppression. In these areas, she is put forward as a paragon whose embodiment of morality, spirituality and social engagement can be imitated. This imitation resonates deeply in women involving themselves in works of social welfare, in education, in political activism and in family life; in a word, Zaynab is the model of a perfectly modern yet pious Shi'i woman. The major

³⁴ Op. cit.: 136.

³⁵ HAMDAR A., "Jihad of Words: Gender and Contemporary Karbala Narratives", 2009: 92.

³⁶ For an evaluation of this transformation, cf. AGHAIE K.S., 1994. "Reinventing Karbala: Revisionist interpretations of the Karbala Paradigm" in *Jusur: The UCLA Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 10, 1994:1-30.

change here, observes Deeb, is that “for women, bringing Karbala into the contemporary moment requires public participation in the betterment of the community as a necessary component of being a moral person.”³⁷

To force a transformation on Zaynab for socio-political reasons is to ignore the natural transformation that is evident at the level of the texts. Furthermore, to turn her into a fearless revolutionary, no matter how inspirational this may prove, is to discount and deny her very human traits, breaking down, for example, in grief-stricken tears even when she was at her most powerful. Not to accept her as she is in the texts, without some later cosmetic transformation, is to diminish her power to inspire people at every level of society, and not just those who may be involved in the great socio-political movements of their time. It is my contention that the real Zaynab is an amalgam of all the elements encapsulated by the various levels of transformation. We have to understand Zaynab for who she was; a terrified and grieving woman who had lost everything, but who at a particular instant gathered all her inner strength and cemented the history and mourning rites of Karbalâ’, as she endorsed and justified her brother’s actions before the Umayyad powers.

All of the elements of the older views of Zaynab have value; she mourned deeply, with a sadness that ran through to the marrow, exercised her maternal capacity in caring for the survivors of Karbalâ’, took a leading role in establishing the rites of mourning and ensured that both the *raison d’être* and the authentic history of her brother’s struggle and martyrdom would be preserved and retold. However, as Pandya reminds us, “while in the past Zaynab was understood to be a symbol of grieving womanhood, today this would be considered an incomplete way of understanding her significance.”³⁸ Or, perhaps, of the meaning of Karbalâ’ itself.

The Karbalâ’ story barely needs retelling. For the sake of brevity we can say that the catalyst of the affair, although not the

³⁷ DEEB L., “Emulating and/or Embodying the Ideal: The Gendering of Temporal Frameworks and Islamic Role Models in Shi’i Lebanon”, 2009: 253.

³⁸ PANDYA S., “Women’s Shi’i Ma’atim in Bahrain”, 2010: 44.

sole cause, was the caliphate of Mu‘âwiya, during whose tenure al-Ḥusayn received numerous appeals to lead a revolt together with pledges of support, and the accession of Yazîd b. Mu‘âwiya to the caliphate after his father’s death. Al-Ḥusayn motives are simultaneously political, religious and moral; he regarded Yazîd, with his inflexible demand for allegiance, as entirely unprincipled and depraved. Both Yazîd and his father were envisaged as men who had violated the Islamic socio-political ideal, thereby threatening the foundations of the office of the caliphate and the very substructure of Islam. Tenacious, in spite of the quite obvious outcome of such a course, al-Ḥusayn was uncompromising in his rejection of allegiance to Yazîd, and for this reason he could not possibly have remained, inactive, in Medina. If, as some may think, he acted with disproportionate idealism and without the adroitness and versatility of a politician, ultimately, he appears to have had little choice. For one thing, all of this was preordained, since martyrdom is integral to the office of Imâm. For another, al-Ḥusayn felt himself to be acting in accordance with a divine command:

“How should ye not fight for the cause of Allah and of the feeble among men and of the women and the children who are crying: Our Lord! Bring us forth from out of this town of which the people are oppressors. Oh, give us from Thy presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Thy presence some defender!”³⁹

While it is difficult to determine whether he was, from the start, fully cognizant of the final outcome, al-Ḥusayn left Medina for Mecca, where he stayed about four months. Numerous *ab‘âdât* relate that not only al-Ḥusayn, but others too, like his grandfather, father and mother, knew that this boy, whose conception and birth is meticulously encased in accounts of heavenly intervention, would die a martyr’s death. Some, but certainly not all, actually mention Karbalâ’ as the site of his martyrdom, with accounts of Muḥammad being given red soil from the place.⁴⁰ He continued to

³⁹ Q. 4: 75.

⁴⁰ These include the genre of dreams by women such as Umm Salama, Umm al-Faḍl and Umm Ayman, carried by Sunnî and Shî‘î alike, as well as similar dreams, visions and angelic visitations experienced by

Muḥammad. “Fāṭima will give birth to a boy, whom your community

after you will kill,” announces Ġibraʿil to Muḥammad (al-Kulaynī., *al-Kāfī fī ʿilm al-dīn*, vol. I, *Kitāb al-ḥuǧǧa*, bb. *mawlid al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī*, n. 3: 464, Ibn Qūlūya al-Qummi., *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, bb. 16, n. 4: 122, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *fī imāmat Abī ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusayn*: 57, al-Astarābādī., *Taʿwīl al-āyāt al-bābira fī faḍl al-ʿitra al-ṭābira*: 563, al-Maǧlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 21: 246, n. 31: 253, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 16: 231, vol. LIII, bb. 29, n. 126: 102, vol. LXVI, bb. 37: 266). In another account, Muḥammad tells Fāṭima that he has had a vision of God in ‘a most beautiful form’ (*fī aḥsan šūra*), and who declared al-Ḥusayn the first of the martyrs from first to last (Ibn Qūlūya al-Qummi., *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, bb. 21, n. 1: 140, n. 2: 70, al-Maǧlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 29: 238). The books of *aḥādīth* abound with these stories, related with an assortment of details. The Sunnī transmitter al-Ḥawārizmī, for example, dedicates a whole chapter of his *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn* to relating them from various sources, while a number of his Sunnī colleagues, including Ibn Ḥanbal in his *Musnad*, al-Nisābūrī in his *Kitāb al-mustadrak ʿalā al-ṣaḥīḥayn* and al-Ṭabarī in his *Daḥāʾir al-ʿuqbā*, relate the story in various settings, sometimes in an angelic visitation, sometimes in a vision, always containing the same strand of a tragic augury (Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, n. 648: 184–185; vol. IV, *Musnad Anas b. Mālik*, n. 13539: 482, n. 13796: 527, al-Tirmidī., *Sunan*, vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitāb al-manāqib*), bb. *al-Ḥasan wa-l-Ḥusayn*, n. 3774:333, al-Nisābūrī., *Kitāb (Talḥīs) al-mustadrak ʿalā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*, vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitāb maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*), bb. *anwal faḍāʾil Abī ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī*, n. 4890: 213, vol. IV, bk. 31 (*Kitāb maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*), *Diker Umm Salama*, nn. 6843, 6844: 101, vol. IV, bk. 47 (*Taʿbīr al-ruʾyā*), n. 8282: 553–554, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, Part I, bb. *Faḍāʾil Fāṭima al-Zabrāʾ bt. rasūl Allāh*, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī-l-tārīḥ*, vol. III: 169, al-Ṭabarī., *Daḥāʾir al-ʿuqbā*: 147–148, al-Hayṭamī., *Maǧmaʿ al-zanāʾid wa-manbaʿ al-fanāʾid*, vol. IX, bb. *manāqib al-Ḥusayn*: 189–190, 193, al-ʿAsqalānī., *Tabḍīb al-tabḍīb*, vol. II, bb. *al-ḥāʾ*: 347. Added to this is a strand of *iznā ʿasharī* theology positing that each Imām possesses a deposit of esoteric and exoteric knowledge transmitted from one Imām to the next, although, as Momen points out, the extent of the knowledge is not agreed upon by the scholars, and the majority agree that it does not necessarily include an inherent knowledge of the future (MOMEN M., *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam. The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shiʿism*, Yale Uni-

receive letters and emissaries from Kûfa, begging him to lead an insurrection and pledging assistance. He left Mecca, finally, without having completed the Pilgrimage rites (having heard that enemies had arrived among the pilgrims and intended to shed his blood there), thus beginning the calamitous journey that would end at Karbalâ'. This fate seemed apparent to a number of his friends and companions as al-Ḥusayn prepared to leave Mecca, but the commentators insist that it was a destiny preordained by God, aside from any political consequences that may have determined it. His journey from Mecca to Kûfa continued, despite unnerving reports of the capriciousness of the Kûfans (who had promised him their aid), the mass of military might opposing him and the desertion of a substantial number of his supporters. Aside from disheartening reports, efforts to dissuade him and attempts to intercept him, the texts give the sense that as the journey proceeded, there was increasing despair and hopelessness, not only of help but also of the possibility of negotiations. Some dispute al-Ḥusayn's resoluteness; there appears to have been a point at which he was ready to accept one of a number of possible compromises, although this is not an opinion unanimously held.

The group traveling with him diminished as many, who had been anticipating conquer, began to experience increasing doubts about his fate. With the arrival of a large group of horsemen sent to intercept him, and the warnings of its leader, al-Ḥusayn, having led both groups in prayer, insisted upon the pledges of allegiance he had received and asked for that those pledges now be honoured. He also offered to go back should the people of Kûfa give some sign that they were displeased with his coming. No such undertaking was received from Kûfa. We are also told that he used this opportunity to articulate the reasons for his risk and the jeopardy into which he was bringing his family; an oppressive ruler was violating

versity Press, New Haven 1985: 156). However, as noted later in this work, some sources suggest al-Ḥusayn's apparent willingness to negotiate a different outcome, as well as attempts by people close to him, including the husband of Zaynab, to dissuade him from undertaking such a venture, casting doubt on his certainty that his foreordained death would take place at Karbalâ'.

the sanctions of God, opposing the *Sunna* of Muḥammad and ill-treating one of God's servants. To desist in fighting such a ruler would earn one a place in the Fire.

The rest of the story is both swift and grim; al-Ḥusayn and his small remnant are deprived of access to water and subsequently, on the 10th of Muḥarram, are massacred one by one by the sizable opposing force. All the elements of Karbalâ' and the days surrounding it would be remembered and accentuated in their telling, in the traditions that grew up around them and in the remembrance services, so decisive a part of Shi'î ritual.

In terms of the lead up to Karbalâ', the battle itself, and its immediate consequences, I have followed the chronology of al-Ṭabarî in his *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk* ('The Annals of Messengers and Kings'), bearing in mind that he omits a number of important incidents concerning Zaynab, including the night voices that she hears at al-Ḥuzaymiyya and the challenge that she delivers to 'Umar b. Sa'd b. Abî al-Waqqâs, commander of Yazîd's forces. In an attempt to trace the movements of Zaynab in the events in which she is directly or indirectly involved, I have added to al-Ṭabarî's chronology the key incidents that are missing. Accordingly, al-Ṭabarî's chronology (1–11), with additions (A–F), is:

BEFORE KARBALÂ'

- A. The al-Ḥuzaymiyya night voices (omitted by al-Ṭabarî, but also by most other transmitters)
- 1. The clamour of battle and al-Ḥusayn's dream (from Abû Miḥnaf)
- 2. The dirge of al-Ḥusayn (from Abû Miḥnaf)

IN THE COURSE OF THE BATTLE

- 3. The death of 'Alî al-Akbar b. al-Ḥusayn (from Abû Miḥnaf)
- 4. The boy whom Zaynab cannot restrain (from Abû Miḥnaf)
- B. The emergence of 'Ali b. al-Ḥusayn and Umm Kulṭûm (omitted by al-Ṭabarî and most others)
- 5. The killing of al-Ḥusayn's infant son, 'Abd Allah b. al-Ḥusayn
- 6. The boy with pearl earrings
- 7. Zaynab emerges from her tent and challenges 'Umar b. Sa'd (from Abû Miḥnaf)

8. Zaynab's lament at the departure from Karbalâ' for Kûfa (from Abû Miḥnaf)

AFTER KARBALÂ'

C. Zaynab's Kûfa protest (omitted by al-Ṭabarî)

D. Zaynab's lament upon seeing al-Ḥusayn's head (omitted by al-Ṭabarî)

9. The Zaynab-Ibn Ziyâd dialogues (from Abû Miḥnaf)

10. Zaynab before Yazîd (from Abû Miḥnaf)

E. Zaynab's lament upon seeing al-Ḥusayn's head (omitted by al-Ṭabarî)

F. Zaynab's protest before Yazîd (omitted by al-Ṭabarî)

11. The return to Medina

While many of the earlier incidents are single events, the reports depicting Zaynab after Karbalâ' encompass a collection of important encounters. The Zaynab-Ibn Ziyâd dialogues incorporate descriptions of Zaynab in disguise, hidden among her maids, the words exchanged between her and an irascible Ibn Ziyâd, the judicious intervention of Ibn Ḥurayṭ, Ibn Ziyâd's evaluation of Zaynab's character and, ultimately, Zaynab's agency in saving 'Ali b. al-Ḥusayn. Similarly, the Zaynab-Yazîd dialogues comprise the issue of Yazîd's volatile mood swings, Zaynab's lamentation upon seeing her brother's decapitated head and her protest to Yazîd, the unseemly demands of a red-headed Syrian and Zaynab's arbitration in saving her niece, the momentous bartering of Qur'ânic verses between Yazîd and the fourth Imâm, and Yazîd's cryptic accommodation of the group and dispatching of the survivors back to Medina.

Seeking a broad-spectrum perspective of Zaynab, I have attempted to use an eclectic mix of Sunnî and Shî'î sources, a more comprehensive list of which can be found at the beginning of this work. It goes without saying that many of the classical authors did not restrict themselves to one particular genre or field of expertise, so that they are not easily classifiable; al-Dînawarî, for example, wrote with the same facility on botany and metallurgy as he did on history. Amidst the more important Sunnî historians and biographers, I have concentrated, among others, on the following texts:

1. Ibn Saʿd in his *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* ('The Great Book of Lists'); as Hussein notes, none of the popular printed editions of Baṣra-born Ibn Saʿd's *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt* have included the entries for al-Ḥusayn, so that one is compelled to rely upon the later publication of a critical edition of the al-Ḥusayn entry.⁴¹
2. al-Balāḍurī, who in his *Kitāb ansāb al-ashrāf* ('Genealogies of the Nobles') showed himself not indifferent to al-Ḥusayn and to his cause.
3. al-Dīnawarī, the polymath contemporary of al-Balāḍurī, in his *Kitāb al-aḥbār al-ṭiwāl* ('The Lengthy Annals'); something of an Umayyad apologist, al-Dīnawarī has left us a key narration about the Karbalāʾ event.
4. al-Ṭabarī in his *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* ('The Annals of Messengers and Kings'), whose detailed accounts of the Karbalāʾ events provide a crucial chronology for the battle events. He (like so many others after him, such as al-Masʿūdī, al-Mufid, al-Shahrastānī, al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn al-Ġawzī, Ibn al-Aṭīr) is transmitting in the main from Abū Miḥnaf, who was writing 150 years before him.⁴²
5. al-Baġdādī, writing a century after al-Ṭabarī and as famous for his preaching as he was for his scholarship, in his *Tārīḥ Baġdād* ('The History of Baghdad').

⁴¹ HUSSEIN A.J., *A Developmental Analysis of Depictions of the Events of Karbalāʾ in Early Islamic History*, PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2001: 18.

⁴² In al-Ṭabarī's account, notes Shoshan, "which is mainly based on Abū Miḥnaf (on occasion, in the recension of Hishām Ibn al-Kalbī) – a Ḥusayn sympathizer – one is able to observe, more than in other contemporary sources, the version that would be amplified in future Shīʿite circles." Cf. SHOSHAN B., *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstruction of Tabarī's History*, Brill, Leiden 2004: 234. Through the truncated versions found in historians such as al-Yaʿqūbī, al-Dīnawarī, al-Masʿūdī, Ibn Kaṭīr, and al-Balāḍurī, al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom has been diffused into the psyche of the entire Islamic community, and not the Shīʿa alone.

6. Ibn ‘Asâkir in his *Târîḥ madînat Dimashq* (‘History of the City of Damascus’), in which he furnishes us with a substantial amount of information about al-Ḥusayn and Zaynab.
7. Turkish-born Ibn al-Aṭîr in his *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ* (‘The Complete History’) and in his intriguingly named *Usd al-ġâba fî ma‘rifat al-ṣahâba* (‘The Lions of the Forest in the Knowledge of the Companions’).
8. Ibn Kaṭîr, equally proficient in *tafsîr* and *ahādîth* studies as he was in history, in his wide-ranging *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya* (‘The Beginning and the End’).
9. Damascus-born al-Ḍahabî in his *Siyar a‘lâm al-nubalâ’* (‘Biographies of the Eminent Figures among the Nobles’), with its two separate entries for al-Ḥusayn, one of them dealing expressly with his martyrdom.
10. The Meccan-based al-‘Iṣâmî in his *Simṭ al-nuġûm al-‘awâlî fî anabâ’ al-awâ’il wa-l-tawâlî* (‘The Highest Thread of Stars in the Reports of the Ancestors and the Succession’).
11. The al-Azhar scholar al-Shablanġî in his *Nûr al-absâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr* (‘Light of Insights in the Virtues of the People of the House of the Chosen Prophet’); he wrote his work in fulfilment of a vow he had made should he be healed of an eye disease.

Among their Shî‘î counterparts I have included:

1. al-Ya‘qûbî in his *Târîḥ* (‘History’); if al-Ya‘qûbî was not, in fact, a Shî‘a, and this is a moot point, he evinces a strong Shî‘î predisposition.
2. al-Mas‘ûdî in his *Murûġ al-dahab* (‘Meadows of Gold’); like al-Ya‘qûbî, he is far more economical and at times sparse in his treatment of the Karbalâ’ event.
3. Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, writing 300 years after them, in his *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf* (‘The Book of Sorrows over those Killed on the

Banks)⁴³ and his *Kitâb al-iqbâl bi-l-a'mâl al-ḥasana* ('The Book of Turning to Good Actions').

4. al-Irbilî in his *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma'rîfat al-a'imma* ('The Unveiling of Grief in the Knowledge of the Imâms') and who, like his fellow Shî'î historian and theologian Ibn Ṭâ'ûs, offers a far more extensive account of events.⁴⁴

Among the compilers of the indispensable *maqtal* literature, those written accounts dealing specifically with the murder of al-Ḥusayn and his companions as well as the killing of other members of the *ahl al-bayt*, I have chosen four authors:

1. Abû Miḥnaf, the Sunnî historian who died within 100 years of Karbalâ' and whose early *maqtal*, with its sensitivity towards al-Ḥusayn, would provide much of the content of al-Ṭabarî's *Kitâb al-bîr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*.

2. al-Ḥawârizmî, the Sunnî Ḥanafî scholar and pupil of al-Zamahsharî, in his *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* ('The Killing of al-Ḥusayn')

⁴³ Sometimes *Kitâb al-luhûf 'alâ qatlâ al-ṭufîf* or *al-Malbhûf 'alâ qatlâ al-ṭufîf*.

⁴⁴ As will be noted at the end of this work, by the time Ibn Ṭâ'ûs was writing his panegyric *Kitâb al-luhûf* in the middle of the 7th/13th century, that Islamic strand or 'tendency' (*tashayyû'*) that would eventually come to be called 'Shî'a', together with its distinctive vision of Karbalâ' and of the aura surrounding the members of the *ahl al-bayt*, had undergone a considerable transformation. Ibn Ṭâ'ûs' view of the battle, for example, and of Zaynab's role in those days, was significantly amplified, in comparison to, for example, the more prosaic accounts of the Sunnî historian al-Ṭabarî, writing three centuries earlier. Writing six centuries after the battle, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs' work encompasses hundreds of years of theological reflection, loss of authority, persecution, spiritual embellishment and, running deeply through the Shî'î ethos, the steady realization that they would never attain to the power they maintained was their due, and the concomitant turning increasingly to a supernatural, other-worldly potency.

imbued as it is with sympathy for al-Ḥusayn,⁴⁵ and in his *al-Manâqib* ('The Virtues of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib')

3. al-Iṣfahānī, Shī'ī poet and transmitter of *aḥādīth*, in his *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn* ('The Killings of the Members of the Ṭālib Line').

4. Ibn Namā al-Hillī, scion of a renowned family of Shī'ī scholars, in his *Mutīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashğān* ('The Stimulant of Griefs and the Radiant Ways of Sorrows').

Among the plentiful Shī'ī transmitters of *aḥādīth*, I have used the works of:

1. al-Ḥaṣībī in his *al-Hidāya (al-Kubrā)* ('The Guidance'), although admittedly, he was a member of the 'Alawiyya, and his transmissions are distrusted by a sizable number Shī'ī scholars.

2. Ibn Qûlûya al-Qummī, pupil of the acclaimed al-Kulaynī and an expert in jurisprudence and *aḥādīth*, sometimes referred to as Ibn Qulawayh, in his *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* ('The Complete Visitations').

3. al-Ṣadûq, the prolific *shayḥ* raised in Qum, educated by his father and nicknamed 'Ibn Babawayh', chiefly in his *Kitāb al-amālī fī al-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār* ('Book of Dictations in Traditions and Reports') although I have, at times, referred to a number of his other texts.

4. *Shayḥ* al-Mufīd, pupil of Ibn Qulawayh and al-Ṣadûq, in his *al-Irshād fī ma'rifat ḥuğğ Allāb 'alā al-'ibād* ('Guidance in the Knowledge of the Proofs of God concerning Humanity') and his *al-Amālī li-l-Mufīd* ('The Dictations of al-Mufīd').

⁴⁵ Al-Ḥawārizmī's work, notes Hussein, "is at times so dramatic and its depictions so emotionally charged that its effects were significant not only on Shī'īs but Sunnī perceptions as well." He goes on to note its influence on Ibn Ṭā'ūs in his *Kitāb al-tubūf fī qatlı al-tufūf*, and even years later in the works of the resolutely Sunnī scholar al-Dahabī (d. 748/1348). There is, in short, "a dramatic difference between the pre-Khwārazmī and post-Khwārazmī Sunnī perceptions of Husayn at Karbalā'." Cf. HUSEIN A.J., *A Developmental Analysis of Depictions of the Events of Karbalā' in Early Islamic History*, 2001: 284–285.

5. The Persian *Shayḥ* al-Ṭūsî, himself a pupil of al-Mufid and known as *Shayḥ al-Ṭâ'ifa* ('head of the sect') in his *al-Amâlî fî al-ḥadîṯ* ('Dictations').
6. al-Fattâl al-Nîsâbûrî in his *Rawḍat al-wâ'izîn wa-tabsirat al-mutta'izîn* ('The Garden of the Preachers and the Enlightenment of the Exhortations'), a work detailing the history and virtues of the prophets and the members of the *ahl al-bayt* and in which he transmits from, among others, *Shayḥ* al-Ṭūsî.
7. Ibn Shaḥrâshûb in his highly-regarded *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib* ('The Virtues of the Family of Abû Ṭâlib'), a massive work on the virtues of the family of 'Alî, and in which he draws greatly upon al-Fattâl al-Nîsâbûrî.
8. The less well-known al-Daylamî in his *Irshâd al-qulûb* ('Guidance of the Hearts').
9. al-Ḥurr al-Āmilî in his encyclopedic collection *Tafṣîl wasâ'il al-shi'a ilâ taḥṣîl masâ'il al-shari'a* ('Exposition of the Means of the Shi'a towards the Studying of the Issues of the Law'), in his *al-Gawâbir al-saniyya fî-l-aḥâdîṯ al-qudsiyya* ('The Shining Jewels in the Sacred Traditions'), and in his *Iṭbât al-hudât bi-l-nuṣûṣ wa-l-mu'ǧẓât* ('Proofs of the Guides in the Texts and the Miracles').
10. Two other encyclopaedists in the transmission of *aḥâdîṯ*, al-Mağlisî in his mammoth *Bihâr al-anwâr* ('Oceans of Light') and al-Baḥrânî in his *Āwâlim al-ʿulûm wa al-ma'ârif al-aḥwâl min al-âyat wa-l-aḥbâr wa-l-aqwâl* ('The Realms of Opinions and the Knowledge of the Circumstances from the Verses, the Reports and the Testimonies').
11. al-Ġazâ'irî, one of al-Mağlisî's students, in his *Riyâd al-abrâr fî manâqib al-a'imma al-aḥbâr* ('The Gardens of the Righteous in the Virtues of the Pure Imâms').
12. al-Ṭabarsî (called so by Brockelmann, but in other texts Ṭabrisî) in his *Mustadrak al-wasâ'il* ('Supplement of the Means'), an addendum to the work of al-Ḥurr al-Āmilî.

Among their Sunnî counterparts, I have included:

1. The Persian al-Ḥâkim al-Nîsâbûrî, one of the leading scholars of his era, in his *Kitâb al-mustadrak ʿalâ al-ṣaḥîḥayn* ('Supplement to the Two *Ṣaḥîḥs*')

2. The Spanish Mālikī judge, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in his *al-Isti‘āb fī ma‘rifat al-aṣḥāb* (‘Comprehension in the Knowledge of the Companions’)
3. The erudite Ḥanbalī and renowned hunter of heresy, Ibn al-Ġawzī, in his *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa* (‘The Quality of the Best’), not to be confused with his grandson, Sibṭ al-Ġawzī, author of *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīkr ḥaṣā’iṣ al-a’imma* (‘The Memento of the Attributes of the Nation in the Remembrance of the Qualities of the Imāms’).
4. al-Ṭabarī in his *Dahā’ir al-‘uqbā* (‘The Treasures of the Final Attainment’).⁴⁶
5. al-Haytamī, not to be confused with the better known Ibn Ḥaġar al-Haytamī, in his *Maġma‘ al-zawā’id wa-manba‘ al-fawā’id* (‘The Collection of the Appendices and the Fountainhead of Merits’).
6. al-‘Asqalānī in his *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba* (‘The Wound in the Partiality of the Companions’) and in his *Tabdīb al-tabdīb* (‘Rectification of the Rectification’).

In the main, I have looked at the writings of two Shī‘ī exegetes:

1. al-Ṭabarsī in his *Kitāb al-iḥtiḡāġ ‘alā ahl al-liġāġ* (‘Book of Remonstrance against the People of the Depths’), his *Tāġ al-mawālīd* (‘Crown of the Births’), and his *I‘lām al-warā bi-a‘lām al-hudā* (‘Notification of Mankind Concerning the Signs of Guidance’).
2. al-Baḥrānī in his *al-Burbān fī tafsīr al-qur’ān* (‘The Evidence in the Exegesis of the Qur’ān’).

Other sources include the Shī‘ī theologian al-‘Āmilī in his *al-Ṣirāt al-mustaḡīm ilā mustaḥaqq al-taqdīm fī al-imāma* (‘The Straight Path to

⁴⁶ There are at least three authors named al-Ṭabarī, and Sezgin warns of the danger of confusing them. There is, firstly, the Shī‘ī scholar, Abū Ġa‘far b. Rustam al-Ṭabarī (c. 224/839: cf. GAL S. I: 217, GAS I: 540). There is, secondly, the Sunnī Muḥib al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī al-Makkī al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 684/1295: cf. GAL I: 361), the author of *Dahā’ir al-‘uqbā*. Thirdly, there is the Sunnī historian Abū Ġa‘far Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923: cf. GAS I: 232 and GAL S I: 217), author of *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*.

the Deserving of Guardianship in the Imamate'), al-Ṭabarî in his *Dalâ'il al-imâma* ('Proofs of the Imamate') and his *Kitâb al-mustarshid fî imâmat 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib* ('The Book of Seeking Guidance in the Imamate of 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib') and Ibn Abî Ṭâhir Ṭayfûr in his *Balâgât al-nisâ'* ('Reports of the Women').

This work has a number of diverse aims:

It offers a fresh reading of the life of the eldest daughter of 'Alî and Fâtîma; 'fresh', because as yet, there exists no substantial biography based on the primary Arabic Shî'î and Sunnî sources. There are certainly biographies quoted in this work; those by Bilgrami and Shahin, as well as Karbâssi's entry on Zaynab in his work on the women around al-Ḥusayn. As they stand, these are of little academic value, presenting as they do an almost entirely hagiographical portrait of Zaynab, with few or any references to the historical sources. They are referenced nonetheless, so as to offer to the reader a glimpse into what contemporary popular piety believes about Zaynab, even if the events or virtues they articulate about her are not found in the classical texts of history or *ahâdîth*. This work, instead, attempts to access those classical sources, starting with the earliest ones that make reference to Zaynab (such as the histories of Abû Miḥnaf, Ibn Sa'd and al-Balâdufî) and attentive to the development in her character as the sources get older. It is to be noted that even the earliest sources employed (except for Abû Miḥnaf) postdate Zaynab by more than 100 years; Ibn Sa'd died over a century-and-a-half after Zaynab and al-Ṭabarî, whose historical chronicle provides a useful chronology for Zaynab at Karbalâ', one hundred years after Ibn Sa'd.

Considering the centrality of the Karbalâ' event for the Shî'a in general and the *imâ' ashari'* in particular,⁴⁷ a second aim of the

⁴⁷ There are significant differences in the approach to Karbalâ' among the divergent Shî'î groupings. The Zaydî follow the rudimental narrative, listing the names of the extended household killed; this is congruent with Zaydî theology, believing as they do that valid politico-religious authority is found with Muḥammad's family and descendants, thus rendering crucial the death of any member of that family. Unlike the *imâ' ashari'*, the Zaydî narratives, although resonant with tragedy and heroism, do not envisage the event as part of a cosmic or eschatological strug-

work is to situate Zaynab in the days before, during and immediately after the battle, chronicling her participation and noting especially her verbal interventions in favour of her brother al-Ḥusayn and her nephew ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.

A third aim is an attempt to trace the composite figure of Zaynab, as she is presented by the earliest primary sources, both Sunnī and Shī‘a, through the embellishment of her figure by later, mostly Shī‘ī commentators, until the reinterpretation of her figure as a model for the contemporary Muslim woman. In this, there are three movements worth watching; firstly, the accounts of Zaynab at Karbalā’, revealing very human traits of fear and weakness, as described by an early historian like al-Ṭabarī. Secondly, there is the Zaynab embellished by later hagiographic accounts, which present an idealistic childhood and a Zaynab who is a model of piety, knowledge and feminine reserve. Thirdly, there is a fresh image of Zaynab as a model for contemporary women in society; a vigorous combatant of injustice and, at times, an almost fearless revolutionary. Here, we cannot fail to take into account some of the more contemporary arguments among Shī‘ī scholars and commentators about what they term ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ readings of Karbalā’ and, consequently, of Zaynab’s place there. The aim is not to dismiss the more contemporary reading of Zaynab’s life as much as to suggest that an early reading presents a woman who may well

gle between good and evil; it is physical historical details and lineage that holds their attention, and not the supernatural. The Ismā‘īlī have no one authoritative reading of Karbalā’; the majority of the Ismā‘īlī (the Nizārī) follow less emotional forms of remembrance, preferring the story stripped of any greater theological significance. The *itnā ‘asharī* accounts present the most detailed amplified reports of the Karbalā’ story, which lies at the core of their spirituality and distinctiveness. The *itnā ‘asharī* Shī‘ī Karbalā’ is detailed and impassioned, permeated by cosmological and esoteric implications. However, it is a narrative, notes Haider, that has grown and developed over a period of years, from vary basic elegies for the fallen to the complex annual rituals in the modern period. Cf. HAIDER N., *Shī‘ī Islam: An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2014: 66–81.

be closer to the daily experience of numerous contemporary women.

A final, more personal aim, is a theological appreciation of Zaynab by a non-Muslim, offering the possibility of drawing potential parallels between her and the figure of Mary in Roman Catholic theology and piety. While such parallels are normally drawn between Mary and the Maryam of the Qur'ân, or between Mary and Fâtîma, mother of Zaynab, powerful female figures are sadly rare in Islam and Christianity, making Zaynab a prime candidate for such a comparative theology.

It is a glimpse at Zaynab, and at the possibilities of a 'Zaynabian' theology and spirituality, through various lenses; through the eyes of the hagiographers, those of the historians, who ostensibly relate eyewitness accounts,⁴⁸ those of pious Shî'î devotees and those of more contemporary socio-political commentators who used her as a rallying point and exemplar.

It is my hope that this brief monograph will illustrate that the contemporary reshaping of Zaynab's life should in no way detract from cultivating devotion to the Zaynab of earlier, more quietist and mournful pieties, but instead brings to the fore some of her qualities crucial to a time of crisis; that this stirring and articulate woman, deeply pious, candid in the face of tyranny, willing to speak the truth in the face of enormous personal danger, also lived with profound anguish and loss. Even more, I hope to encourage imitation of Zaynab as achievable, not only for women and men who live on what someone once called society's seismic fault lines, deeply engaged in justice struggles, but also for those whose engagement with daily life may be given over to entirely more ordinary and mundane things; I am thinking particularly of those who suffer an authentic martyrdom by pouring out their lives and energy in the conscientious endurance of everyday life. It is these especially whom, I trust, would reread Zaynab's story in the light of faith and draw fresh strength from this astonishing and gutsy woman.

⁴⁸ Noting, as ever, that al-Ṭabarî, who died in 310/923, postdates Zaynab and Karbalâ' by 250 years, but that the major incidents he relates concerning Zaynab in and around Karbalâ' are from eyewitness accounts transmitted by Abû Miḥnaf (d. 157/774).

CHAPTER ONE.

IN THE HOUSE OF PROPHECY

Alas! Mourning has begun.

Alas! The moon of grief has shown her face.

A number of texts, each of them slightly different in the telling, chronicle for their readers an enigmatic story; in *Bihâr al-anwâr*, al-Mağlisî's encyclopedic collection of *ahâdîth*, he relates it from al-Râwandî's¹ *al-Ḥarâ'ig wa-l-ġarâ'ih fî-l-mu'ġizât* and from Ibn Shahrâshûb's *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*. In the days of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 247/861), the story goes, a woman appeared, contending that she was in fact Zaynab, daughter of 'Alî and Fâtîma and granddaughter of Muḥammad. Not surprisingly, al-Mutawakkil expressed vigorous doubts, since this was a young woman, while more than two hundred years had elapsed since the time of Muḥammad. The woman's response was that her grandfather had stroked her with his hand and had asked God to restore her youthfulness to her every forty (in some texts, fifty) years. Ostensibly, she had been transported to Syria, living there in anonymity, and this was the first time, and only because of necessity, that she was making an appearance.

Al-Mutawakkil then summoned the elders of the family of Abû Ṭâlib and the descendants of al-'Abbâs and the Quraysh, to inform them about her and ask their opinion. Since the death of Zaynab had in fact been reported in a particular year, al-Mutawakkil felt impelled to ask the woman what she thought about this. In reply, she insisted that the reports were lies and falsehoods:

¹ Quṭb al-Dîn Abû al-Ḥusayn Sa'îd b. Hibat Allâh b. Abî al-Ḥasan al-Râwandî (d. 573/1177: cf. GAL S. I: 624).

“My affairs were hidden from the people,” she insisted, “and neither death nor life acknowledged me.” Al-Mutawakkil then asked the elders if they had any evidence that the woman was lying, and they replied in the negative, suggesting that perhaps Ibn al-Riḍā, a descendant of the Imām who died in 202/818 – in a few texts, named as his grandson Imām al-Hādī (d. 254/868) – possessed some evidence that they did not. In some transmissions, this descendant denounced the woman as a liar because of the certainty that Zaynab had died in a particular year, in a particular month and on a particular day (although the texts never reveal these dates). In a more specific ending, the descendant announced that there was in fact a sign to determine the genuine offspring of ‘Alī; it was that lions would never attack them. The plan was then to put the woman among lions, and if they did not harm her in any way, it would be a sign that she had been telling the truth. At this, the woman took fright, and turning to al-Mutawakkil, cried out: “Commander of the Faithful, by God, God, he means to kill me!” She then mounted a donkey and began to exclaim: “I am, in truth, Zaynab the liar!”²

It is an arcane story, but not a bad one with which to begin our hunt for the authentic Zaynab, whose life, at first glance, would dishearten any would-be chroniclers; at the very most, one could cull some biographical notes from the sources and hagiography available, but little more than that, and certainly no comprehensive biography.

Zaynab was born in Medina sometime after the 622 emigration (*hiğra*), plausibly in the year 6/627, to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭima al-Zahrā’, Muḥammad’s son-in-law and daughter.³ Scholars wrangle over the precise dating of her birth, although significantly less so than over that of her mother Fāṭima. Sources suggest that

² Cf. for example al-Rāwandī, *al-Ḥarā’iğ wa-l-ğarā’iğ fi-l-mu’ğziāt*, bb. 11: 405, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fi āyāti-hi*: 416, al-‘Āmilī, *al-Şirāt al-mustaqīm ilā mustaḥaqq al-taqdīm fi al-imāma*, vol. II, n. 10: 204, al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Itbāt al-hudāt bi-l-nuṣūṣ wa-l-mu’ğziāt*, vol. IV, n. 43: 476, al-Mağlisī, *Biḥār al-annār*, vol. I, bb. 3, n. 35: 149, bb. 4, n. 14: 204.

³ al-Balāḍurī, *Kitāb ansāb al-aşhrāf*, vol. III: 393.

Zaynab's birth was in the fifth year of the *hiġra*, on Wednesday 5th Ġumâdâ al-awwal (2nd October) 6/627. Karbâssî holds that it was in fact in Medina on Tuesday 5th Ġumâdâ al-awwal in the sixth year of the *hiġra*, although he notes that some say the first day of Sha'bân of that year.⁴ The debate, therefore, concerns both the day and the year; 5th Ġumâdâ al-awwal or 1st Sha'bân, in the fifth or the sixth year of the *hiġra*. Qutbuġġin resorts to the 'early' days of Sha'bân, in the year 6/627; Bilgrami and Shahin posit the fifth year of the *hiġra* but offer no sources. Rizvi claims 5th Ġumâdâ al-awwal in the fifth year of the *hiġra*, one year after the birth of Zaynab's brother al-Ĥusayn, but he too offers no sources.⁵ Al-Kâshânî suggests 5th Ġumâdâ al-awwal in either the fifth or sixth year year of the *hiġra*, rejecting those who put it as late as the ninth year; this would be an unrealistic date considering the death of Fâtima in 11/632 (having given birth, after Zaynab, to a second daughter, Umm Kulţûm, and by all accounts miscarried one other child).⁶

⁴ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anşâr al-Ĥusayn – al-nisâ'*, Hussaini Charitable Trust, London 2009: 334–5.

⁵ QUTBUġġIN B.T., "Zaynab bint Ali" in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edn., Thomson Gale, New York 2005: 9937, BILGRAMI M.H., *The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint 'Alî*, 1986: 3, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, Ansariyan, Qum 2002: 61, RIZVI A.A., *Bibi Zainab*, al-Raza Printers, Karachi 2007: 17.

⁶ As to this child, a boy named al-Muġsin or al-Muġassin, there is some uncertainty, many of the Sunnî omitting any mention of him, or saying that he was born, but died in childhood; the Shi'a remain adamant that Fâtima miscarried because of physical violence perpetrated against her after Muġammad's death. For mention of the boy among the Sunnî, cf. for e.g. Ibn Ĥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 769: 211–212, n. 953: 250–251, where his birth is recorded, n. 1370: 335 where it is omitted, al-Balâġurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. I, *Azġvâġ rasûl Allâb*, n. 865: 402, 404, al-Ĥawârizmî., *Maqtal al-Ĥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *jadâ'il Fâtima al-Zabrâ' bt. rasûl Allâb*, n. 73: 128, al-Ġawzi., *Şifat al-şafwa*, vol. II, *Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâb*: 2, al-Ṭabari., *Ḍabâ'ir al-ʿuġbâ*, 55. Cf. AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubumma*, Dâr al-Ġawâdayn li-l-Ṭibâ'a wa-l-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi', Beirut 2008: 12.

Muḥammad had moved his daughters Umm Kulṭûm and Fâtîma to Medina after the *biğra* and, according to the Sunnî scholars, the marriage of ‘Alî and Fâtîma took place around 1–2/623 or 3/624,⁷ when, the Sunnî maintain, Fâtîma was about nineteen or twenty. The Sunnî historian al-Ṭabarî, in harmony with some other scholars, places their marriage just before the end of the month of Şafar in 622, before the battles of Badr (1–2/623) and Uḥud (3/624).⁸ A number of sources assert that ‘Alî and Fâtîma consummated the marriage upon his return from Badr; their first child, al-Ḥasan,⁹ was born in the second year of the *biğra*, followed, fifty days after his birth, by the conception of their second child, al-Ḥusayn.¹⁰ Al-‘Işâmî transmits more than one strand suggesting that the marriage was either in the second or third year of the *biğra*, some saying before the battle of Uḥud, others saying before Muḥammad married ‘Â’isha, when Fâtîma was fifteen and ‘Alî

⁷ Cf. for e.g. Ibn al-Aṭîr., *Usd al-gâba fî ma‘rifat al-şahâba*, vol. VI, bb. 7175 (*Fâtîma bt. Rasûl Allâh*): 223.

⁸ al-Ṭabarî., *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, vol. IV, n. 1273: 410, n. 1367: 485, al-Ḥâkim al-Nisâbûrî., *Kitâb (Talḥîs) al-mustadrak ‘alâ al-şahîḥayn*, vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma‘rifat al-şahâba*), *Manâqib Fâtîma bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 4807: 185, al-Ġawzî., *Şifat al-şafwa*, vol. II, *Fâtîma bt. rasûl Allâh*: 2, al-Dahabî., *al-‘Ibar fî aḥbâr al-başar muntaḥab al-ta’rîḥ al-kabîr*, vol. I: 4, Ibn Ḥağar al-‘Asqalânî., *Tabdîb al-tabdîb*, vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4434: 441, al-Muttaqî al-Hindî., *Muntaḥab kanz al-‘ummâl* in the margins of *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. V: 99, al-‘Işâmî., *Simṭ al-nuğûm al-‘awâlî*, vol. I, bb. 5: 425, al-Shablânġî., *Nûr al-abşâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr*, bb. fî *ḍiker manâqib ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlîb*: 43.

⁹ Ibn Sa‘d., *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr*, vol. XII, bb. *ḍiker banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtîma*): 21–24, it is posited here that the marriage took place five months after the *biğra* and was consummated when ‘Alî returned from the battle of Badr and when Fâtîma was eighteen years old.

¹⁰ al-Balâdurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. I, *Azḡwâğ rasûl Allâh*, n. 864: 404, al-Ṭabarî., *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, vol. IV, n. 1431: 537, who posits that al-Ḥasan was born in the third year of the *biğra* (thus c. 4/625), with al-Ḥusayn conceived fifty days later; but in the same volume, n. 1367: 485, he concedes that some hold al-Ḥasan to have been born in the second year of the *biğra*.

twenty-one.¹¹ ‘Abd al-Barr agrees with the ages, but places the marriage after Uḥud.¹² According to the Shī‘ī scholars, who place Fâtīma’s birth around 615, a whole ten years later than Sunnî reckonings, she was about seven or eight years of age when she was betrothed to ‘Alī (within the first year of the *hiğra*).¹³

Writing in his *Kashf al-ğumma*, al-Irbili informs us that the four children of ‘Alī and Fâtīma were al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab al-Kubrâ (‘the greater’) and Zaynab al-Şuğrâ (‘the younger’), whose *kunya* (pl. *kunâ*)¹⁴ was Umm Kulţûm. He takes note of the death of al-Muḥassin, the younger brother of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, using the verb *sağata*, which, observes Lane, indicates that the child was born abortively, but having a developed form.¹⁵ It was a death, notes Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, transmitting from al-Qutayba’s *Ma‘ârif*, resulting from an injury done to Fâtīma when she was pushed rough-

¹¹ al-Nasâ‘î., *Kitâb al-ḥaşâ‘îş fî fadl ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*. 5, Ibn al-A‘îr., *Usd al-ğâba fî ma‘rifat al-şahâba*, vol. VI, bb. 7175 (*Fâtīma bt. Rasûl Allâh*): 223, al-‘Işâmî., *Simţ al-nuğûm al-‘awâlî*, vol. I, bb. 5: 425.

¹² Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr., *al-Istî‘âb fî ma‘rifat al-aşḥâb*, vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’*, n. 4057: 1893. Cf. also Ibn al-A‘îr., *Usd al-ğâba fî ma‘rifat al-şahâba*, vol. VI, bb. 7175 (*Fâtīma bt. Rasûl Allâh*): 223, Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. VI: 332.

¹³ al-Ya‘qûbî., *Târîḥ*, vol. II: 42, al-Mas‘ûdî., *Murûğ al-dahab*, vol. III, bb. 72, n. 1485: 22–23, bb. 73, n. 1486: 27–28.

¹⁴ QUTBUDDIN B.T., “Zaynab bint Ali” in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edn., 2005: 9937, AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubumma*, 2008: 11. The authors provide no references for these appellations. A *kunya* is patronymic, comprising two parts: ‘Abû’ or ‘Umm’ in connection with a second term. It comes from the root meaning ‘to speak of someone or something in an allusive way’. If the name is of a person, the *kunya* indicates the relationship of parent to child. It is possible to distinguish between this, the ‘real’ *kunya*, and a metaphorical, figurative *kunya*, in which this bond of kinship is impossible. For a succinct explanation of the components of Arabic names, cf. PIERCE M., *Twelve Infallible Men. The Imams and the Making of Shi‘ism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 2016: 155.

¹⁵ LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, Librairie du Liban, Beirut 1968, vol. IV: 1380.

ly during an assault on her home.¹⁶ Al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab al-Kubrâ and Umm Kulţûm are the four, insists al-Irbilî, who have sprung from the purity of Fâtîma the Virgin (*al-batûl*),¹⁷ daughter of the Messenger of God.¹⁸

Al-Mağlisî transmits that the marriage of ‘Alî and Fâtîma took place in the second year of the *hiğra* and that the couple consummated it upon ‘Alî’s return from Badr; he names the four children as al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab al-Kubrâ and Umm Kulţûm al-Kubrâ.¹⁹ He notes that Ibn al-Ḥadîd in his *Sharḥ nabğ al-balâğa* names the two girls as Umm Kulţûm al-Kubrâ and Zaynab al-Kubrâ,²⁰ and observes the same of Ibn Manda al-Aşfahânî in his *Kitâb al-ma‘rifâ* (who places the marriage as one year after the

¹⁶ Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *faşl fî ḥilyati-hâ wa-tawârîḥ-hâ*: 358.

¹⁷ The title *al-batûl*, as well as that of *al-‘aḍrâ*, both rendered as ‘the Virgin’, are ascribed to Fâtîma in numerous *aḥādîṯ*. Of all the theological and spiritual titles given to her, the designation ‘virgin’, remains the most enigmatic. Quite clearly speaking of a virginity that is not the same as the physical virginity of Maryam in the Qur’ân, Shî‘î Islam presents Fâtîma as married with (at least) four children, and nowhere suggests that any of these were not the result of sexual intercourse or that her marriage with ‘Alî was devoid of sexual relations. It is patently clear that Fâtîma must be declared a virgin if she is not to become in some sense ‘secondary’ to Maryam, whose virginity is underscored both in the Qur’ânic text and in the books of *aḥādîṯ*. Nonetheless, the explanation of Fâtîma’s virginity, unlike that of Maryam, is not of something physical, but of something esoteric. At no time is there a hint that any of her children are parallel to ‘Îsâ in that they are unfathered. Hers is a singularity that is expressed in multifaceted theology. Cf. CLOHESSY C.P., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2009: 107–108.

¹⁸ al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ğumma fî ma‘rifat al-a‘imma*, vol. I: 440–441. Cf. also AL-MÛSAWÎ M., *al-Kawîtar fî aḥwâl Fâtîma bt. al-nabî al-aḥbar*, vol. VII, ch. 17, nn.1/3858, 3/3860: 99, n. 5/3862: 99–100.

¹⁹ al-Mağlisî., *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XXII, bb. 1, n. 25: 167.

²⁰ As noted too by al-Mûsawî; cf. AL-MÛSAWÎ M., *al-Kawîtar fî aḥwâl Fâtîma bt. al-nabî al-aḥbar*, vol. VII, ch. 17, n. 11/3868: 102. Cf. also al-Ṭabarî., *Daḥâ’ir al-‘uqbâ*: 204.

biġra).²¹ Transmitting from Ibn Shaḥrāshūb's *Manāqib*,²² al-Maġlisī names her Umm Kulṭūm al-Kubrā and adds the miscarried al-Muḥassin to the list.²³

Al-Kāshānī refers us to *al-Risālat al-ḥaynabiyya* of the extremely prolific al-Suyūṭī; Brockelmann (almost certainly incorrectly) names this text as *al-Uġāla* ('*Aġāġa*) *al-ḥaynabiyya fī-l-ḥulāla al-ḥaynabiyya*, while Witkam, based on an extant copy in Leiden, calls it *Risālat al-sulāla wa-l-ḥaynabiyya*. On the manuscript itself, the text is entitled *al-ʿAġāġa al-ḥaynabiyya fī-l-sulālat al-ḥaynabiyya* ('The Perfumed Cloud in the Zaynabian Progeny').²⁴ Al-Suyūṭī names the five children of ʿAlī and Fāṭima as al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, al-Muḥassin ('born abortively'), Umm Kulṭūm and Zaynab. However, as soon as he begins to detail the marriages of the latter two, it becomes apparent that he has mixed up the two girls and has the order wrong; it ought to be Zaynab, followed by Umm Kulṭūm.²⁵

²¹ al-Maġlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XLII, bb. 120, n. 18: 90, vol. XLIII, bb. 7: 214.

²² Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Tālib*, vol. III, bb. *faṣl fī aẓwāġi-hi*: 308.

²³ al-Maġlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XLII, bb. 120, n. 20: 91, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 44: 214, b. 9, n. 10: 233. A recent English translation of this volume of *Biḥār al-anwār* reads this as 'al-Muḥsin'; cf. SARWAR M., (trans.), *Behar al-anwar*, vol. 43, The Islamic Seminary Inc., New York 2015: 302. Cf. AL-MŪSAWĪ M., *al-Kawṭar fī ahwāl Fāṭima bt. al-nabī al-aṭṭar*, vol. VII, ch. 17, n. 5/3862: 99–100. He also lists the two girls as Zaynab al-Kubrā and Umm Kulṭūm al-Kubrā (n. 9/3866: 101).

²⁴ Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr Kamāl al-Dīn b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Ġalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505: cf. GAL S. II: 178 and GAL. II: 143). Cf. WITKAM J.J., *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden*, Ter Lugt Press, Leiden 2008: 237.

²⁵ al-Suyūṭī., *al-ʿAġāġa al-ḥaynabiyya fī-l-sulālat al-ḥaynabiyya*: 2. The general aim of his text is to clarify that the numerous descendants of Zaynab and her husband ʿAbd Allāh b. Ġaʿfar are indeed related in a real way to Muḥammad; in doing so, al-Suyūṭī delineates the names and numbers of the children of ʿAlī and Fāṭima as well as those of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ġaʿfar and Zaynab.

It seems almost certain, then, that there were four children born to this couple: al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab and Umm Kulṭûm,²⁶ and that Zaynab is the third child born to ‘Alī and Fâṭima, after al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, with a roughly one-year interval between each child (the author of the standard biography of her life notes that al-Ḥusayn was about three-years-old when she was born).²⁷

It is ‘well-known’, notes Kārbâssî, that she was the third child born to Fâṭima, and the first girl – there are some who believe her to be the second girl or the fourth child, but these differ with what is both “well-known and preferred,”²⁸ and her birth was followed by that of her sister Umm Kulṭûm. A handful of scholars believe that Zaynab and Umm Kulṭûm were the same person, and that ‘Alī

²⁶ Ibn Sa’d., *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr*, vol. XII, bb. *ḍiker banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (Fâṭima): 27, al-Nasâ’î., *Kitâb al-ḥaşâ’is fî faḍl ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*: 5, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr., *al-Istî‘âb fî ma’rifat al-aṣḥâb*, vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ’ wa-kunâ-hunna*, n. 4057: 1894, Sibṭ al-Ġawzî., *Tadkîrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaşâ’is al-a’imma*: 270. These authors mention only four children, omitting al-Muḥsin (or al-Muḥassin), apparently miscarried in an act of violence perpetrated against Fâṭima. Cf. also al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 120 (*Aḥwâl awlâdi-bi wa aẓwâġi-hi*): 74. Fâṭima shaved the hair of her four newborn children and gave in charity the weight in silver (“Fâṭima, the daughter of the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, weighed the hair of Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Zaynab and Umm Kulṭûm, and gave away in *ṣadaqa* an equivalent weight of silver”). Cf. Ibn Mâlik., *al-Mawaṭṭa’*, bk. 26 (*Kitâb al-‘aġîqa*), bb. 1, nn. 2–3: 501. Cf. CLOHESSY C.P., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 37. Cf. also Ibn al-Ġawzî., *Ṣifât al-ṣafwa*, vol. I, bb. *ḍiker awlâdi-bi*: 119, vol. II, bb. *Fâṭima bt. Rasûl Allâh*: 2, where he confirms her as ‘Alī and Fâṭima’s third child after her brothers al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.

²⁷ BILGRAMI M.H., *The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint ‘Alî*, Zahra Publications, Pakistan 1986. This text is of little help academically, containing neither references, nor indices nor bibliography. Nonetheless, al-‘Âmilî carefully establishes her pedigree as granddaughter of the Messenger, daughter of the one authorized for leadership (*al-waṣî*) and of the Virgin (*al-batûl*), and sister to al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, born of the same parents. Cf. al-‘Âmilî., *A’yân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 137.

²⁸ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ġam ansâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 334–5.

and Fâtîma had no second daughter named Umm Kulţûm; this contention has been clearly and eloquently refuted by Jaffer Ladak, especially since it contradicts most of the classical sources.²⁹ The insistence upon four children, not including the miscarried al-Muḥassin, thus affirming that Zaynab al-Kubrâ and Zaynab al-Şuġrâ are indeed two different individuals, is found also in other writers, such as Ibn al-Bitrîq, al-Ṭabarsî, al-Ṭabarî and al-Ḥaşîbî. Shahin and al-Kâshânî both note that ‘Alî was referred to as ‘father of Zaynab’ (during the Umayyad rule, when mention of ‘Alî’s name was largely taboo), a *kunya* used especially in the transmission of *aḥâdîth*. This is recorded by Ibn al-Ḥadîd in his *Sharḥ naḥğ al-balâġa*, and suggests strongly that Zaynab was indeed the firstborn daughter of ‘Alî and Fâtîma.³⁰

Ibn al-Aṭîr in *Usd al-ġâba fî ma‘rifat al-şahâba* has a short passage dedicated to Zaynab, and which is quoted by al-Kâshânî, describing her as intelligent (*‘âqila*) and understanding (*labîba*), confirming her parents as ‘Alî and Fâtîma, noting that her birth was during the lifetime of Muḥammad, and that after Muḥammad’s death Fâtîma gave birth to no more children.³¹ Al-Kâshânî also quotes Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalânî’s *al-Işâba* (who is himself quoting from Ibn al-Aṭîr) to establish her pedigree as daughter of ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib al-Hâshimîyya, granddaughter of the Messenger of God and whose mother was Fâtîma al-Zahrâ’.³²

Both al-Kâshânî and Karbâssî relate that when Zaynab was born, her mother Fâtîma carried her to her father ‘Alî and told him to name the newborn. ‘Alî deferred to Muḥammad (“it is not for me to take precedence over the Messenger of God”), who was

²⁹ LADAK J., *The Hidden Treasure. Lady Umm Kulthum, Daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima*, Sun Behind the Cloud Publications, Birmingham 2011.

³⁰ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 63, AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., 250 *Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubuwwa*, 2008: 11.

³¹ Ibn al-Aṭîr., *Usd al-ġâba fî ma‘rifat al-şahâba*, vol. VI, bb. 6961 (*Zaynab bt. ‘Alî*): 136–137. Cf. AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., 250 *Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubuwwa*, 2008: 15.

³² Ibid. Cf. al-‘Asqalânî., *al-Işâba fî tamyîz al-şahâba*, vol. IV, n. 510: 314–315, al-‘Âmilî., *Aġân al-Sbi‘a*, vol. VII: 137.

away on a journey. When Muḥammad returned, ‘Alī questioned him about the name of his new daughter, and Muḥammad deferred to God (“it is not for me to take precedence over my Lord, the Most High”). The angel Ġibra’īl³³ then descended, bringing words of peace from God the Majestic (*al-Ġalīl*), and said to Muḥammad: “Name this newborn Zaynab, for God has chosen this name for her.”³⁴ Shahin too notes that Muḥammad named her at the prompting of Ġibrīl, who descended from heaven to pronounce ‘Zaynab’ as the name chosen by God for the girl.³⁵

The concept of God Himself determining the name for a newborn, as well as the themes of naming and the reluctance to take precedence in the affair, are related often in the classical sources, but not of Zaynab; instead, they generally concern her two brothers, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.³⁶ In the classical accounts of the naming of her brother al-Ḥusayn, for example, there are two major strands among the transmitters; the first is that Muḥammad named

³³ Ġibrīl is the principal entity in Islamic angelology and is mentioned by name three times in the Qur’ān (Q. 2: 97–98, 66: 4), which also refers to him as ‘the Faithful Spirit’ (al-rūḥ al-amīn, Q. 26: 193), ‘the Spirit of holiness’ (rūḥ al-quḍus, Q. 2: 87, 16: 102, erroneously translated by some as ‘the holy Spirit’) and ‘Our Spirit’ (rūḥa-nā, Q. 19: 17). In a number of other verses, he is implied, but given neither name nor epithet (Q. 53: 5–18, 81: 19–25). Throughout the Shī‘ī and Sunnī aḥādīth, his name is written in an assortment of ways; sometimes ‘Ġibrīl’, at other times ‘Ġibra’īl’ and occasional ‘Ġibrā’īl’. Unless the text dictates otherwise, I have attempted to use ‘Ġibrīl’ throughout.

³⁴ AL-KĀSHĀNĪ A., *250 Karāma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidāt bayt al-nubuwva*, 2008: 11, KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Mu‘ġam anṣār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisā’*, 2009: 335.

³⁵ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 57.

³⁶ Cf. al-Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*, maḡlis 28: 134–135, *‘Ilal al-sharā’i‘ wa-l-aḥkām*, vol. I, bb. 116: 137–138, *Ma‘ānī al-aḥbār*: 57, al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī fī al-aḥādīth*, maḡlis 3: 92–93, al-Ṭabarsī, *I‘lām al-warā bi-a‘lām al-hudā*: 210, 218, al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Tafṣīl wasā’il al-sbī‘a ilā tafṣīl masā’il al-sharī‘a*, vol. XXI, bb. 36: 409, al-Maḡlisī, *Bihār al-annār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 11: 238, 240–241, vol. XLIV, bb. 31: 238, 250, al-Ṭabarsī, *Ḥātīmat mustadrak al-wasā’il*, vol. XV, bb. 32: 145.

him ‘al-Ḥusayn’ at the command of God given through Ġibrīl.³⁷ The second strand, commonly carried by the Sunnī (although almost always without reference to an angelic visitation) has Muḥammad questioning ‘Alī about the name he has given to his eldest son and, upon discovering that ‘Alī has named him ‘Harb’, changing it to al-Ḥusayn.³⁸ There are also a number of *rarer aḥādīth* found in the Shī‘ī texts; one insists that al-Ḥusayn is given a derivative of his brother al-Ḥasan’s name because he is ‘better’ than al-Ḥasan.³⁹ Another holds that al-Ḥusayn’s name is ‘cleft’ from that of al-Ḥasan,⁴⁰ although this contradicts an *asbbāḥ ḥadīth* in which God claims to have cleft for al-Ḥusayn a name from the divine names.⁴¹

³⁷ Cf. al-Ṣadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*: 134, ‘*Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā*, vol. II, bb. 31, n. 5: 25, *Ma‘ānī al-aḥbār*, n. 6: 57, ‘*Ilal al-sbarā’i’ wa-l-aḥkām*, vol. I, bb. 112, n. 7: 138, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā‘iẓīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta‘iẓīn*, vol. I: 153, al-Ṭabarsī., *I‘lām al-warā bi-a‘lām al-hudā*: 205, 218, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. III, bb. *ma‘ālī umūri-himā*: 448, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 3: 238, n. 4: 238–239, n. 8: 240–241, n. 10: 241, n. 26: 250–251, vol. XLIII, bb. 22, n. 3: 134, bb. 11, nn. 3–4: 238–239, n. 8: 240–241, n. 10: 241, n. 40: 257, vol. CI, bb. 4, n. 18: 110.

³⁸ Among the Shī‘a, cf. al-Ṣadūq., ‘*Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā*, vol. II, bb. 31, n. 5: 25, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā‘iẓīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta‘iẓīn*, vol. I: 153, al-Ṭabarsī., *I‘lām al-warā bi-a‘lām al-hudā*: 218, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. III, bb. *ma‘ālī umūri-himā*: 448, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XXXIX: 62, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 4: 238, n. 28: 251, n. 33: 254. Among the Sunnī, cf. for e.g. Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*, n. 569: 211–212, n. 953: 251.

³⁹ Cf. al-Ṭabarī., *Dalā’il al-imāma*: 20, al-Ṣadūq., *Ma‘ānī al-aḥbār*, n. 7: 57, ‘*Ilal al-sbarā’i’ wa-l-aḥkām*, vol. I, bb. 112, n. 10: 138, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. III, bb. *ma‘ālī umūri-himā*: 448, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. LXIII, bb. 11, n. 12: 242, n. 28: 251.

⁴⁰ Cf. al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. LXIII, bb. 11, n. 11: 241–242.

⁴¹ The *asbbāḥ aḥādīth*, part of the Shī‘ī mystical tradition, are intimately related to the Shī‘ī understanding of the *abl al-bayt* and particularly the five ‘impeccable’ ones (*ma‘sumūn*). The *aḥādīth* differ in details, but generally tell of Ādam (and sometimes Ḥawwā’ [Eve] with him), who sees various figures of light in his own shape and form prostrating before God, and,

In a further thread, in which ‘Alī’s relation to Muḥammad is compared with Hârûn’s relation to Mûsâ, Ğibrîl commands that ‘Alī’s two children be named after the children of Hârûn – Shabbar and Shabbîr. “My tongue is Arabic,” complains Muḥammad, not understanding the names, and Ğibrîl translates them as ‘al-Ḥasan’ and ‘al-Ḥusayn’.⁴² Al-Maġlisî carries yet another strand, in which ‘Alī names his sons Ḥamza (al-Ḥasan) and Ğa‘far (al-Ḥusayn), but changes them at Muḥammad’s order.⁴³

In the case of Fâtîma, mother to al-Ḥusayn and Zaynab, the name ‘Fâtîma’ and the appellation al-Zahrâ’ are her chief names and receive significant attention in the books of *ahâdîth*, her other

thinking himself to be alone, asks after their identity. He is informed that these are Fâtîma, ‘Alī and their two sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn (cf. for e.g. al-Ḥawârizmî, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *faḍâ’il Fâtîma al-Zahrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 37: 106–107, Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalânî, *Lisân al-mîzân*, vol. III, n. 1409: 346–347). In one of these *ahâdîth*, God relates that He has cleft names for al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn from His own divine names (cf. al-Maġlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XI, bb. 2, n. 25: 150–151, vol. XXVI, bb. 7, n. 10: 326–327).

⁴² Cf. Ibn Qays al-Hilâlî, *Kitâb Sulaym b. Qays*: 705, al-Ṭabari, *Bishârat al-muṣṭafâ*: 174, al-Ṣadûq, *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-ahâdîth wa-l-ahbâr*, n. 3: 134, 191, 439, ‘Uyûn ahbâr al-Riḍâ, vol. II, bb. 31, n. 5: 25, *Ma‘ânî al-ahbâr*, n. 6: 57, *Ulal al-sharâ’i‘ wa-l-ahkâm*, vol. I, bb. 116, n. 6: 138, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî, *Rawḍat al-wâ‘iẓîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta‘iẓîn*, vol. I: 123, 153, al-Ṭabarsî, *I‘lâm al-warâ‘ bi-‘lâm al-hudâ*: 160, 218, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *ma‘âlî umûri-bimâ*: 448, al-Râwandî, *al-Ḥarâ’iġ wa-l-ġarâ’ih fî-l-mu‘ġẓât*, vol. I: 345, Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, *Kitâb al-iqbâl bi-l-‘mâl al-ḥasana*: 382, al-Maġlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. IX, bb. 2: 298, vol. XIII, bb. 11, n. 11: 331, vol. XXXVI, bb. 50, n. 4: 36, vol. XXXVII, bb. 50: 37, 92, vol. XXXVIII, bb. 63: 190, vol. XXXIX, bb. 72: 33, 62, vol. XLIII, bb. 11, n. 1: 237, nn. 3–4: 238, n. 10: 241, n. 29: 245, vol. XLIX, bb. 4: 77, vol. XCIX, bb. 8: 191, vol. CI, bb. 4, n. 18: 110, al-Ṭabarsî, *Ḥâtîmat mustadrak al-wasâ’il*, vol. I, bb. 8, n. 7–1163: 461, vol. XV, bb. 32, n. 7–17805: 144.

⁴³ al-Maġlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. LXIII, bb. 11, n. 28: 251, n. 33: 254–255. For the tradition that no one had been named Ḥusayn before, cf. Ibn Qûlûya al-Qummî, *Kâmil al-zġyârât*, bb. 28, n. 10: 182–183, al-‘Ayyâshî, *Tafsîr al-‘Ayyâshî*: 295, al-Maġlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 40, n. 22: 211.

titles, at least twenty-seven in al-Mağlisî's 'official' litanies,⁴⁴ are accorded less elucidation, although they are used consistently throughout the corpus of *ahādīṭ*. What is noteworthy is that although she has many names both on earth and in heaven, the texts do not make it abundantly clear that God Himself has chosen all these names for her and ordered them be given her. In a number of *ahādīṭ*, Muḥammad explains why he named his daughter 'Fâṭima', without explicit reference to God giving her the name. On the other hand, the naming of Zaynab by God Himself, much written about in hagiographical texts, finds barely an echo in the classical sources.

The naming of Fâṭima is of particular importance for Zaynab's future; transmitting from the *Tafsīr Furât b. Ibrâhīm al-Kūfī*⁴⁵ and from *Sbayḥ al-Ṣadûq's Ma'ânî al-ahbâr*, al-Mağlisî reports that 'Fâṭima' is the earthly name of Muḥammad's daughter, and is given for good reason: "(Ġibra'īl) said: She is called Fâṭima on earth because she has separated her adherents (*shī'a*) from the Fire, and her enemies have been separated from her love."⁴⁶ 'Fâṭima' is a wordplay on the Arabic root *f-t-m*, with its primary meaning 'to wean'. The concept of Muḥammad's daughter as one whom God 'weaned' and by whom He weans others, is expressed by numerous *ahādīṭ*, and although most of these have diverse phraseology, the wordplay constituting the central element remains the same. Al-Mağlisî records this *ḥadīṭ* from al-Ṣadûq's *Uyûn aḥbâr al-Riḍâ*: "The Messenger of God said: I called my daughter Fâṭima because God, powerful and lofty, has separated her and separated those who love her from the Fire."⁴⁷ Transmitting from *Ulal al-sharâ'i*⁴⁸ by the same

⁴⁴ al-Mağlisî, *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 1: 10–11, n. 15: 16–17.

⁴⁵ Furât b Ibrâhīm b. Furât al-Kūfī (d. 310/992: Cf. MOD: 413 and GAS I: 539).

⁴⁶ al-Mağlisî, *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 3: 4, bb. 2, n. 17: 18. Cf. al-Ṣadûq, *Ma'ânî al-ahbâr*, n. 53: 396.

⁴⁷ al-Mağlisî, *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 4: 12. Cf. al-Ṣadûq, *Uyûn aḥbâr al-Riḍâ*, vol. II, bb. 31, n. 174: 46. Among the Sunnî, cf. al-Ḥâkim al-Nisâbûrî, *Kitâb (Talḥîs) al-mustadrak 'alâ al-ṣaḥîḥayn*, vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-ṣaḥâba*), *Manâqib Fâṭima bt. rasûl Allâh*, nn. 4788, 4789:

al-Şadûq, al-Mağlisî notes that the concept of being weaned means ‘to be separated’.⁴⁸ In this sense, the texts delineate a four-fold separation for Fâtîma by God: she is separated from the Fire,⁴⁹ from evil⁵⁰ (suggesting that her purification, at the very least, took place in the womb), from polytheism (*shirk*)⁵¹ and from menstruation.⁵² The texts demarcate four recipients of this separation from the

178–179, n. 4792: 180, al-Hawârizmî, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *faḍâ’il Fâtîma al-Zabrâ’* bt. *rasûl Allâb*, n. 2: 90, al-Ġawzî, *Kitâb al-mawḍû’ât min al-abâdît al-marfû’a*, vol. I, bb. *fî ḍiker tazwîġ Fâtîma bi-’Alî*: 421, al-Ṭabari, *Daḥâ’ir al-’uqbâ*: 26, al-Şaffûrî, *Nuẓḥat al-maġâlîs wa-muntaḥab al-nafâ’is*, vol. II, bb. *manâqib Fâtîma al-Zabrâ’*: 179, al-Muttaqî al-Hindi, *Muntaḥab kanẓ al-’ummâl* in the margins of *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. V: 97, al-’Işâmi, *Simṯ al-nuġûm al-’awâlî*, vol. I, bb. 5: 425, al-Shablangî, *Nûr al-abşâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr*, bb. *faḍl fî ḍiker manâqib ’Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*: 43.

⁴⁸ al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 7: 13. Cf. al-Şadûq, *’Ilal al-sbarâ’i’ wa-l-abkâm*, vol. I, bb. 142, n. 2: 178.

⁴⁹ al-Ṭabari, *Dalâ’il al-imâma*: 15, al-Şadûq, *’Uyûn aḥbâr al-Riḍâ*, vol. II, bb. 31, n. 336: 72, *’Ilal al-sbarâ’i’ wa-l-abkâm*, vol. I, bb. 142, nn. 5–6: 179, al-Ṭûsî, *al-Amâlî fî al-ḥadîṯ*, bb. 22, n. 5–1179: 570, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *manâqib Fâtîma al-Zabrâ’*: 377, al-Irbilî, *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma’rifat al-a’imma*, vol. I: 463, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, nn. 3–4: 12, n. 10: 14, nn. 12, 14: 15, nn. 17–18: 18–19.

⁵⁰ al-Şadûq, *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-aḥâdîṯ wa-l-aḥbâr*, n. 18: 592, *Kitâb al-ḥiṣâl*, vol. II, n. 3: 414, *’Ilal al-sbarâ’i’ wa-l-abkâm*, vol. I, bb. 142, n. 3: 178, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî, *Rawḍat al-wâ’iẓîn wa-taḥsirat al-mutta’iẓîn*, vol. I: 148, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *manâqib Fâtîma al-Zabrâ’*: 377–378, al-Irbilî, *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma’rifat al-a’imma*, vol. I: 463, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 1: 10, n. 14: 15–16.

⁵¹ al-Ṭabari, *Dalâ’il al-imâma*: 10.

⁵² al-Kulaynî, *al-Kâfî fî ’ilm al-dîn*, vol. I, bk. 4 (*Kitâb al-ḥuġġa*), bb. *mawlid al-Zabrâ’ Fâtîma*, n. 6: 460, al-Şadûq, *’Ilal al-sbarâ’i’ wa-l-abkâm*, vol. I, bb. 142, n. 4: 179, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *manâqib Fâtîma al-Zabrâ’*: 378, al-Irbilî, *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma’rifat al-a’imma*, vol. I: 463, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 9: 14–15, n. 14: 15–16.

Fire: her followers (*shīʿa*),⁵³ those who love her,⁵⁴ her offspring⁵⁵ and those who support her and her offspring.⁵⁶

The separation of Fāṭima's offspring from the Fire is intimately connected to a *ḥadīth* that is more profuse both in Sunnī and Shīʿī sources. A number of texts speak of Fāṭima's dedication to chastity: "Fāṭima has guarded her chastity and God has forbidden her offspring to the Fire."⁵⁷ This concept, literally translated as 'forti-

⁵³ al-Ṭabarī., *Dalāʾil al-imāma*: 53, al-Ṣadūq., *ʿUyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā*, vol. II, bb. 31, n. 336: 72, *Maʿānī al-aḥbār*, n. 53: 396, *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ wa-l-aḥkām*, vol. I, bb. 142, n. 5: 179, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. III, bb. *fi manzūlati-hā*: 377–378, al-Irbilī., *Kashf al-ḡumma fī maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. I: 463, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 1, n. 3: 4, bb. 2, n. 3: 12, n. 10: 14, n. 14: 15, n. 17: 18, vol. LXV, bb. 15, n. 135: 76. Cf. also al-Kūfī., *Tafsīr Furāt b. Ibrāhīm*, n. 435: 321.

⁵⁴ al-Ṭabarī., *Bishārat al-muṣṭafā*: 123, 131, 184, al-Ṣadūq., *ʿUyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā*, vol. II, bb. 31, n. 174: 46, *Maʿānī al-aḥbār*, n. 14: 64, *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ wa-l-aḥkām*, vol. I, bb. 142, n. 1: 178, al-Ṭūsī., *Tabḏīb al-aḥkām*, vol. III: 98, *al-Amālī fī al-ḥadīth*, bb. 11, n. 18–571: 294, al-Ṭabarsī., *Iʿlām al-warāʾ bi-aʿlām al-hudā*: 148, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. III, bb. *manāqib Fāṭima al-Zabrāʾ*: 377, Ibn Ṭāʾūs., *Kitāb al-iqbāl bi-l-aʿmāl al-ḥasana*: 182, al-Irbilī., *Kashf al-ḡumma fī maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. I: 463, al-Daylamī., *Irshād al-qulūb*, vol. II: 232, al-Ḥillī al-ʿAllāma., *Kashf al-yaqīn fī faḍāʾil amīr al-muʾminīn*: 352, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 4: 12, n. 8: 13, n. 12: 15, n. 14: 16, vol. LXV, bb. 18, n. 66: 133, vol. XCV, bb. 7: 139.

⁵⁵ al-Ṭabarī., *Dalāʾil al-imāma*: 53, al-Ṭūsī., *al-Amālī fī al-ḥadīth*, bb. 22, n. 5–1179: 570, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 18: 18–19.

⁵⁶ al-Ṣadūq., *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ wa-l-aḥkām*, vol. I, bb. 142, n. 6: 179, al-Irbilī., *Kashf al-ḡumma fī maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. I: 463, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. VIII, bb. 21, n. 57: 50, vol. XLIII, bb. 2, n. 11: 14.

⁵⁷ al-Ṣadūq., *ʿUyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā*, vol. II, bb. 31, n. 264: 63, bb. 58, n. 1: 232, *Maʿānī al-aḥbār*, nn. 1–6: 105–106, al-Rāwandī., *al-Ḥarāʾiḡ wa-l-ḡarāʾiḡ fī-l-muʾḡzāt*, vol. I: 281, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. III, bb. *Manāqib Fāṭima al-Zabrāʾ*: 373, al-Irbilī., *Kashf al-ḡumma fī maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. I: 468, vol. II: 144, 310, 346, al-Ḥillī al-ʿAllāma., *Kashf al-yaqīn fī faḍāʾil amīr al-muʾminīn*: 351, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 6: 20, bb. 9, n. 2: 230, nn. 3–6: 231, n. 7: 232, vol. XLVI, bb. 11, n. 51: 185, vol. XLVIII: 315, vol. XLIX, bb. 16, nn. 2–3: 217, vol. LXXV, bb. 16, n. 52: 78, vol. XCIII, bb. 27, nn. 14–18: 221–223. Among the Sunnī,

fied' or 'made inaccessible her private parts' (the same words used of Maryam in Q. 21: 91) certainly confirms her physical virginity, that is, prior to her marriage with 'Alí. Thus, while her name indicates the fact of the weaning or separation, it is her chaste lifestyle that becomes the *raison d'être* for the salvation of her progeny, starting with her four children. While a number of texts do not define these offspring by using names,⁵⁸ others name al-Hasan and al-Ḥusayn, sometimes adding 'especially', as well as 'those born from her womb',⁵⁹ while others add the names of Zaynab and Umm

cf. al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī., *Kitāb (Talbīs) al-mustadrak 'alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*, vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitāb ma'rīfat al-ṣaḥāba*), *Manāqib Fāṭima bt. rasūl Allāh*, n. 4789: 179, Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī., *Ḥīyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-asfīyā'*, vol. IV, bb. 268, n. 5277: 209, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fadā'il Fāṭima al-Zabrā'* bt. rasūl Allāh, n. 9: 94, al-Ṭabari., *Daḥā'ir al-'uqba'*: 48, al-Haytamī., *Mağma' al-ṣawā'id wa-manba' al-fawā'id*, vol. IX, bb. *manāqib Fāṭima bt. rasūl Allāh*: 202, al-Muttaqī al-Hindī., *Muntaḥab kanz al-'ummāl* in the margins of *Musnad Ibn Hanbal*, vol. V: 97.

⁵⁸ al-Baḥrānī., *al-Burbān fī tafsīr al-qur'ān*, vol. V: 431, al-Mağlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 3, n. 6: 20 (from 'Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā), bb. 9, n. 5: 231 (from *Ma'ānī al-aḥbār*), vol. XLVI, bb. 11, n. 51: 175 (from al-Rāwandī's *al-Ḥarā'ig wa-l-ḡarā'ih fī-l-mu'ğzāt*), vol. XLVIII: 315, vol. XCIII, bb. 27, n. 17: 223 (from 'Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā).

⁵⁹ al-Ṣadūq., 'Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā, vol. II, bb. 58, n. 1: 232, *Ma'ānī al-aḥbār*, n. 1: 106, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. III, bb. *faṣl fī manzīlati-bi*: 325, quoting Ibn Manda, al-Irbilī., *Kashf al-ḡumma fī ma'rīfat al-a'imma*, vol. II: 311, 346, al-Mağlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 9, n. 2: 230 (from *Ma'ānī al-aḥbār*), n. 6: 231 (from *Ma'ānī al-aḥbār*), n. 7: 232 (from *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*), vol. XLIX, bb. 16, n. 3: 218 (from 'Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā), vol. LXXV, bb. 16, n. 52: 78 (from *Kashf al-ḡumma fī ma'rīfat al-a'imma*), vol. XCIII, bb. 27, n. 14: 222 (from 'Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā), n. 18: 223 (from 'Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā).

Kulṭûm.⁶⁰ Curiously, there is one text which names al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and Umm Kulṭûm, but omits Zaynab entirely.⁶¹

'Zaynab', the name (*ism*) given by God to the daughter of 'Alī and Fāṭima, derives from two Arabic words, *ẓayn* from the verb *ẓāna-yazīnu* ('to ornament, beautify, embellish') and the Arabic for 'father' (*āb*), and thus means the 'adornment' or 'grace' or 'beauty' of the father'.⁶² She is called Zaynab al-Kubrâ, to distinguish her from her sister Umm Kulṭûm (Zaynab al-Ṣuġrâ); al-Kâshânî notes that the appellation *al-kubrâ* is to differentiate between her and her sisters, (using the plural but without naming those sisters) who also have the name Zaynab or the same *kunya*. Referring us to al-Ṣadûq's *ʿIlal al-sharâʿi wa-l-ahkâm* as transmitted by al-Maġlisî, al-Kâshânî notes an incident when, supposedly, Fāṭima was informed that 'Alī intended to marry a second wife.⁶³ According to the text,

⁶⁰ al-Ṣadûq, *Maʿānî al-ahbâr*, n. 2: 106, n. 3: 107, al-Maġlisî, *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 9, n. 3, n. 4: 231 (from *Maʿānî al-ahbâr*), vol. XCIII, bb. 27, n. 15: 222 (from *Maʿānî al-ahbâr*).

⁶¹ al-Ṣadûq, *Maʿānî al-ahbâr*, n. 3: 108, al-Irbilî, *Kashf al-ġumma fî maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. I: 468, al-Maġlisî, *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XCIII, bb. 27, n. 16: 223.

⁶² Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. III, 1968: 1279. Lane notes the meanings carried by *ẓayn*, including a 'grace', a 'beauty', a 'comely quality', a physical or intellectual 'adornment', an 'honour', a 'credit' and anything that could be described as someone or something's 'pride' and 'glory'. Steingass also records 'Zaynab' as the name of a particular aromatic tree (cf. STEINGASS F., *Learner's Arabic English Dictionary*, Hippocrene Books, New York 1993: 472).

⁶³ A number of *ahâdîth* intimate that 'Alī was going to take the daughter of Abû Ġahl as a second wife; according to al-Buḥârî and others, Muḥammad worried about the distress this would cause Fāṭima (cf. al-Buḥârî, *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitâb farḍ al-ḥums*), bb. 5, n. 342: 219–220, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb faḍâʾil al-aṣḥâb*), bb. 17, n. 75: 56–57, Muslim., *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb faḍâʾil al-ṣaḥâba*), bb. 10 (*Faḍâʾil Fâṭima bt. al-nabî*), n. 95: 1903, al-Tirmidî, *Sunan*, vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), *Manâqib Fâṭima bt. Muḥammad*, bb. fî faḍl Fâṭima, n. 3868: 387). Muḥammad, receiving complaints from Fāṭima, protested from the pulpit that the daughter of God's Prophet and the daughter of God's enemy could not live under

she was greatly distressed thinking about this, and finally, as night fell, took al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and Umm Kulṭûm and went to see her father. It seems most likely, as al-Kâshânî points out, that the Umm Kulṭûm mentioned in the text is Zaynab.⁶⁴ Al-Kâshânî also refers us to Ibn ‘Inaba’s *Ansâb al-Ṭâlibiyyîn*,⁶⁵ in which the author confirms that Zaynab al-Kubrâ was the daughter of ‘Alî, that her *kunya* was Umm al-Ḥasan, and that she transmitted on the authority of her mother Fâtîma, daughter of the Messenger of God.

Karbâssî draws our attention to an inexplicable note in the margin of al-Sharastânî’s *Nabḍa al-Ḥusayn*,⁶⁶ which reminds the reader that ‘Alî had two daughters by the name of Zaynab and with the *kunya* Umm Kulṭûm, that al-Kubrâ was the mistress of Ṭaff

the same roof (Muslim., *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb faḍâ’il al-ṣaḥâba*), bb. 10 (*Faḍâ’il Fâtîma bt. al-nabî*), n. 96: 1903–1904). The Shî‘a record the *ahādîth*, while denying the context of ‘Alî attempting a second marriage while Fâtîma was still alive (among many, cf. for e.g. Ibn Qays al-Hilâlî, *Kitâb Sulaym b. Qays*: 830, 868, al-Ṭabarî, *Dalâ’il al-imâma*, bb. *ḥabar al-wafât wa-l-dajr*: 45, *Bishârat al-muṣṭafâ*, 70, 177, al-Ṣadûq, *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-ahādîth wa-l-ahbâr*, n. 3: 102, n. 18: 486, *‘Itâl al-sharâ’i’ wa-l-ahkâm*, vol. I, n. 2: 185, 187, al-Mufîd., *al-Amâlî li-l-Mufîd*, n. 2: 259, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbüri., *Rawḍat al-wa‘izîn wa-tabṣîrat al-mutta‘izîn*, vol. I: 149, Ibn Shahrâshûb., *Manâqib al-Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *manâqib Fâtîma al-Zabrâ?*: 378, al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma‘rifat al-a’imma*, vol. I: 363, 466, al-‘Âmilî., *al-Širât al-mustaġim ilâ mustaḥbaqq al-taqdîm fî al-imâma*, vol. I: 170, vol. II: 118, 282, 289, vol. III: 12, al-Ḥurr al-‘Âmilî., *Tafṣîl wasâ’il al-shi‘a ilâ tafṣîl masâ’il al-sharî‘a*, vol. XX, bb. 24, n. 25054: 67, bb. 129, n. 25510: 232, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XXI, bb. 32: 279, vol. XXIII, bb. 7, n. 97: 143, bb. 13: 234, vol. XXVII, bb. 1: 62, al-Ṭabarsî., *Ḥâtîmat mustadrak al-wasâ’il*, vol. XIV, bb. 61, n. 16450: 182.

⁶⁴ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubuwva*, 2008: 12. Cf. al-Ṣadûq., *‘Itâl al-sharâ’i’ wa-l-ahkâm*, vol. I, bb. 149: 185, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 31: 207.

⁶⁵ This is the work *‘Umdat al-ṭâlib fî nasab (ansâb) al-Abî Ṭâlib* by Ğamâl al-Dîn Aḥmad b. ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muhannâ b. ‘Inaba b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib al-Zaydî al-Ašġar al-Dâ’udî al-Ḥasanî (d. 835/1432: cf. GAL S. II: 271).

⁶⁶ Muḥammad ‘Alî b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥsin b. Murtaḍâ b. al-Ḥusaynî Hibba al-Dîn al-Shahrastânî (d. 1387/1967).

(Karbala'), that Ibn 'Abbâs referred to her as 'the most esteemed of the Banû Hâshim' ('*aqila banî Hâshim*)⁶⁷ and that Fâtîma gave birth to her two years after her brother al-Ḥusayn. Al-Sharastânî notes further that she was married to 'Abd Allâh, son of her uncle Ġa'far after the death of her sister Umm Kulţûm, during the caliphate of 'Utmân or Mu'âwiya, and that Zaynab was the leading personality in the circle of dependents in the Ḥusaynî tents.⁶⁸ Quite clearly, al-Sharastânî's thesis about her marriage is incorrect; Zaynab had one sister, Umm Kulţûm, who was alive and present at Karbalâ', well after Zaynab's marriage.

Karbâssî notes that while Zaynab's *kunya* is Umm Kulţûm, this is not the name by which she became known, in order to differentiate her from her younger sister, known by her *kunya* Umm

⁶⁷ Zaynab is referred to both as '*aqila* (عاقلة) and as '*aqila* (عاقلة). The latter refers specifically to gifts of the intellect; a woman who is thus described is one who is understanding, rational, judicious and sensible – one, notes Lane who restrains herself, turning her soul away from flawed inclinations (cf. WEHR H., *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 1980: 737, LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. V, 1968: 2115). The former has a different nuance, indicating what Lane terms "a woman of generous race", modest or bashful, "kept behind the curtain" or "held in high estimation" (LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. V, 1968: 2115). Wehr offers a more limited definition, as "the best" or the "pick", noting too that the word can refer to a wife or a spouse (WEHR H., *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 1980: 737). If '*aqila* does indeed include the connotation of 'kept behind a curtain', in Zaynab's case this must be understood metaphorically (in spite of some pious legends that suggest a literal seclusion), considering her active and public role during and after Karbalâ' – during her protest in Kûfa, at least one bystander (Ḥaḍlam b. Satîr) notes that he has never witnessed one so modest and yet so articulate (cf. for e.g. al-Mufîd., *al-Amâlî li-l-Mufîd*, *mağlis* 38: 321–323, al-Ṭūsî., *al-Amâlî fî al-badî'*, *mağlis* 3: 92–93, al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-ibtigâğ 'alâ abl al-ligâğ*, vol. II: 304, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 45, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî maqatal-hi*: 115, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 86–87, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abẓân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*, Part 3: 86).

⁶⁸ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu'ġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ'*, 2009: 340.

Kulţûm and hardly ever by her given name, also Zaynab.⁶⁹ According to al-Mufid, ‘Alî and Fâţîma’s two daughters were Zaynab the ‘elder’ and Zaynab the ‘younger’, who was given the *kunya* Umm Kulţûm.⁷⁰ Zaynab herself has a list of *kunâ*: Umm Kulţûm, Umm al-Ḥasan (a reference to her brother),⁷¹ Umm Hâshim (‘mother of the clan of Hâshim’), Umm al-‘Awâğîz (‘mother of the weak’), Umm al-Masâkîn (‘mother of the poor’), Umm Mişr (‘mother of Egypt’, especially in that country)⁷² and Umm al-Maşâ’ib (‘mother of afflictions’).⁷³ Her *laqab* (pl. *alqâb*)⁷⁴ include *al-‘aqîla* (‘the most esteemed’),⁷⁵ *‘aqîla banî Hâshim* (‘the most esteemed of the Hâshim

⁶⁹ Op. cit.: 335.

⁷⁰ Cf. al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma‘rifat ḥuğğ Allâh ‘alâ al-‘ibâd*, vol. I, bb. *ḍîker awlâd amîr al-mu‘minîn*: 355.

⁷¹ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubumma*, 2008: 11. The author provides no references for these appellations. Cf. also KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 335.

⁷² QUTBUDDIN B.T., “Zaynab bint Ali” in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopædia of Religion*, 2nd edn., 2005: 9937. The author provides no references for these appellations.

⁷³ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 59–61. The author provides no references for this appellation, although it is used by al-‘Âmilî, who lists the numerous afflictions she experienced in the deaths of all those close to her, including her two sons who, he notes, were killed before her eyes. Cf. al-‘Âmilî., *Aşyân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 137.

⁷⁴ A nickname conveying a certain esteem, of which one might be the bearer of several. The *laqab* might signal some moral quality or distinct merit, might accentuate a physical peculiarity or simply underscore one’s belonging to a particular sect or group.

⁷⁵ QUTBUDDIN B.T., “Zaynab bint Ali” in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopædia of Religion*, 2nd edn., 2005: 9937, AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubumma*, 2008: 11. The author provides no references for this appellation but points out that *al-‘aqîla* refers to the one who is the most noble woman of her people (*al-makrîma*), the most august (*al-‘azîza*) in her own house, and that Zaynab was above even this. The word indicates ‘the best’, ‘the most excellent’, ‘esteemed’, ‘modest’, ‘secluded’, and with the connotation of a precious pearl; cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. V, 1968: 2115.

clan'),⁷⁶ *'aqīla al-tālibiyīn* ('the most esteemed of the Tālib line'), *al-ṣaddīqa al-suḡrā* ('the younger truthful one' or 'righteous one', to differentiate between her and her mother Fāṭima al-Zahrā', known as *al-ṣaddīqa al-kubrā*),⁷⁷ *al-ʿālima* ('the knowledgeable') *ʿabīda ʿāl* *ʿAlī* ('the worshipper in the family of ʿAlī'), *al-kāmila* ('the perfect') and *al-fādila* ('the virtuous').⁷⁸ She is also known as *tānī al-Zahrā'* ('the second Fāṭima') and, in Egypt, *al-tābira* ('the pure one') or simply as *al-sayyida*. In his *Maqātil al-tālibīyyīn*, al-Iṣfahānī notes that when Ibn ʿAbbās transmits from Zaynab the words of Fāṭima about Fadak, he refers to Zaynab as 'our most esteemed' (*'aqīlatu-nā*).⁷⁹ Musa Muhammad adds *al-ʿarīfa* ('the cognizant') and *al-muwattaqa* (the trustworthy),⁸⁰ while Bilgrami adds *al-fāṣiḥa* ('the fluent') and *al-balīḡa* ('the eloquent').⁸¹

Muḥammad was her maternal grandfather, so that she is a member of the *ahl al-bayt*, revered not only for her admirable characteristics and actions but also for her membership in and continuation of the biological line of Muḥammad. In spite of this, her name does not occur in the famous *ahādīth* in which Muḥammad defines the 'people of his house' – only ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are mentioned. Writing in his *Dahāʾir al-ʿuqbā*, al-Ṭabarī refers to her presence in other works, such as Ibn Saʿd's *Ṭabaqāt*, al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīḥ*, Ibn ʿAsākir's *Tārīḥ*, Ibn Aʿīr's *Usd al-ḡāba fī maʿrifat*

⁷⁶ Cf. also KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Muʿḡam anṣār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisā'*, 2009: 335, nt. 1: 340.

⁷⁷ AL-KĀSHĀNĪ A., *250 Karāma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidāt bayt al-nubumwa*, 2008: 11. The author provides no references for these appellations.

⁷⁸ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 59–61, AL-KĀSHĀNĪ A., *250 Karāma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidāt bayt al-nubumwa*, 2008: 11. The authors provides no references for these appellations.

⁷⁹ al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-tālibīyyīn*: 91. Cf. AL-KĀSHĀNĪ A., *250 Karāma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidāt bayt al-nubumwa*, 2008: 15–16, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 65.

⁸⁰ Musa Muhammad, in his short work entitled 'Lady Zaynab', accessible at www.alhassanain.com.

⁸¹ BILGRAMI M.H., *The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint ʿAlī*, 1986: 5.

al-ṣaḥāba as well as his own *al-Simt al-tamīn fī manāqib ummabāt al-mu'minīn*, and then notes:

We deferred mention of her and the mention of her sister Umm Kulthūm from the *ahādīṭ* of the 'people of the house'...because the above-mentioned *ahādīṭ* of the 'people of the house' do not include the two of them; God knows best! They were not present when the verse came down, when they were all enwrapped with the cloak and the Prophet said what he said.⁸²

Nor does Zaynab find a place among the fourteen 'infallibles' or 'immaculate ones' (*ma'ṣūmīn*); Muḥammad, Fāṭima and the twelve Imāms. To these belong an exalted spiritual station of inerrancy and impeccability (*ʿiṣma*), so that they are deemed as being pure (*ma'ṣūm*), protected from sin and error, attributes indicated by the words of Q. 21: 73.⁸³ Zaynab's *ʿiṣma* is a subordinate one (*al-ʿiṣma al-ṣuġrā*), raised and educated as she was by members of the fourteen.

However, for all her exalted position, Zaynab, like her brother al-Ḥusayn, was born in tears. The conception and birth of al-Ḥusayn is methodically enwrapped in accounts of heavenly intervention and immense grief. One example describes a visit by God to Muḥammad as he sits in Fāṭima's house with al-Ḥusayn in his lap. Inexplicably, Muḥammad begins to weep, and in response to Fāṭima's confusion and questions, says that he has, in that very hour, seen the Most High in a most beautiful form (*fī aḥsan ṣūra*). God questions Muḥammad about his love for al-Ḥusayn: "He is the delight of my eye," replies Muḥammad, using a phrase he also uses for the boy's mother, "my sweet basil, the fruit of my heart and the skin between my eyes." God then places His hand on al-Ḥusayn's head, saying that His blessings, prayers, mercy and favour are upon the boy, but announcing that he is the chief of the mar-

⁸² al-Ṭabarī., *Daḥā'ir al-ʿuqbā*: 285–6.

⁸³ "And We made them chiefs who guide by Our command, and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds and the right establishment of worship and the giving of alms, and they were worshippers of Us (alone)".

tyrs from first to last.⁸⁴ In some of the accounts, Muḥammad is given red soil from Karbalá³, the place of al-Ḥusayn's death; in others, it is either Ğibrīl or God who makes the actual announcement of his martyrdom. Still others place these angelic portents before his birth, or omit any reference to Divine or angelic visitation, and articulate the announcement of death through a vision given to Muḥammad.⁸⁵

Al-Kâshânî relates that when Ğibrīl descended to give instructions about her naming, he also informed Muḥammad of the afflictions (*maṣâ'ib*) that Zaynab would suffer, causing her weeping grandfather to say: "Whoever weeps over the affliction of this girl is as one who weeps over her brothers, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn."⁸⁶ Karbâssî transmits an expanded version, not found in the classical texts:

The Messenger said (to Fâṭima): "My daughter, give me your newborn daughter." When she had fetched her, he clasped her to his noble breast, laid his lofty cheek against her cheek and wept bitterly, the tears flowing over his beautiful and noble parts. Fâṭima said to him: "Why your tears? May God not cause your eye to weep, my father!" He replied: "My daughter, Fâṭima, He informed me that this girl will be afflicted with tribulations after you and after me, and diverse afflictions and

⁸⁴ Cf. Ibn Qûlûya al-Qummi., *Kâmil al-ziyârât*, bb. 21, n. 1: 140, n. 2: 70, al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLIV, bb. 30, n. 29: 238.

⁸⁵ Among the Sunnî transmitters of this genre, cf. al-Tirmidî., *Sunan*, vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *manâqib al-Ḥasan wa-l-Ḥusayn*, n. 3774: 333, al-Ḥâkim al-Nisâbûrî., *Kitâb (Talḥîs) al-mustadrak 'alâ al-ṣaḥîḥayn*, vol. III, Part 3, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-ṣaḥâba*), bb. *annwal fadâ'il Abî 'Abd Allâh al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alî*, n. 4884: 210, n. 4888: 211–212, nn. 4890, 4892: 213, al-Ṭabari., *Daḥâ'ir al-'uqbâ*: 146–147, al-Tibrizî., *Mishkât al-maṣâbîḥ*, vol. III, bk. 30 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 10 (*Manâqib ahl bayt al-nabî*), n. 6136: 1733, n. 6157: 1737–1738, Ibn Ḥağar al-'Asqalânî., *Tabdîb al-tabdîb*, vol. II: 347, al-Haytamî., *Mağma' al-zawâ'id wa-manba' al-fawâ'id*, vol. IX, bb. *manâqib al-Ḥusayn*: 187–189, al-Shablangî., *Nûr al-abṣâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr*: 114.

⁸⁶ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunwa*, 2008: 11.

the most calamitous and heavy losses will come to her.” Fâtima asked him: “What is the reward for one who weeps for her and for her afflictions?” He replied: “Part of me⁸⁷ and delight of my eye, whoever weeps over her and over her afflictions, is as one who weeps over her brothers, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.”⁸⁸

In another story, also related by Karbâssî but missing in the classical sources, it is related that the Companions came to Muḥammad to congratulate him on the birth of his granddaughter; one of them, named Salmân al-Fârsî,⁸⁹ went to congratulate ‘Alî, and found him

⁸⁷ A reference to Muḥammad’s widely transmitted declaration: “Fâtima is part of me. Whatever troubles her troubles me, and whatever injures her injures me.” Cf. for e.g. among the Sunnî, Muslim., *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb faḍâ’il al-ṣaḥâba*), bb. 10, n. 93: 1902, nn. 95, 96: 1903–1904, al-Tirmiḍî., *Sunan*, vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *fi faḍl Fâtima bt. Muḥammad*, n. 3866: 386, n. 3868: 386–387, Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. VI, *Ḥadîṯ al-Masûr b. Maḥrama al-Zubrî*, n. 18929: 486–487, n. 18933: 492, n. 18935: 492–493, n. 18952: 501–502, vol. V, *Ḥadîṯ ‘Abd Allâh b. Zubayr b. al-‘Anwâm*, n. 16123: 453, al-Buḥârî., *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. IV, bk. 53 (*Kitâb farḍ al-ḥums*), bb. 5, n. 342: 219–220, vol. V, bk. 57 (*Kitâb faḍâ’il al-aṣḥâb*), bb. 13, n. 61: 50, ch. 17, n. 75: 56–57, bb. 29, n. 111: 75, al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asrâf*, vol. I, *Aẓwâġ rasûl Allâh*, n. 865: 402–403, al-Nasâ’î., *Kitâb al-ḥaṣâ’is fi faḍl ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*: 80–81, al-Ḥâkim al-Nisâbûrî., *Kitâb (Talḥîs) al-mustadrak ‘alâ al-ṣaḥîḥayn*, vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma’rifat al-ṣaḥâba*), *Manâqib Fâtima bt. rasûl Allâh*, nn. 4813, 4814, 4815: 187–188, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *faḍâ’il Fâtima al-Zabrâ’ bt. rasûl Allâh*, n. 6: 91–92, Ibn al-Aṯîr., *Usd al-ġâba fi ma’rifat al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. VI, bb. 7175 (*Fâtima bt. Rasûl Allâh*): 223, Ibn Kaṯîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. VI: 333. Cf. CLOHESSY C.P., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 41.

⁸⁸ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu’ġam anṣâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 335.

⁸⁹ Modarressi notes that Salmân al-Fârsî was one of a number of the companions of Muḥammad who kept a special attachment to the ‘people of the house’ until the end of their lives. Abû Ḍarr al-Ġifârî, whose name will appear later in the Zaynab story, was another. The Shi‘a look upon these as comprising their first generation. Cf. MODARRESSI H., *Tradition and Survival. A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi‘ite Literature*, vol. I, One-world, Oxford 2003: 6.

despondent and sorrowing. ‘Alī explained to Salmân what his daughter would suffer at Karbalâ’.⁹⁰ Karbâssî adds a note to say that in the days that she was pregnant with Zaynab, Fâtîma was overwhelmed with disquiet (*hamm*) and affliction (*ġamm*), not only because of Ġibrîl’s visit to Muḥammad to inform him of the afflictions that Zaynab would suffer, but also because she carried both Zaynab and Umm Kulţûm on the left side, completely different to al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.⁹¹

Aside from the trauma she would suffer around the Karbalâ’ event, tribulation shadowed Zaynab’s life. Karbâssî tells us that the childhood that Zaynab left behind her was one filled with afflictions and adversities, including the loss of a number of people close to her heart; Karbâssî names among these her uncle Ġa‘far al-Ṭayyâr. He notes that she had seen and heard numerous crucial events, some painful and some comforting, and it was these events that had burnished both the inner and the physical life with which she had been blessed. She was, he reminds us, born in the house of revelation and prophecy, and became seasoned with the wisdom usually found in one much older than her, and well-versed in general affairs, on the same level as a leader of people. The days passed her by, like the passing of the years, with their griefs and their festivities; she possessed an attentiveness that was more than the attentiveness of adults.⁹²

Lamentation and grief are stitched into the fabric of her mother Fâtîma’s life during the final illness and death of Muḥammad⁹³ and Fâtîma’s own last months – Karbâssî notes that

⁹⁰ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 336.

⁹¹ Op. cit.: 334.

⁹² Op. cit.: 339.

⁹³ Ibn Sa‘d., *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr*, vol. II, bb. *diġer al-ḥuṣn ‘alâ rasûl Allâb*: 720, Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. IV, *Musnad Anas b. Mâlik*, n. 13030: 392, al-Buḥârî., *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-maġâz*), n. 739: 526–527, Ibn Mâġa., *Sunan*, vol. I, bk. 6 (*Kitâb al-ġanâ’iz*), bb. 65, n. 1630: 522, al-Nasâ‘î., *al-Sunan al-kubrâ*, vol. IV, *Kitâb al-ġanâ’iz*, bb. *fî al-bukâ’ ‘alâ al-mayyit*: 12–13, al-Ḥâkim al-Nisâbûrî., *Kitâb (Talḥîs) al-mustadrak ‘alâ al-ṣaḥîḥayn*, vol. I, bk. 13 (*Kitâb al-ġanâ’iz*), n. 1409: 532–533, vol. III, bk. 30 (*Kitâb al-maġâz*), n. 4457: 65, al-Baġdâdî., *Târîḥ Baġdâd*, vol. VI, n. 3292: 261–262.

when Muḥammad's death drew near, 'Alī and Fâtīma, seeing all the indications of his death, were seized with weeping and sadness.⁹⁴ "Among the women believers," Ğibrīl tells Fâtīma when her father dies, "there is no greater grief than yours",⁹⁵ while Ibn Kaṭīr, among others, reports that she never once laughed after her father's death.⁹⁶ All of this sadness could not have failed to affect Zaynab.

It was after Muḥammad's death that two momentous events, to which Zaynab was almost certainly a young and bewildered witness, thrust Fâtīma precipitously into conflict. The first was the alleged attempt to force 'Alī's allegiance (*bay'ā*) to Abû Bakr, an incident relayed by a number of Sunnī transmitters and accentuated by the Shī'a. Ostensibly, the intention of 'Umar, Abû Bakr and some others, unindulgent towards 'Alī's refusal to concede, was to take him by force to the mosque and compel him to do so. An armed group went to the house of 'Alī and Fâtīma, threatening to burn it down. They forced their way in, wielding their swords in the house and injuring Fâtīma in the process, causing her to miscarry her unborn child. There are numerous reports of this incident, all of them fragmented and at variance in their details.⁹⁷ Al-Ṭabarī's report reads:

"Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb came to the house of 'Alī. Ṭalḥah and al-Zubayr and some of the Muhājirūn were [also] in the house [with 'Alī]. 'Umar cried out, "By God, either you come out to

⁹⁴ KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Mu'ğam anşār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisā'*, 2009: 336.

⁹⁵ Ibn Ḥağar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥh al-bārī*, vol. VIII, bk. 6 (*Kitāb al-mağāzī*), bb. 84, n. 4434: 171.

⁹⁶ Abû Nu'aym al-Işbahānī, *Hilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aşfyā'*, vol. II, bb. 133: 42–43, Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. VI: 333.

⁹⁷ For Sunnī accounts, cf. al-Balāḍurī, *Kitāb ansāb al-aşraf*, vol. I, nn. 1184, 1186: 586, HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. IX, 1990: 186–187, Ibn al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ naḥğ al-balāğa*, vol. II: 23, vol. VI: 11, 47–49. For Shī'ī accounts, cf. al-Ya'qûbi, *Tārīḥ*, vol. II: 141.

render the oath of allegiance [to Abū Bakr], or I will set the house on fire.”⁹⁸

Al-Ṭabarī omits mention of violence against Fāṭima; the translator of the text, in a footnote, remarks that the scene grew violent and that Fāṭima was intensely angry.⁹⁹ The Sunnī transmitters are cautious in their telling of the story; for the most part, the threat by ‘Umar to burn everyone alive is the only actual violence mentioned. Ibn al-Ḥadīd includes in his account the vow by an angry Fāṭima that she will never again speak to ‘Umar.¹⁰⁰

In his transmissions about the attack on the house, al-Mağlisī repeats his enumeration of the four children, and, following a number of transmitters, adds the name of Fiḍḍa,¹⁰¹ Fāṭima’s servant, who will play a later role in Zaynab’s life and who is practically

⁹⁸ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. IX, 1990: 186–187.

⁹⁹ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. IX, 1990: 187, nt. 1291.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn al-Ḥadīd takes a view held by some Shī‘ī transmitters: cf. Ibn al-Ḥadīd., *Sharḥ naḥḥ al-balāḡa*, vol. VI: 11, 47–49.

¹⁰¹ Fiḍḍa was supposedly a Nubian (Sudanese) princess named Maymūna (although others suggest that she was an Abyssinian slave) who came to work for Fāṭima and was renamed Fiḍḍa (“silver”) by Muḥammad so so that she would not be ashamed of her dark colour. She seems to have been regarded as a member of the family and appears in a number of *ahādīth* about the household of Fāṭima. In terms of Zaynab, she features in a curious story about a lion, transmitted by al-Mağlisī from al-Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfī*; after the death of al-Ḥusayn, when the intention of the enemy was to trample his body, Fiḍḍa, having related a strange tale to Zaynab, persuades her to allow Fiḍḍa to employ the services of a lion to prevent this terrible deed. It is a tale probably better relegated to the realms of hagiography. Cf. al-Kulaynī., *al-Kāfī fī ‘ilm al-dīn*, vol. I, bb. *mawlid al-Ḥusayn*, n. 8: 465, al-Mağlisī., *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 17: 169, with a note that the *ḥadīth* is weak (*ḍa‘īf*) Cf. also SINDAWI K.A., “Fiḍḍa l-Nūbiyya: The Woman and her Role in Early Shīte History” in *al-Masāq. Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, v. 21. 2009: 269–287.

understood as a member of the household.¹⁰² Al-Daylamî too, in his *Irshâd al-qulûb*, transmits that the four children were present at the incidents after Muḥammad's death.¹⁰³ A number of other writers too, including al-Mufid and al-Ṭabarsî, insist that all four children were present when the house of 'Alî and Fâtîma was attacked.¹⁰⁴

The second event was the denial of Fâtîma's claim to Fadak,¹⁰⁵ a small town allocated to Muḥammad after the conquest of Ḥaybar; he dedicated its not inconsiderable revenues to the needs of the poor (travelers and members of the Banû Hâshim). After Muḥammad's death, Fâtîma asked Abû Bakr to hand over the possessions of her father he was still holding; in terms of Fadak and the shares of Ḥaybar, Abû Bakr refused, insisting that he had heard Muḥammad say that everything he left would be a public property for benevolent purposes (*sadaqa*).

This is strongly contentious issue, despite scholars from both sides, including al-Suyûfî (on the authority of Abû Sa'îd al-Ḥudrî),

¹⁰² al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. LIII, bb. 28, n. 4: 18. Cf. for example al-Ḥaṣîbî, *al-Hidâya (al-Kubrâ)*, b. 14: 417. In this transmission, al-Ḥaṣîbî includes the name of Ruqayya. It is difficult to know to whom he is referring, but the number of texts which do not include a girl by that name as a fifth (already born) child suggest that it is an oversight. Al-Mûsawî names her too, transmitting from al-Ṭabarî in his *Daḥâ'ir al-'uqbâ* (on the authority of Ibn Sa'd), and noting that she died without coming of age. Cf. al-Ṭabarî, *Daḥâ'ir al-'uqbâ*: 105, AL-MÛSAWÎ M., *al-Kawâṭir fî aḥwâl Fâtîma bt. al-nabî al-aṭṭar*, vol. VII, ch. 17, n. 3/3860: 99.

¹⁰³ al-Daylamî, *Irshâd al-qulûb*, vol. II: 286.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. for example al-Ṭabarî, *Dalâ'il al-imâma*, n. 33: 104, al-Ḥaṣîbî, *al-Hidâya (al-Kubrâ)*, bb. 2: 163, 180, bb. 14: 417, al-Ṭabarsî, *Tağ al-manâ'il*: 76, 80, *I'lâm al-warâ bi-a'lâm al-hudâ*, bb. 5: 203, Ibn al-Bitriq, *al-'Umda fî 'uyûn al-abyâr fî manâqib amîr al-mu'minîn*, fâṣl 6: 29.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Sa'd, *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr*, vol. XII, bb. *ḍikr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (Fâtîma): 28–29, al-Buḥârî, *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. V, bk. 62 (*Kitâb faḍâ'il aṣḥâb al-nabî*), bb. 13, n. 60: 49–50, al-Balâḍurî, *Kitâb futûḥ al-buldân*, n. 119: 37–38, Faḥr al-Dîn al-Râzî, *al-Tafsîr al-kabîr*, vol. XV, Part 30, *Sûrat al-ḥasbr*: 284, Ibn Kaṭîr, *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. V: 249. Among the Shî'a, cf. al-Ya'qûbî, *Târîḥ*, vol. II: 142.

in their commentary on the verse, “give the kinsman his due” (Q. 17: 26), holding that when this verse was revealed, Muḥammad gave Fâtîma the village of Fadak.¹⁰⁶ There are varying accounts of Fâtîma’s anger with Abû Bakr; while some maintain that she refused to see him, remaining angry with him until she died,¹⁰⁷ others, like Ibn Sa’d, tell us that, only for the sake of her husband ‘Alî, she saw him, but with great disinclination. While some record that she turned her face to the wall, or reduced Abû Bakr to tears with a stern lecture, Ibn Sa’d reports merely that “she was satisfied with him.”¹⁰⁸ Zaynab was held to have been present at her mother’s famous protest, prompted by these events immediately after Muḥammad’s death – not only the usurpation of power, but also Abû Bakr’s refusal to hand over the property of Fadak. It was delivered by Fâtîma before a gathering of believers in the mosque of her father in Medina, and in the course of which, among numerous

¹⁰⁶ al-Balâdufî, *Kitâb futûḥ al-buldân*, n. 119: 37–38, al-Dahabî, *Mîzân al-i’tidâl fî tarâğîm al-rigâl*, vol. II, n. 4560: 492, Ibn Kaṭîr, *Tafsîr al-qur’ân al-‘aẓîm*, vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ’*: 302 (he denies the possibility, insisting that the verse was revealed long before Muḥammad gave Fadak to Fâtîma), al-Suyûtî, *al-Durr al-manṭûr fî al-tafsîr bi-l-ma’tûr*, vol. IV, *Sûrat al-isrâ’*: 320, al-Haytamî, *Mağma‘ al-ẓawâ’id wa-manba‘ al-fawâ’id*, vol. VII, *Sûrat al-isrâ’*: 49, who declares the *ḥadîth* is ‘weak’ (*da‘îf*) and ‘abandoned’ (*matrûk*). Among the Shî‘a, cf. al-Baḥrânî, *al-Burbân fî tafsîr al-qur’ân*, vol. II, Part 15, *Sûrat al-isrâ’*, n. 1: 414–415 (insisting that Muḥammad was ordered by God to give Fadak to Fâtîma), al-Tûsî, *al-Tibyân fî tafsîr al-qur’ân*, vol. VI, *Sûrat al-isrâ’*: 468. Cf. also al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-amwâr*, vol. XXIX, bb. 11: 122.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad Abî Bakr al-Ṣiddîq*, n. 25: 25, n. 60: 33, al-Buḥârî, *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. V, bk. 59 (*Kitâb al-mağâz*), bb. 37, n. 545: 381–384, vol. VIII, bk. 80 (*Kitâb al-farâ’id*), bb. 3, n. 718: 471–472, Muslim, *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. III, bk. 32 (*Kitâb al-ğihâd*), bb. 16, n. 52: 1380–1381, al-Ṭabarî, *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, vol. V, n. 1825: 206, Ibn al-Ḥadîd, *Sbarḥ naḥğ al-balâğa*, vol. VI: 46, Ibn Kaṭîr, *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. V: 249–250, 285.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Sa’d, *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr*, vol. XII, bb. *ḍîkr banât rasûl Allâh*, n. 4927 (*Fâtîma*): 28. Cf. also Ibn Kaṭîr, *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. VI: 333, who claims that Abû Bakr came to her on her deathbed, asked forgiveness and was reconciled with her.

sentiments expressed, she asked Abû Bakr for her inheritance from her father.¹⁰⁹

Suffice it to say that Zaynab, at this stage somewhere between five and seven years old, would have been inescapably enmeshed in these harrowing events, culminating in the death of her mother, but not ending there, since having lost her grandfather Muḥammad and, shortly after him, her unborn brother and her mother Fâṭima,¹¹⁰ she would live to witness the murder of her father ‘Alî and her brothers al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. Transmitting from *Kitâb al-tirâz al-muddabab*, Karbâssî notes that, present at the death of her mother, Zaynab there received the commission to accompany her two brothers, taking them under her wing and acting as a mother to them after Fâṭima’s death.¹¹¹ Al-Kâshânî too, referring us to an historical work entitled *Nâsiḥ al-tawârîḥ*,¹¹² notes that Zaynab (aged six or seven) was present when Fâṭima died, and came, dragging her outer cloak, and cried out: “My father! Messenger of God! Now we come to know the deprivation of seeing you!”¹¹³ He refers his readers to al-Maḡlisî’s *Bihâr al-anwâr*, transmitting from *Rawḍat al-wâ‘iẓîn wa-taḥṣîrat al-mutta‘iẓîn*, which relates that upon the death of Fâṭima, Umm Kulṭûm came, dragging the train of the patched robe she was wearing and enwrapped in her preferred outer garment, and cried out: “My father! Messenger of God! In truth we are bereft of you with a bereavement never to be encountered again!” Al-Kâshânî insists that “without any doubt” this Umm

¹⁰⁹ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 339. Cf. al-Ṭabarsî, *Kitâb al-iḥtiğâğ ‘alâ abl al-liğğâğ*, vol. I: 99, al-Irbilî, *Kashf al-ğumma fî ma‘rifat al-a’imma*, vol. I: 482, al-Maḡlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XXIX: 221.

¹¹⁰ For an overview of these events, cf. CLOHESSY C., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 149–159.

¹¹¹ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 338.

¹¹² Authored in Persian by Muḥammad Taqî Kâshânî (d. 1296/1879), known as *Lisân al-mulk* (“mouthpiece of the nation”); this is an unfinished work, comprising two books, each containing a number of volumes.

¹¹³ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 12–13.

Kulṭûm is in fact Zaynab, the eldest daughter of Fâṭima, and aged six or seven at her mother's death.¹¹⁴

At the death of Fâṭima, and as expressed by her final wish, 'Alī marries his deceased wife's niece, Umâma bt. Abî al-ʿÂṣ, whose mother was Zaynab bt. Muḥammad;¹¹⁵ she was, however, destined to play a far less significant role in the life of Zaynab than Fâṭima ever did.

The classical texts present two further distinct events, both ostensibly performed in haste and in secret. The first is the washing and preparation of Fâṭima's body immediately after her death. Most of the texts seem to agree that 'Alī played the chief role in this, and that he was assisted by six others: al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab, Umm Kulṭûm, Fiḍḍa and Asmâ' bt. 'Umays.¹¹⁶ This is offset by one *hadîth* in al-Maḡlisî in which, having washed the body of Fâṭima, 'Alī calls Umm Kulṭûm, Zaynab, Sukayna, Fiḍḍa, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn to come and see their 'mother' for the last time. The Sukayna mentioned is the unknown quantity here, but is not of necessity a reference to another daughter, since 'Alī uses the word 'mother' even for the relationship of Fâṭima to Fiḍḍa. Asmâ' bt. 'Umays is missing from the list; in that case, it could be a call addressed only intimate family members, of whom Fiḍḍa is regarded as one. Who, then, is Sukayna? It cannot be the daughter of al-Ḥusayn, who shares the name (although she is sometimes referred to as Sakîna). The English translation of *Bihâr al-anwâr* mistakenly leaves Zaynab out of this list.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâʿiẓîn wa-tabṣîrat al-muttaʿiẓîn*, vol. I: 153, al-Maḡlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 20: 192. Cf. AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., 250 *Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 12–13.

¹¹⁵ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., 250 *Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 14, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 62.

¹¹⁶ al-Ṭabarî., *Dalâʾil al-imâma*, n. 45: 136, al-Ḥaṣîbî., *al-Hidâya (al-Kubrâ)*, bb. 2: 178, al-Maḡlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XXX, n. 164: 348, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 1: 171, al-Ṭabarsî., *Ḥâtîmat mustadrak al-wasâʾil*, vol. II, bb. 21, n. 1761: 186.

¹¹⁷ al-Maḡlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 15: 179. Cf. SARWAR M., (trans.), *Behar al-anwar*, vol. 43, 2015: 256.

The second event is Fâṭima's burial by night in al-Baqî' cemetery; Zaynab was almost certainly not present at this, and nor was her sister Umm Kulṭûm.¹¹⁸ While al-Ḥaṣībî notes that the burial and its concomitant rites were performed, at Fâṭima's request, by 'Alî, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn,¹¹⁹ other texts add the names of al-'Abbâs, al-Miqdâd and al-Zubayr.¹²⁰ With the burial of her mother, there is a thirty-year gap in what the classical texts tell us of Zaynab's life, aside from two major incidents: her marriage to 'Abd Allâh b. Ğa'far b. Abî Ṭâlib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, and the 40/661 murder of her father 'Alî.

Karbâssî writes that when Zaynab had passed her ninth year (around 16/637), a number of high-level suitors, including Qurayshî nobles, desired to marry her, only to be turned down by 'Alî, who "did not find among them her equal." 'Alî seemed to be harking back to the words of Muḥammad, who had looked at the children of 'Alî and Ğa'far, the two sons of Abû Ṭâlib, and said: 'Our girls for our sons and our sons for our girls'.¹²¹ According to the classical texts, when Zaynab came of age, she was married by her father 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib to his nephew and her first cousin, 'Abd Allâh b. Ğa'far b. Abî Ṭâlib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib; her new husband's father was 'Alî's brother (Ğa'far al-Ṭayyâr b. Abî Ṭâlib) and his mother, notes Qutbuddin,¹²² was at that time 'Alî's own wife and thus Zaynab's stepmother, Asmâ' bt. 'Umays. The Shî'î and a number of the Sunnî transmitters (including al-Ṭabarî) insist

¹¹⁸ al-Ṭabarî, *Dalâ'il al-imâma*, n. 45: 136.

¹¹⁹ al-Ḥaṣībî, *al-Hidâya (al-Kubrâ)*, bb. 2: 178, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 7, n. 1: 171.

¹²⁰ al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XXIX: 389.

¹²¹ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu'ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ'*, 2009: 340. Cf. al-Şadûq, *Man lâ yaḥḍuru-hu al-faqîh*, vol. III, n. 4384: 393, al-Ṭabarsî, *Makârim al-aḥlâq*: 204, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *faşl fî azwâğî-hi*: 305, al-Ḥurr al-'Âmilî, *Tafşîl wasâ'il al-shi'a ilâ taḥşîl masâ'il al-shari'a*, vol. XX, bb. 27: 74, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLII, bb. 120: 92, vol. C, bb. 21: 373, al-Ṭabarsî, *Ḥâtimat mustadrak al-wasâ'il*, vol. XIV, bb. 23: 187.

¹²² QUTBUDDIN B.T., "Zaynab bint Ali" in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edn., 2005: 9937.

that 'Alī married no other woman until the death of Fâṭima.¹²³ By the time of Zaynab's marriage however, Fâṭima has been dead for a number of years.

About the details of the marriage, the classical sources tell us almost nothing; Karbâssī, in his hagiography, describes it in lyrical terms, remarking that the sixteen-year-old 'Abd Allāh b. Ğa'far did not hesitate in agreeing to marry Zaynab, having been captivated by her. Some of the sources do transmit that he fixed her dower, like the dower of her mother Fâṭima, at four-hundred-and-eighty dirhams.¹²⁴

Despite the austerity of possessions, the marriage between Zaynab and 'Abd Allāh b. Ğa'far pictured by Karbâssī was fired with the warmth of faith and mutual understanding, and reigned over by a spirit of love, affection, sincere devotion and self-sacrifice in the path of God. When Zaynab was led in solemn procession to

¹²³ Amongst the Sunnī, cf. for e.g. al-Nasâ'ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrâ*: 5, al-Ṭabarī, *Kitâb abyâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, vol VII, n. 3470: 153, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr., *al-Istî'âb fî ma'rifaṭ al-aṣḥâb*, vol. IV, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, n. 4057: 1894, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. VI: 333, Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalânī., *Tabḏîb al-tabḏîb*, vol. XII, *Kitâb al-nisâ'*, n. 4434: 441. Among the Shī'a, cf. al-Mas'ûdī., *Murûġ al-dahab*, vol. III, bb. 73, n. 1496: 31. The reason put forward by the Shī'a for 'Alī's monogamy is that Fâṭima was pure, and incomparable with other women. Even in Paradise, when other men can take the 'maidens of Paradise' as their brides, no such option will be open to 'Alī. In Paradise, Fâṭima will be his only wife. Cf. Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *manâqib Fâṭima al-Zabrâ'*: 372.

¹²⁴ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anṣâr al-Husayn – al-nisâ'*, 2009: 340–341. Cf. for e.g. al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrī., *Rawḏat al-wâ'izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta'izîn*, vol. I: 146, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. III, bb. *faṣṭ fî tazwîġi-hâ*: 351, 356, al-Maġlisī., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIII, bb. 5: 112–113. While later Shī'ī *ahâdîṯ* take up the theme of Fâṭima's own dower being, rather than a sum of money, her prerogatives as intercessor for the sinners of her father's community, Ibn Ḥanbal records that Muḥammad gave Fâṭima a dress of velvet, a skin pillow stuffed with palm fibres, two millstones, two earthenware jars and a water skin. Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad 'Alī b. Abî Ṭâlib*, n. 643: 183, n. 715: 200, n. 819: 223, n. 838: 227–228, n. 853: 231.

the house of ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṭayyâr, God blessed ‘Abd Allāh and lavishly bestowed on him the blessing of property, of children and of the acquisition of estates. His terrain, once a desert, became a lush and fruitful land, and he was a means of sustenance to the indigent and the poor.¹²⁵ Although he was a man of means, the couple is said to have lived a modest life, with much of their wealth devoted to charity, although this factor is not highlighted by any classical source.¹²⁶

While historians like al-Balâḍurî and al-‘Asqalânî merely note that Zaynab bore children for her husband, neither naming nor numbering them,¹²⁷ according to tradition Zaynab bore four sons and a daughter: ‘Alî, known as ‘Alî al-Zaynabî, ‘Awn al-Akbar, ostensibly killed at Karbalâ’, ‘Abbâs, about whom there is little information, Muḥammad, also possibly a martyr at Karbalâ’, and Umm Kulṭûm.¹²⁸ However, the names and numbers of Zaynab’s children are diversely and confusingly reported by the classical texts, and the issue is dealt with briefly in an appendix to this work.

The couple remained in close contact with Zaynab’s two brothers, and with ‘Alî, accompanying him when he emigrated to Kûfa in 36/657 as the fourth of the ‘rightly-guided caliphs’

¹²⁵ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Husayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 340–1.

¹²⁶ He is sometimes nicknamed *baḥr al-ṣaḥâ* or *baḥr al-ğûd* (‘the ocean of munificence’), although this is not found in the classical texts. Cf. al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 393, Ibn al-Ğawzî., *Şifât al-ṣafwa*, vol. II, bb. *Fâtima bt. Rasûl Allâb*: 2, Ibn al-Aṭîr., *Usd al-ğâba fî ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. VI, bb. 6961 (*Zaynab bt. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 136–137, Sibṭ al-Ğawzî., *Taḍkîrat ḥawâşş al-umma bi-dîker ḥaşâ’iṣ al-a’imma*: 270. Cf. also HUSAIN A.A.T., (trans.), *House of Sorrows*, Islamic Publishing House, Ontario 2010: 182, ANTHONY S.W., (trans.), *The Expeditions. An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, New York University Press, New York 2015: 316. Curiously, this text omits any mention of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far’s marriage to Zaynab.

¹²⁷ al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 393, al-‘Asqalânî., *al-Iṣâba fî tamyîz al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. IV, n. 510: 314–315.

¹²⁸ QUTBUDDIN B.T., “Zaynab bint Ali” in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopædia of Religion*, 2nd edn., 2005: 9937: cf. Ibn al-Aṭîr., *Usd al-ğâba fî ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. VI, bb. 6961 (*Zaynab bt. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 136–137.

(*râshidîn*).¹²⁹ According to the idealistic ‘The Victory of Truth’,¹³⁰ Zaynab undertook the role of educating the women, holding sessions to help them study the Qur’ân and augment their knowledge of Islam, starting this practice in Medina and later continuing it when she moved with her father and family to Kûfa. The hagiographers relate that a group of the men of Kûfa asked of ‘Alî that Zaynab undertake the instruction of their womenfolk in the characteristics of religion and the exegesis of the Qur’ân; the Imâm acceded to their request. One day, ‘Alî entered his house in Kûfa and heard his daughter Zaynab speaking to the women about the disconnected letters¹³¹ at the beginnings of the chapters of the Qur’ân. She was explaining *kâf*, *hâ*, *yâ*, ‘*ayn*, *šâd*,¹³² and ‘Alî said to her: “Light of my eye! Did you know that these point to what will befall your brother al-Ḥusayn in the land of Karbalâ?”¹³³ While in itself, the concept of Zaynab taking a role in the education of women is an important one, none of these pious legends find any resonance in the classical texts, although Karbâssî notes that al-Baḥrânî, in his *al-Burbân fî tafsîr al-qur’ân*, in a long (although not widely diffused) *ḥadîṯ* with a chain from Imâm al-‘Askarî,¹³⁴ explains that the *kâf* stands for Karbalâ, the *hâ* for the perishing of the progeny (*balâk al-‘itra*), the *yâ* for Yazîd, whom he asks God to

¹²⁹ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ*, 2009: 341, 343.

¹³⁰ BILGRAMI M.H., *The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint ‘Alî*, 1986: ‘Womanhood’, n.p.

¹³¹ A reference to the much-debated letters found at the start of twenty-nine chapters of the Qur’ân (Chapters 2, 3, 7, 10–15, 19–20, 26–32, 36, 38, 40–46, 50 and 68), just after the *bismillâh*, and variously called *fawâtih al-suwar* (‘the openers of the chapters’), *awâ’il al-suwar* (‘the beginnings of the chapters’) or *al-ḥurûf al-muqaṭṭa’* (‘the disconnected letters’).

¹³² The five letters at the beginning of Q. 19, *sûrat Maryam*.

¹³³ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ*, 2009: 343.

¹³⁴ Abû Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alî al-‘Askarî (d. 259/873 or 260/874), the eleventh Imâm.

curse, the *‘ayn* for al-Ḥusayn’s thirst (*‘aṭash*) and the *ṣād* for his patience (*ṣabr*).¹³⁵

The next four years would be replete with military confrontations with the insurrectionary governor of Syria, Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān as well as with the Ḥawāriğ rebels, one of whom, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḡgam al-Murādī, would eventually assassinate ‘Alī in the mosque at Kūfa in January 40/661, when Zaynab was around thirty-five years old. Her husband ‘Abd Allāh b. Ġa‘far sided with ‘Alī in the battles he fought in those years, and was one of the commanders in his army at the battles of the Camel, Şiffin, and Nahrawān.¹³⁶

Karbāssī relates an incident that almost certainly concerns ‘Ā’isha, daughter of Abū Bakr and widow of Muḡammad, and her behaviour around the battle of the Camel, although he uses no name. It was transmitted that one of the women (ostensibly Ḥafṣa, daughter of ‘Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb and widow of Muḡammad) received a note from her sister (but in other texts, from ‘Ā’isha) during the Battle of the Camel, reading: “What is the news?! What is the news?! ‘Alī is like the ruddy one;¹³⁷ if he advances he will be

¹³⁵ KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Mu‘gam anṣār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisā’*, 2009: 343, nt. 6. Cf. al-Baḥrānī, *al-Burhān fī taṣīr al-qur’ān*, vol. III, 6834/3: 697.

¹³⁶ KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Mu‘gam anṣār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisā’*, 2009: 344. In the course of his Imamate, ‘Alī fought in three major battles: the 35/656 Battle of the Camel (at which ‘Ā’isha, a member of the opposing force, was taken prisoner when her side was defeated), Şiffin and Nahrawān. The Battle of Şiffin (37/657), fought against Mu‘āwiya’s army, lasted three days and was inconclusive. Negotiations, equally inconclusive, were held and Mu‘āwiya, without formally giving in to ‘Alī, retained the governorship of Syria. Dismayed at the mediation and at what they deemed a compromise, a group called the Ḥawāriğ (‘those who go out’) abandoned ‘Alī; it was their main force whom ‘Alī would later defeat at Nahrawān in 39/659.

¹³⁷ Karbāssī omits the word ‘horse’, although this does not diminish the meaning. However, by *al-ashqar*, Karbāssī might well have in mind a camel, since according to Lane, the word, when can be applied to a camel, and means ‘intensely red’ (Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. IV, 1968: 1581). Furthermore, both the verbs used in the poem (*‘aqara-*

slaughtered, and if he delays he will be wounded.” This woman gathers the women of her people, and gets them to beat tambourines and repeat the words. According to Karbâssî, Zaynab hears of what is being said and decides to go and reprove the women. Umm Salama,¹³⁸ reminding her that she is the daughter of the Commander of the Faithful and the most esteemed of the family of Abû Tâlib, suggests that she herself be assigned to go and reprove them. Zaynab refuses, determined to go in person. Dressed in the clothes of a serving girl, not the last time Zaynab would employ such a disguise, surrounded by other servants and accompanied by Umm Salama and Umm Ayman,¹³⁹ she approaches the woman (again, seemingly Ḥaḥṣa rather than ‘Ā’isha) who instigated the event and who, upon seeing her, is ashamed and dismayed and says: “They did this out of ignorance!” Zaynab responds by saying: “You two have been assisting against him just as you assisted against his brother before him.”¹⁴⁰

Ladak, quoting from *Bihâr al-anwâr*, relates a very similar incident but with diverse details and wording; ‘Ā’isha writes to Ḥaḥṣa about ‘Alî being on the move, and says of him: “What is the news?! What is the news?! ‘Alî is on the journey, like a sorrel coloured¹⁴¹

ya‘qiru and *naḥara-yanḥaru*) can mean specifically ‘to stab’ or ‘greatly wound’ or ‘hamstring’ or ‘slaughter’ a camel.

¹³⁸ Widow of Muḥammad and consequently one of the ‘mothers of the believers’, Umm Salama is held in high regard by Shî‘î Islam, not only because she helped to care for Fâṭima and later al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, but also because she transmitted some of the most crucial *ahâdîth* about the *abl al-bayt*.

¹³⁹ An Abyssinian slave girl, Umm Ayman had nursed the young Muḥammad after the death of his mother Âmina and, despite his having freed her, continued to care for him throughout his adult life. She is held in great esteem in the Shî‘î sources.

¹⁴⁰ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anṣâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 344.

¹⁴¹ Ladak uses ‘black’; but Lane notes that when applied to a man, the Arabic *ashqar* has a range of meanings encompassing a variety of ways of saying ‘a ruddy complexion combined with fairness’. When applied to a horse, it means a horse of a clear red or sorrel colour. Although it signifies the best of horses, it is also understood as being regarded by the Arabs as

horse; if he advances he will be wounded, and if he delays he will be slaughtered.” According to *Bihâr al-anwâr*, it is Umm Kulthûm, and not Zaynab, who hears of these words; veiling herself in her cloak (rather than a servant’s dress), she approaches the celebrating women and, once unveiled, is recognised by a shocked Ḥafṣa. Umm Kulthûm, alluding to Q. 66: 4¹⁴² and chastising both Ḥafṣa and ‘Â’isha, says: “You two have been assisting against him just as you assisted against his brother before him...”¹⁴³ The narration is very rare in the classical sources;¹⁴⁴ in both al-Mufid and al-Mağlisî, it is Umm Kulthûm and not Zaynab named as the protagonist, and since al-Mufid clearly distinguishes between the girls, there is little reason not to agree with Ladak that it is in fact the younger and not the older daughter of ‘Alî and Fâṭima involved.

Karbâssî relates an incident found in al-Mufid’s *Kitâb al-irshâd*,¹⁴⁵ and in which ‘Alî is in conversation with his daughter Umm Kulthûm. He tells her that he has seen how scanty the time he will remain with them is, and when she questions this, he says: “I have seen the prophet of God in my sleep. He was wiping dust off

an ill omen. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. IV, 1968: 1581. It was a red or roan horse (*al-asbqar*) that ‘Alî gave to his future assassin, Ibn Mulğam (cf. al-Mufid., *Kitâb al-irshâd*, vol. I, bb. *masîr Mu’âwiya nahwa al-Iraq*: 11.

¹⁴² Ostensibly, as Ladak notes, a verse revealed to call ‘Â’isha and Ḥafṣa to repentance after they had caused some trouble out of jealousy of another of Muḥammad’s wives, Zaynab bt. Ğaḥsh. Cf. LADAK J., *The Hidden Treasure. Lady Umm Kulthum, Daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima*, 2011: n.p.

¹⁴³ al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XXXII, bb. *bay‘a amîr al-mu’minîn*: 90. Cf. LADAK J., *The Hidden Treasure. Lady Umm Kulthum, Daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima*, 2011: n.p.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. al-Mufid., *al-Kâfi‘a fî ibtâl tawba al-ḥâtî‘a*: 16, *al-Ġamal wa-l-nuṣra li-sayyid al-‘itra fî ḥarb al-baṣra*: 276. Neither work is recorded by Brockelmann.

¹⁴⁵ Also in Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. VII, bb. *faṣl fî maqtali-bî*: 490, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâ‘izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta‘izîn*, bb. *wafât amîr al-mu’minîn*, n. 7 [319]: 310, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Manâqib amîr al-mu’minîn*, n. 402: 378.

my face and saying: ‘Alī, do not worry, you have discharged all you had to do.’ Umm Kulṭûm notes that not even three days had passed before the fatal blow was struck. When she cried aloud at this incident, ‘Alī said to her: “Do not do that, my daughter! I see the Messenger of God beckoning with his hand: ‘Alī, come to us, for what we have¹⁴⁶ is better for you.”¹⁴⁷

Karbâssî suggests in a footnote that it is manifest from a plurality of transmissions that the intended here is Zaynab, wife of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far, although it is hard to follow his logic in this. Zaynab al-Şuġrâ, i.e. Umm Kulṭûm would have been in her early thirties at the time of her father’s assassination, so that there is no reason why this conversation could not have been with her. Certainly, Ladak transmits this story as concerning Umm Kulṭûm, and not Zaynab wife of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far.¹⁴⁸ Karbâssî goes on to note that it is not confirmed in such a way that it is a settled matter, reminding us that al-Mufid in his *Kitāb al-irshād*, designates the children of Fâtima as al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab the elder and Zaynab the younger, nicknamed Umm Kulṭûm, thus demonstrating clearly enough that when he speaks of Umm Kulṭûm, he means the sister of Zaynab al-Kubrâ. Karbâssî finishes his note with a laconic ‘God knows’ and with the equivocal observation: “At any rate, there is no distinction between the two of them” (*lâ farq baynahimâ*). It is hard to know whether he means by this that they are equally important as daughters of ‘Alī and Fâtima, or that they are one and the same person, as held by a number of other scholars.¹⁴⁹

During Ramaḍân of the year 40/661, ‘Alī would break the fast one night with al-Ḥasan, one night with al-Ḥusayn and one night with ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far, husband of his daughter Zaynab (on

¹⁴⁶ Mistranscribed in Karbâssî as *‘inda-hâ* instead of *‘inda-nâ*.

¹⁴⁷ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 345. Cf. al-Mufid., *Kitāb al-irshād*, vol. I, bb. *masîr Mu‘âwiya nahwa al-Iraq*: 13.

¹⁴⁸ LADAK J., *The Hidden Treasure. Lady Umm Kultum, Daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima*, 2011: n.p.

¹⁴⁹ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 344–345, nt. 6.

account of her);¹⁵⁰ he never ate beyond three mouthfuls, once claiming that he would prefer that God's decision came to him while he was hungry. It was only a night or two after this declaration that he was killed. Transmitting from al-Mufid's *Kitâb al-irsbâd*, Karbâssî relates how the night before he was killed, 'Alî remained awake and did not go to the *maşğid* for the night prayer as was his custom. He was questioned about this by his daughter Umm Kulţûm – Karbâssî adds in brackets that this is Zaynab, although this is not clarified in al-Mufid's text – and he tells her that he did not go out, since doing so would mean his death. Then one Ibn al-Nabbâh¹⁵¹ comes to summon him to prayer; 'Alî goes a little way and then returns. Umm Kulţûm (again, identified as Zaynab by Karbâssî but not by al-Mufid) begs him to send someone else, Ğa'ada,¹⁵² to lead the prayer, and although 'Alî agrees at first, he later relents, saying: "The appointed time is inescapable!"¹⁵³ Again, since al-Mufid carefully distinguishes between the two sisters, it would be surprising if the daughter in question here was in fact Zaynab and not Umm Kulţûm. Ladak, in his book on Umm Kulţûm, transmits the *hadîth* from *Kitâb al-irsbâd* and sees no reason to doubt that the text concerns Zaynab al-Şuġrâ and not her elder sister.¹⁵⁴ Sharîf al-Rađî, on the other hand, insists that it is Zaynab.¹⁵⁵

Karbâssî transmits a number of *ahâdîth* from *Bihâr al-anwâr* surrounding the death of 'Alî. When his death drew near, says one of

¹⁵⁰ Op. cit.: 344. The author of *Rawdat al-wâ'izîn* replaces the name 'Abd Allâh b. Ğa'far with that of 'Abd Allâh b. al-'Abbâs: cf. al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawdat al-wâ'izîn wa-tabşirat al-mutta'izîn*. bb. *wafât amîr al-Pmu'minîn*, n. 6 [318]: 310.

¹⁵¹ 'Âmir b. al-Nabbâh al-Kûfî, 'Alî's *mu'addîn*.

¹⁵² Ibn Hubayra al-Mahzûmî, one of 'Alî's army leaders and supporters.

¹⁵³ al-Mufid., *Kitâb al-irsbâd*, vol. I, bb. *maşîr Mu'awiya nahwa al-Iraq*, n. 6: 14, KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anşâr al-Husayn – al-nisâ'*, 2009: 345.

¹⁵⁴ LADAK J., *The Hidden Treasure. Lady Umm Kultum, Daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima*, 2011: n.p.

¹⁵⁵ Sharîf al-Rađî (Abû al-Ĥasan Muĥammad b. al-Ĥusayn Mûsâ al-Musawî al-Baġdâdî) in his *Ĥaşâ'is al-a'imma*: 23.

these reports, his daughters Zaynab and Umm Kulţûm came in and sat with him on his bed. They drew close, grieving and saying: “Father, who is there for the young until he comes of age? Who is there for the old among the crowd? Our grief for you will be long and our tears will never cease!”¹⁵⁶ Karbâssî then transmits a second *hadîth* from al-Mağlisî in which, just prior to his death, ‘Alî’s forehead is sweating and he makes as if to wipe the moisture away with his hand. Karbâssî has Zaynab question him about this, and ‘Alî replies: “My daughter, I heard your grandfather the Messenger of God saying that when the believer’s death descends upon him and his demise draws near, the sweat of his forehead will be like brilliant pearls.” However, as Karbâssî then notes, in the *Bihâr al-annwâr* account, it is not Zaynab who in the interlocutor, but one of ‘Alî’s sons.¹⁵⁷ Noting that the narrative that follows is not found in *Bihâr al-annwâr*,¹⁵⁸ Karbâssî then reports:

Immediately, Zaynab lay on the breast of her father and said: “My father, Umm Ayman recounted to me the event of Karbalâ’, but I would love to hear it from you! ‘Alî replied: My daughter, the event is as Umm Ayman recounted it to you. It is as though I were with you and with the women, perishing as the captives of that country, those reduced to submission, “*in fear lest men should extirpate you*”,¹⁵⁹ but patience, patience!”

When he had finished his lament, Zaynab, Umm Kulţûm and all the other women cried out, tearing at their robes, slapping their cheeks, and “the outcry increased in the residence.”¹⁶⁰ When they

¹⁵⁶ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anşâr al-Ĥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 351–352, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-annwâr*, vol. XLII, bb. 127: 289.

¹⁵⁷ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anşâr al-Ĥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 352, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-annwâr*, vol. XLII, bb. 127: 291.

¹⁵⁸ In fact, it is, but in different form: cf. al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-annwâr*, vol. XXVIII, bb. 6: 60.

¹⁵⁹ Q. 8: 26.

¹⁶⁰ The report of the robe tearing and cheek beating is indeed in *Bihâr al-annwâr*, but is reported as a result of ‘Alî’s death, and not his prediction of the Karbalâ’ event and its aftermath. Cf. al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-annwâr*, vol. XLII, bb. 127: 293.

began the preparation of his body, al-Ḥasan called out to his sisters Zaynab and Umm Kulṭûm: “My sisters, bring me the perfumes of my grandfather the Messenger of God!” Zaynab brought the perfumes to him in great haste, and its odour filled the house and all of Kûfa.¹⁶¹ In another, similar narration, Zaynab reports:

When Ibn Muġam, may God curse him, struck my father, and I saw, as a result of it, the sign of death, I said to him: “My father! Umm Ayman recounted to me this and this, but I would have loved to hear it from you!” He replied: “My daughter, the *hadîth* was as Umm Ayman recounted it (to you). It was as though I were with you and the daughters of your people in that country, ignominious, reduced to submission, “*in fear lest men should extirpate you*”,¹⁶² but be patient, for by the One “*who splitteth the grain of corn*”¹⁶³ and created the soul, on that Day God will not have on the earth a *walî* better than you (pl), better than those who love you (pl) and better than your Shî‘a.”¹⁶⁴

In a further instance, al-Mufid’s *Kitâb al-irshâd* recounts the words of Ibn Muġam, who is brought before the dying ‘Alî. “Enemy of God,” Umm Kulṭûm shouts at him, “you have killed the Commander of the Faithful.” Ibn Muġam replies that he has killed no one but her father. “Enemy of God,” she cries out, “I truly hope that there is no harm to him.” “I see you are only crying for ‘Alî,”

¹⁶¹ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 352, where he adds words that are not in the text from which he is transmitting; al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLII, bb. 127: 294. Al-Ḥawârizmî in his *al-Manâqib* omits all mention of Zaynab present at the preparation of her father’s body but puts ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far there with al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. Cf. al-Ḥawârizmî., *al-Manâqib*, bb. *fî bayân maqtali-hi*, n. 401: 386.

¹⁶² Q. 8: 26.

¹⁶³ Q. 6: 95.

¹⁶⁴ Ibn Qûlûya al-Qummî., *Kâmil al-ziyârât*, bb. 88: 265, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XXVIII, bb. 6: 60, vol. XLII, bb. 127: 294, vol. XLV, b. 39, n. 30: 183.

replies Ibn Muġam. While al-Mufid and al-Ḥawârizmî identify the interlocutor as Umm Kulţûm, Karbâssî insists it is Zaynab.¹⁶⁵

Karbâssî reproduces another long *ḥadîṯ* from *Bihâr al-annwâr* concerning the cosmic reaction in the instant that Ibn Muġam strikes the fatal blow against ‘Alî. The angels in heaven raise a great outcry in prayer, a violent wind, black and tenebrous, rages, and the angel Ġibrîl calls out between heaven and earth, in a voice heard by all who are awake:

By God, the pillars of guidance are torn down! By God, the stars of heaven and the guideposts of the pious are obliterated! By God, the firm hold is routed! The son of the uncle of Muḥammad the Chosen One has been killed! The elected guardian has been killed! ‘Alî the Approved (*al-Murtaḍâ*) has been killed. Killed, by God, is the master of the guardians, killed by the most wretched of villains!¹⁶⁶

When Umm Kulţûm hears Ġibrîl’s death announcement, she strikes her face and cheeks, tears her robe and lets out a cry: “My father! My ‘Alî! My Muḥammad! My master!” Then she approaches her brothers, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. Almost certainly, this is not Zaynab, as implied by Karbâssî, but her younger sister.

After the death of her father ‘Alî, Zaynab’s brother al-Ḥasan, in Shî‘î eyes the rightful caliph and the second Imâm, would abdicate in favour of Mu‘âwiya, who then continued as the caliph. The details of this abdication are too complex to recount here; its conditions, upon which Mu‘âwiya would quite patently renege, included that after Mu‘âwiya’s death, the caliphate would revert to al-

¹⁶⁵ al-Mufid., *Kitâb al-irshâd*, vol. I, bb. *shahâda al-Imâm al-Ḥasan*: 19, al-Ḥawârizmî., *al-Manâqib*, bb. *fî bayân maqtali-hi*, n. 400: 384, KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 351. Al-Maġlisî attributes these words to Umm Kulţûm, who addresses Ibn Muġam tearfully: “Alas for you! As for my father, there is no fear for him! But God has rendered you vile in the world and the Hereafter, and your place of destiny is the Fire for all eternity!” Ibn Muġam replies: “Weep, since you are a mourner...” al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-annwâr*, vol. XLII, bb. 127: 289.

¹⁶⁶ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 351, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-annwâr*, vol. XLII, bb. 127: 282.

Ḥasan, and that Mu‘āwiya would not harm any of al-Ḥasan’s followers. Al-Ḥasan retired to Medina, where he was to die in 48/669, poisoned, insist the Shī‘ī historians and some of their Sunnī counterparts, at the instigation of Mu‘āwiya. Karbāssī notes that as al-Ḥasan’s body was being penetrated by poison and he began to discharge blood into a basin, whenever he heard that his sister Zaynab wanted to visit him, he would have the basin removed out of pity for her. She persisted in weeping for her brother al-Ḥasan for a whole month, and demonstrated her mourning, like all the Banū Hāshim, by dressing in black for a whole year.¹⁶⁷ Al-Ḥasan was

¹⁶⁷ KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 354. Al-Mağlisî, transmitting from al-Barqî’s *al-Maḥāsîn*, certainly reports that when al-Ḥusayn was killed, the women of the Banū Hāshim dressed in black to mourn him (al-Barqî, *al-Maḥāsîn*, vol. II, bb. 25, n. 195: 420. Cf. also al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilî, *Tafṣîl masâ’il al-shī‘a ilâ taḥṣîl masâ’il al-sharī‘a*, vol. III, bb. 67, n. 10–3508: 237, al-Baḥrānî, *‘Awālim al-‘ulûm wa-l-ma‘ārif al-ahwâl min al-âyât wa-l-ahbâr wal-aqwâl*, vol. XIV, n. 8: 412, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 33: 177, vol. LXXIX, bb. 16, n. 24: 84, al-Ġazâ‘irî, *Riyâḍ al-abrâr fî manâqib al-a‘imma al-aṭṭhâr*, vol I: 259). Nevertheless, this is a report found in few classical texts, and the issue of wearing black clothing seems not entirely agreed upon in the Shī‘ī sources – al-Kulaynî dedicates a chapter to the subject (al-Kulaynî, *al-Kāfî*, vol. II, bb. 6 (*Lubs al-sawâd*): 449), noting the Muḥammad did not like the colour black except for a number of items of clothing, and narrating an hadit reporting that the ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn was seen wearing a black outer garment. *Shayḥ* al-Şadûq claims that there is no sin in wearing black for the sake of piety (al-Şadûq, *Man lâ yaḥḍuru-hu al-faqîh*, vol. I, bb. *Ma yuşallâ fî-hî*, n. 770: 252), while in his *al-Muqni‘*, black is branded as the clothing of Pharoah (al-Şadûq, *al-Muqni‘*, bb. *al-nawâdir*: 542). A wry *ḥadîṯ* in *‘Ulal al-sharâ‘i‘* reports that Imâm Ġa‘far al-Şâdiq instructs some Shī‘a who ask him about dressing in black that if one’s heart is ‘whitewashed’ one can wear whatever one wants (al-Şadûq, *‘Ulal al-sharâ‘i‘ wa-l-ahkâm*, vol II, bb. 56, n. 5: 347. The Imâm was himself dressed in black at the time). However, in other traditions, Imâm Ġa‘far al-Şâdiq forbids praying in black, which he deems the colour of the clothing of the people of the Fire (cf. for e.g. al-Kulaynî, *al-Kāfî*, vol. III, n. 30: 403, vol. VI, n. 2: 449, al-Şadûq, *Man lâ yaḥḍuru-hu al-faqîh*, vol. I, bb. *Ma yuşallâ fî-hî*, n. 766: 251, n. 771: 252, n. 774: 253, al-Şadûq, *‘Ulal al-sharâ‘i‘ wa-l-ahkâm*, vol II, bb. 56, n. 1:

succeeded as Imâm by his brother al-Ḥusayn. In 60/680 Mu‘âwiya died, defaulting on his pledges and appointing his son Yazîd to succeed him. The Mu‘âwiya caliphate, (during which al-Ḥusayn received numerous appeals and pledges of support should he lead a revolt and reclaim the caliphate) and the accession of Yazîd to leadership after his father’s death would be the catalyst for the Karbalâ’ event.

After Karbalâ’ and her return to Medina, substantially little is known of Zaynab’s life until her death aged around fifty-six, on 15th Raġab 62/682 or, alternatively, 11th or 21st Ğumâdâ al-tâni, or 24th Şafar, or 16th Dû al-Hiġġa. Although most seem to agree upon a date some six months after her return to Medina, others maintain an earlier death, sometime in 61/681. As with the details of her birth, the reports for this period are substantially conflictual, and three theses exist: according to some, she remained in Medina until her death, and was buried there. Writing in his encyclopaedic *Aġyân al-Shi‘a*, al-‘Âmilî asserts that al-Baqi‘ cemetery in Medina is the place of Zaynab’s tomb, since “it is not established that after her return to Medina she ever left there again.”¹⁶⁸ However, Shahin

346, n. 4: 347). Al-Şadûq reports ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib declaring black to the colour of Pharoah’s clothing (al-Şadûq., *Man lâ yaġdurru-hu al-faqîb*, vol. I, bb. *Ma yuṣallâ fî-hi*, n. 770: 251, al-Şadûq., *‘Ilal al-sharâ’i‘ wa-l-ahkâm*, vol II, bb. 56, n. 6: 347, al-Şadûq., *Kitâb al-biṣâl*, vol. II: 615). Considering the number of Shi‘i devotees, including those in leadership, who do where black, and especially in the month of Muġarram, this seems not to be an issue of any import.

¹⁶⁸ al-‘Âmilî., *Aġyân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 140. Noting the ignorance about the dates of death and places of burial of many of the *ahl al-bayt*, especially the women, al-‘Âmilî quotes from a letter which insists that “Zaynab al-Kubrâ, daughter of the Commander of the Faithful and whose *kunya* was Umm Kulţûm” arrived in Damascus with her husband ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far in the days of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwân in the year of the (Medina) drought, that this is where she died and that she is buried outside of Damascus, close to her husband. However, al-‘Âmilî rejects that the authors of the letter have the correct Zaynab in mind, as he rejects the claim that her husband is buried in Syria and the story of the Medina drought.

notes that it seems unlikely that she had been buried there, for she would have had a special and unmistakable tomb.¹⁶⁹ Others insist that Medinan persecution drove her to Egypt, where she would live until her death, remaining until the end as the unrivalled champion of al-Ḥusayn's struggle for justice and the Karbalâ' event's most compelling voice. Still other reports maintain that she went to Syria with her husband, driven from Medina by a severe drought (with Bilgrami adding that her death there was the result of an accident). Again, Shahin objects that the story of this drought has no basis in history.¹⁷⁰

Karbâssî writes that she returned to Medina from Karbalâ' in the month of Rabî' al-awwal in the year 61/681. Here, she took the chance to address the people, rallying them against their Umayyad overlords; as a result, the citizens of Medina soon became disgruntled and began to express their disapproval of the Umayyad regime. This triggered an outraged response from the Umayyads; the Umayyad governor 'Amr b. Sa'îd al-Ashdaq¹⁷¹ wrote to Yazîd b. Mu'âwiya, urging the expulsion of Zaynab from Medina. Yazîd voiced his agreement;¹⁷² and while Shahin notes that he suggested Zaynab be offered a choice of places of exile, Bilgrami writes that Yazîd's forces, sent to dispel a revolt in Medina, took Zaynab and other members of her family to Damascus by force.¹⁷³

Zaynab, Karbâssî insists, rejected this move and prepared herself to oppose it. However, the women of the Banû Hâshim and perhaps also her nephew, Imâm Zayn al-Âbidîn¹⁷⁴ intervened in the matter and counseled her to leave, to avoid the danger of staying in Medina. Zaynab yielded to their advice and left with a group of the women of the Banû Hâshim, heading towards Egypt, where preparations had been made for this eventuality. They arrived on

¹⁶⁹ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 225.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. BILGRAMI M.H., *The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint 'Alî*, 1986: 18, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 226.

¹⁷¹ 'Amr b. Sa'îd b. al-Âṣ al-Ashdaq (d. 70/689).

¹⁷² KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu'ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ'*, 2009: 369.

¹⁷³ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 227, BILGRAMI M.H., *The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint 'Alî*, 1986: 18.

¹⁷⁴ Lit. 'the adornment of the worshippers'.

27th Raġab in in the year 61/681, received by the chiefs of the Umayyad State; present too were a number of supporters and patrons. It would be in the house of one of the patrons that the exhausted Zaynab would live out her life; she died on 15th Raġab 62/682 and was buried in the house in which she had been living, in the very shadow of the official residences.¹⁷⁵ Shahin suggests that it was the governor of Egypt himself, one Maslama b. Muḥallad al-Anṣārī (d. 62/682), a Companion of Muḥammad, who offered her a place in his residence.¹⁷⁶ Her burial in Egypt is supported by *Nūr al-absār* (not surprisingly, since al-Shablanġī was an al-Azhar scholar).¹⁷⁷ Al-Shablanġī is transmitting from al-Sha‘rānī¹⁷⁸ in his *Laṭā’if al-minan wa-l-ahlāq*, who is in turn transmitting from his teacher ‘Alī al-Ḥawwāṣ, the prominent 16th century Ṣūfī poet, who insists that the Zaynab buried in Qanāṭir al-sibā‘ in Egypt is indeed the daughter of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and that there is absolutely no doubt that she is buried here. Al-Sha‘rānī describes how al-Ḥawwāṣ used to take off his sandals at the threshold of the path and walk barefoot until he passed by her mosque. He would stop in front of its façade and would gain access to God by means of her, who would then forgive him.¹⁷⁹ He also refers to al-Sha‘rānī’s *Lawāqib al-annwār al-qudsiyya* to reinforce the thesis that Zaynab, ‘sister of al-Ḥusayn’ is entombed in Qanāṭir al-sabā‘, and that this is further underscored in al-Sha‘rānī’s *al-Ṭabaqāt*, in the biography of al-Ḥusayn. The Egyptian thesis is also mentioned by scholars such as Ṣāliḥ al-Wardānī (“on the authority of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Anṣārī, who said: I saw Zaynab bt. ‘Alī in Egypt just days after her arrival. I have never seen anyone like her! Her face was like a sliver of the

¹⁷⁵ KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Mu‘ġam anṣār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisā’*, 2009: 369.

¹⁷⁶ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 227.

¹⁷⁷ al-Shablanġī, *Nūr al-absār fī manāqib āl bayt al-nabī al-muḥtār*: 202.

¹⁷⁸ Abū al-Mawāhib ‘Abd al-Waḥḥāb b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Sha‘rānī (d. 972/1565), an Egyptian Shāfi‘ī scholar and proponent of *taṣawwuf*, who would establish his own mystical school. His master was ‘Alī al-Ḥawwāṣ. (Cf. GAL S. II: 464–6).

¹⁷⁹ al-Sha‘rānī, *Laṭā’if al-minan wa-l-ahlāq*: 477.

moon”).¹⁸⁰ Concerning the assertion that she was buried in Egypt, Karbâssî relates that when she was suffering the pain of illness and was asked whether the doctor ought to come to her, Zaynab replied: “We are not among those who look upon the world and upon remaining in it, because we are the people of the house of prophecy, and the most desirable encounter for us is the encounter with our Lord.” Karbâssî notes that the doctor did not come; nor was he able to delay the moment of death.

In spite of evidence for the Egypt thesis, there are other opinions. While Sunnî Muslims with devotion to her prefer the Sayyida Zaynab mosque in Cairo,¹⁸¹ the Shî‘a favour mostly her Damascus mausoleum and most frequented shrine, the Sayyida Zaynab mosque, so large that it has lent its name to the surrounding district of Sayyida Zaynab.¹⁸² “With its golden-domed mausoleum,” writes Sindawi, “two tall 54-metre high minarets and decorated porticoes, her tomb covers a total area of 15,000 m² and can hold up to 5000

¹⁸⁰ Cf. al-WARDÂNÎ Ş., *al-Shî‘a fî miṣr min al-imâm ‘Alî ḥatta al-imâm Ḥumaynî*, Cairo 1993: 91.

¹⁸¹ QUTBUDDIN B.T., “Zaynab bint Ali” in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edn., 2005: 9938.

¹⁸² Szanto notes that the Syrian refugee camp-shrine town of Sayyida Zaynab began as a camp for refugee Palestinians in 1949 but grew incrementally by the settlement of displaced Syrians from the Golan Heights in 1967 and exiled Iraqis in the 1970s and 1980s. It became an important centre of Shî‘i education and pilgrimage when, for various reasons in the 1980s and 1990s, Karbalâ’ and Najaf became inaccessible to non-Iraqi Shî‘i Muslims. Cf. SZANTO E., “Sayyida Zaynab in the State of Exception: Shii Sainthood as ‘Qualified Life’” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2), 2012: 285. It is of note the Ibn Ğubayr (d. 614/1217), travelling in the area of Râwiyya, some kilometres outside of Damascus, takes note of one particular shrine: “Among the religious shrines of the *ahl al-bayt* is the shrine of Umm Kulṭûm, daughter of ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib.” Ibn Ğubayr suggests that this is Zaynab al-Şuġrâ, given the *kunya* Umm Kulṭûm on account of her similarity to Umm Kulṭûm, daughter of Muḥammad; but his laconic “God knows” suggests his lack of certainty. Cf. Ibn Ğubayr., *Rihla*, Brill, Leiden 1907: 280–281.

people.”¹⁸³ A number of contemporary scholars make reference to her tomb there.¹⁸⁴

For the most part, it is hagiography and popular piety that form the bulk of material on the life of Zaynab; these pious legends are numerous, and although such a genre forms a substantial part of most religious traditions, it does not greatly assist us in constructing an account that is rigorously academic. Their presence in more contemporary texts while absent in the classical sources, for example, prevents us from dating some of the traditions, as a way of establishing whether or not they have arisen as a reaction to a particular religious, social or political question. Even in the classical sources, we see an embellishment and augmentation over the centuries, with her role in and around Karbala³, for example, while fairly simple in the earlier texts like al-Ṭabarī, great enhanced in later accounts of the battle, such as those of Ibn Ṭāʾûs, transmitting three hundred years later. Nevertheless, the hagiographic accounts that dominate the later Zaynab literature do give us a glimpse into how she is envisaged at the level of popular piety.

Zaynab is held up by her biographers as among the most abstemious and devout women of her time; Karbâssî recounts how her nephew, the fourth Imâm, transmitted: “My aunt, with all those calamities and ordeals that befell her on our journey to Syria, never relinquished her supererogatory prayers (*namâfil*) at night.”¹⁸⁵ In another report, he noted that during the terrible journey from Kûfa to Syria, his aunt Zaynab, who would ordinarily perform her ob-

¹⁸³ SINDAWI K., “The Zaynabiyya Ḥawza in Damascus and its Role in Shīʿite Religious Instruction” in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. XLV, n. 6 (November 2009): 862–3.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. AMORETTI B.S., “How to Place Women in History. Some Remarks on the Recent Shiite Interest in Women’s Shrines” in *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie, Anno 89, Nr. 1 (2009): 1–12, who speaks at length about her Syrian tomb, and CALZONI I., “Shiite mausoleums in Syria with particular reference to Sayyida Zaynab’s mausoleum” in *Proceedings of the Conference on La Shiʿa nell’Impero Ottomano* (Roma, 15/4/1991), Roma 1993: 191–201.

¹⁸⁵ Also recounted by Shahin, although he provides no reference to any of the classical sources. SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 43.

ligatory (*farâ'id*) and supererogatory prayers standing, prayed sitting down in some of the camp sites, and when he asked the reason for this, replied: "I pray sitting down because of the strain of the pain and the weakness the last three nights" – since she had been sharing whatever food she received with the children because of the small amounts with which they had to make do. A further story is told about her diligence in the matter of supererogatory prayers; that her brother al-Ḥusayn, in his last farewell, exhorted her: "My sister! Do not forget me in the nighttime supererogatory prayers and do not relinquish the nighttime supererogatory prayers even on the night of 'Āshûrâ." Al-Ḥusayn's daughter Fâtima goes on to note that her aunt Zaynab remained standing in her place of prayer all of that night, appealing to her Lord.¹⁸⁶ Nor do the secret prayers of the young Zaynab, whispered to her Lord at night, go unheard and unnoticed by her father 'Alî; among those he attributes to her are: "Praise be to You, possessor of generosity and glory and exaltedness who give and hold back as You will!" Among the prayers which she used to pray during the dead of night, comes the following:

Be praised,¹⁸⁷ You who have garbed and clothed yourself in
might,

¹⁸⁶ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu'ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ'*, 2009: 355.

¹⁸⁷ The phrase *subhâna* or *subhâna-hu* is hard to render in English; literally, it means 'His praises', and could be used as an exclamation of surprise, such as 'Far be it from God!' or 'How far God is from every imperfection!' About the phrase *subhâna Allâb*, Lane notes that it means: "I declare [or celebrate or extol] the remoteness, or freedom, of God [from every imperfection or impurity, or from everything derogatory from his glory, i.e.] from the imputation of there being any equal to Him, or any companion, or anything like unto Him, or anything contrary to Him; or from anything that should not be imputed to Him...[I declare, or celebrate, or extol, His absolute perfection or glory or purity: or extolled be His absolute perfection...].I declare the remoteness of God, or His freedom from evil, or from every evil, and [especially] from the imputation of His having a female companion, and offspring: or, I declare God's being very far removed from all the foul imputations of those who assert

Be praised, who wraps Himself in glory and is generous,
 Be praised, to whom it is not fitting to give glory to any but
 Him, exalted His sublimity,
 Be praised, who enumerates the number of all things in His
 knowledge, His noble character and His power,
 Be praised, possessor of might and blessings, possessor of
 power and generosity!

O God, I ask You by the glories of Your throne¹⁸⁸ and the highest degree of the mercy of Your Book, and by Your greatest name and highest assiduity,¹⁸⁹ and by Your perfect words, which brought about truth and justice, that You bless Muḥammad and the noble and pure family of Muḥammad and that You arrange for me benevolence in this world and the next. God, You are the Living (*al-ḥayy*) and the Subsisting (*al-qayyūm*); You guided me, You feed me and give me to drink, You bring me to die and endow me with life. Forgive me by Your mercy, most Merciful of the merciful.¹⁹⁰

In another prayer, Zaynab offers some theological names for God:

Bedrock, for whom there is no bedrock, Storehouse, for whom there is no storehouse, Support, for whom there is no support, Sanctuary of the weak and Treasure of the poor, Listener to the urgent request, Safety of those drowning and Saviour of the dying, Embellisher and Beautifier, Benefactor and Conferer of benefits, You are the One to whom prostrate the blackness of night and the brightness of day, the rays of the sun, the rustling of the trees and the roar of waters. God, before whom and after whom there is nothing, Who has neither beginning

a plurality of gods.” Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1968, vol. IV: 1290.

¹⁸⁸ Lit. “by the properties wherein consists the title of thy throne to glory or by the places wherein these properties are [as it were] knit together” (cf. Op. cit., vol. V: 2107).

¹⁸⁹ In terms, notes Karbâssî, of assistance, good fortune, providence, but specifically favour.

¹⁹⁰ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anṣâr al-Husayn – al-nisâʿ*, 2009: 356.

nor end, neither equal nor rival, and by the holiness of Your name, which has its signification in human beings, clothed in grandeur and light and majesty, Examiner of truths and Thwarter of idolatry and calamities, and by the name, by which everlasting, eternal life endures, with which there is neither death nor annihilation, and by the holy spirit, and in the hearing of the One present and the sight of the One who penetrates, Crown of dignity, Seal of the prophethood, Attestation of the covenant, God, who has no partner.¹⁹¹

Karbâssî notes that Zaynab was similar to her grandmother, Ḥadiġa bt. Ḥuwaylid who was, he reminds us, without doubt, one of the most beautiful and intelligent of the Qurayshî women, sometimes called ‘queen of the Arabs’ and who was known as ‘the Lady of the valley of Mecca’ (*al-baḥbâʿ*). Muḥammad himself had said that Zaynab was similar to his (maternal) aunt Umm Kulṭûm. Karbâssî tells how one day Fâṭima came to Muḥammad with Zaynab al-Kubrâ. Fâṭima sat next to her father, while Zaynab played in front of him:

Then she fell at the door of the room, looked at her grandfather and he smiled and said to her: “Yes!” She looked at him a second time, and he said to her: “Yes!” She looked at him a third time, and he said to her: “Yes!” She looked at him a fourth time, and he said to her: “No!” Then she wept. Fâṭima said to him: “Messenger of God! By the One who sent you with the truth, what is this ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to Zaynab?” He replied: “Indeed, she asked first if she would be a leader, and I said to her: yes. She asked secondly if she would be excellent in counsel, and I said to her: yes. She asked thirdly if she would be free in the disposal of her affairs, and I said to her: yes. She asked fourthly if she would be entrusted with intercession, and I said: no, that is not permitted except to me.”¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Cf. Q. 6: 163. KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anṣâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâʿ*, 2009: 356.

¹⁹² KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anṣâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâʿ*, 2009: 336–7.

Karbâssi's hagiography, firmly rooted in the pietistic tradition, uses lofty sentiments to describe how Zaynab *al-ʿaqla* grew up in the house of revelation, in the heart (*abdân*) of the prophecy, and in the shelter of the infallible Imâms, ʿAlî, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. She was educated in the school of heaven, the school of the most admirable exemplar for human perfection, the clearest criterion for the believing woman, and who desired that Zaynab be a living example for the rest of the women. She was the image of her mother Fâtîma al-Zahrâ' and an example to be imitated. While she was not immaculate and impeccable (*maʿsûma*) in terms of that infallibility or impeccability (*ʿisma*) that pertains to the fourteen (Muhammad, Fâtîma and the twelve Imâms), she was graced with the minor impeccability, and after her mother, no women was close to her in rank.¹⁹³ She was as the fourth Imâm, ʿAlî b. al-Ḥusayn said of her: "You, by the praise of God, are erudite without an instructor, quick of understanding without being taught."¹⁹⁴

One could understand that the Karbâssi text proposes, in a theology drawn chiefly from pious tradition and hagiography, a number of 'beautiful names' or theological titles for Zaynab, as Zaynab would herself offer a selection of theological epithets for her martyred brother in her famous Kûfa protest. Noting that she personified within herself the ideal, and that magnanimity emanated from her,¹⁹⁵ he lists these titles as 'newborn of the house of revelation and impeccability' (*walîdatu bayt al-wahy wa-l-ʿisma*), 'suckling child of knowledge and wisdom' (*radîʿat al-ʿilm wa-l-ḥikma*), 'foster daughter of abstemiousness and piety' (*rabîbat al-zuhd wa-l-taqwâ*), 'heiress of fluency and eloquence' (*warîtat al-faṣaḥa wa-l-balâgat*), 'possessor of generosity and munificence' (*ṣâhibat al-ğûd wa-l-karam*), 'fountainhead of contemplation and refinement' (*manbaʿ al-fikr wa-l-*

¹⁹³ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâʿ*, 2009: 337.

¹⁹⁴ Words, as recorded by al-Ṭabarsî, spoken by ʿAlî b. al-Ḥusayn after Zaynab's famous Kûfa protest, when he asks his aunt to be silent so that he can speak. It is one of three occasions that she is asked to be silent, and will be noted later in this work. Cf. al-Ṭabarsî, *Kitâb al-iḥtiğâğ ʿalâ abl al-lîğâğ*, vol. II: 305, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 164, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 200.

¹⁹⁵ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâʿ*, 2009: 337.

adab), ‘companion of martyrdom and gallantry’ (*rafīqat al-shahāda wa-l-shahāma*), ‘descendant of boldness and courage’ (*durīyyat al-ḡur’a wa-l-shaḡā’a*), ‘branch of the tree of prophecy’ (*far’ shaḡarat al-nubunnā*),¹⁹⁶ ‘companion of the light of the imamate’ (*qarīn nūr al-imāma*), ‘cradle of honour and chastity’ (*mabḍ al-sharaf wa-l-‘iffā*) and ‘possessor of praiseworthy attributes and lofty merits’ (*dāt al-ṣifāt al-ḥamīda wa-l-mahāsīn al-ḡalīla*). While the titles used to address her in the *ḡiyāra* prayer (used specifically in pilgrimage to her tomb) almost all make reference to her status as daughter of ‘Alī and granddaughter of Muḥammad, these theological titles quite noticeably pertain to her own qualities.

While many of these names have a poetic ring in Arabic (*walīda*, *radī’a*, *rabība*, *warīta*, *ṣāḥiba*, *rafīqa*, *durīyya*) they are not titles conferred upon Zaynab by the classical sources, even the later ones. Nor does Karbāssī refer us to any sources for them.

Both al-Kāshānī and Karbāssī record a frightening vision which Zaynab recounted to her grandfather Muḥammad:

Zaynab went to her grandfather and said: “Grandfather, yesterday I saw a vision! A violent wind emanated, which blackened the world and everything in it, and darkened it, and shook me from side to side. I saw a great tree, and I clung to it because of the force of the wind. Then the wind uprooted it and cast it upon the ground. So I clung to one of the strong branches of that tree, but the wind severed it too. So I clung to another branch, but it broke it too. So I clung to one of two of its boughs, but it broke it too. Then I woke from my sleep.” When he heard her words, Muḥammad wept bitterly, and re-

¹⁹⁶ This is the only one of these titles that find an echo in the classical sources; ‘branch of the tree of prophecy’ is regularly used to describe the Imāms and the *abl al-bayt*. Out of numerous examples, cf. for e.g. al-Qummi., *Tafsīr*, vol. II, bb. 37: 228, al-Saffar., *Baṣā’ir al-daraḡāt fī ‘ulūm al-Muḥammad*, vol. I, nn. 1–3, 6–9: 56–58, al-Kulaynī., *al-Kāfī fī ‘ilm al-dīn*, vol. I, bb. *anna al-a’imma ma’dīn al-‘ilm*, nn. 1.3: 221, Furāt al-Kūfī., *Tafsīr Furāt b. Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī*: 395, al-Mufīd., *al-Irshād fī ma’rifat ḥuḡaḡ Allāh ‘alā al-‘ibād*, vol. II: 168, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā‘iḡīn wa-taḥsirat al-mutta‘iḡīn*, vol. I: 206, al-Ṭabarsī., *I’lām al-warā’ bi-a’lām al-hudā*, vol. I: 508.

plied: “The tree is your grandfather: the first branch is your mother Fâṭima and the second your father ‘Alī. The other two boughs are your brothers (al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn). The world will be blackened by their loss, and you will put on the clothing of mourning because of their calamity.”¹⁹⁷

This story is not found in the classical texts: Karbâssî takes it from al-Baḥrânî.¹⁹⁸ In fact, the theme of the *abl al-bayt* compared to a tree is found in other *abḥādīṭ*, but rarely in the context of a vision attributed to Zaynab. They are, for the most part, quite similar in detail; Muḥammad claims to be the tree, naming Fâṭima as its branch (*farʿ*) or, in some texts, its fruit (*ḥaml*), ‘Alī its seed or fecundation (*laqāḥ*), al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn as its fruits (*tamar*), and those of the *umma* who love them (or sometimes, ‘our Shī’a’) the leaves (*awrāq*) of the tree.¹⁹⁹

Karbâssî relates that she was present at her mother’s death, accepting Fâṭima’s charge that she should care for her two brothers, and relates the popular story concerning her early childhood (*tuḥūla*), when sitting on the lap of her father ‘Alī, who is petting her. ‘Alī said to her: “Say ‘one!’” Zaynab replied ‘one’. Then he said: “Say ‘two!’” But she remained silent, so ‘Alī spoke again: “Speak to me, delight of my eye!” She answered: “My father, I am not able to say ‘two’ with my tongue, treating it in the same manner

¹⁹⁷ AL-KĀSHĀNĪ A., 250 *Karāma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidāt bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 13, KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Muḡam anṣār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisāʾ*, 2009: 337–8.

¹⁹⁸ al-Baḥrânî., *Awālim al-ʿulūm wa-l-maʿārif al-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-aḥbār wal-aqwāl*, vol. XI, bb. 1, n. 3: 947. Precisely the same phrase (رَأَيْتُ الْبَارِحَةَ رُوِيَا) is used by al-Ḥusayn’s daughter Sukayna, as she describes to Yazīd a vision she has had of a castle in Paradise.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. for e.g. al-Ḥākīm al-Nisābūrī., *Kitāb (Talḥīs) al-mustadrak ʿalā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*, vol. III (*Kitāb maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*): 160, Ibn ʿAsākir., *Tārīḥ Dimasḥq*, vol. XLII, bb. 4933 (*ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālīb*): 65, al-Ġawzī., *Kitāb al-mawḏūʿāt min al-aḥādīṭ al-marfūʿa*, vol. II: 5, al-Ḍahabī., *Miẓān al-iʿtidāl fī tarāḡim al-riḡāl*, Part 4: 237, Ibn ʿAsākir., *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimasḥq*, vol XIV, bb. 1566 (*al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālīb*): 168, al-Ṣaffūrī., *Nuẓḥat al-maḡālīs wa-muntaḥab al-naḡāʾis*, vol. II, bb. *manāqib Fâṭima al-Zabrāʾ*: 179–80.

as ‘one’.”²⁰⁰ This, like many other pious stories, is not found in the classical Shi‘î sources.

Yahyâ b. Salîm al-Mâzanî²⁰¹ points out her chastity and refinement during the period of her early childhood and her maidenhood, saying:

I was close to the Commander of the Faithful for a long time and in the vicinity of the house²⁰² in which his daughter Zaynab lived, and by God, I never saw a person with her or heard a sound from her. Whenever she wanted to go out to visit²⁰³ her grandfather the Messenger of God, she would go out at night with al-Ḥasan on her right, and al-Ḥusayn on her left, and the Commander of the Faithful in front of her. Whenever she came near to the noble tomb, the Commander of the Faithful would precede her and extinguish the light of the lamps. Al-Ḥasan once asked him about this, and ‘Alî replied: “I fear that someone will look upon the person of your sister Zaynab.”²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 338, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 63.

²⁰¹ Martyred with al-Ḥusayn at Karbalâ’.

²⁰² The ground-floor room, notes the author in a footnote.

²⁰³ The text uses the word *ziyâra*, indicating that these visits were in the form of a pilgrimage to sites associated with her grandfather, such as his tomb.

²⁰⁴ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 338–9. This is, at best, an anachronistic text, for while as a pious story it attempts to highlight the modesty and devoutness of Zaynab, it is at variance with other pictures we have of her; al-Ṭabarî’s ostensibly eyewitness accounts of her vigorous and visible presence at Karbalâ’, for example, and later, contemporary interpretations of Zaynab (by scholars like Shariati) as the exemplar of the modern woman taking her place in society. Furthermore, as certainly as there are scholars who would support an active role for women in contemporary society, others might employ a story like this to reinforce the need for female seclusion and invisibility. As it stands, Karbâssî is unable to refer us to any classical texts, and this story is carried

Karbâssî recounts another well-known story; one day, Zaynab questions her father, saying: “My father, do you love us?” ‘Alî responds: “How could I not love you, when you are the fruit of my heart?” She replies: “My father, love is for God Most High, and for us, tenderness!”²⁰⁵

It is reported that she had achieved a high level of intelligence by the time she had reached her fifth year, when her grandfather Muḥammad died, in 11/632, followed approximately six months later by the death of Zaynab’s mother Fâṭima. Al-Kâshânî, like Karbâssî quoting the threads of his story from al-Baḥrânî’s *‘Awâlim al-‘ulûm*, notes in his hagiography that all of Zaynab’s upbringing and education were within the prophetic household; she grew up in the ‘house of the prophecy’, was “suckled with the milk of revelation from the breast of al-Zahrâ’,²⁰⁶ the Virgin, and with food from the hand of the nephew of the Messenger.”²⁰⁷ Says al-Kâshânî: “She was raised with a holy upbringing and educated with a spiritual education, clothed in the garments of sublimity and majesty and clad in the cloak of modesty and timidity.”²⁰⁸ He goes on to say that it was the five ‘companions of the cloak’ (*aṣḥâb al-‘abâ’*)²⁰⁹ who

only by a late source, al-Baḥrânî (al-Baḥrânî, *‘Awâlim al-‘ulûm wa-l-ma‘ârif al-aḥwâl min al-âyât wa-l-aḥbâr wal-aqwâl*, vol. XI, bb. 7: 955).

²⁰⁵ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘āḡam anṣâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 339, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 63.

²⁰⁶ In the case of Fâṭima, the appellation al-Zahrâ’ (‘the Radiant’) is directly connected with the themes of light that are suffused throughout her story. Some descriptions of her conception augment the accounts, with depictions of light emanating from God to Muḥammad and then to Fâṭima and ‘Alî. This light passed from her to her sons and subsequently to the other Imâms. Cf. CLOHESSY C., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 94–96.

²⁰⁷ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 14.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ The famous ‘report of the cloak’ (*ḥadīṡ al-kisâ’*), transmitted by numerous Sunnî and Shî‘î texts, on the occasion of the revelation of Q. 33: 3, when Muḥammad spread his cloak over ‘Alî, Fâṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and stated: “These are the members of my Household, and

were concerned with her education, her instruction and her training.²¹⁰

Al-Kâshânî refers us to a number of works; he quotes Ibn Ḥağar al-‘Asqalânî’s *al-Iṣāba* that she was intelligent (‘*âqila*) and abundantly understanding (*labîba*).²¹¹ He directs us to al-‘Allâma al-Barağânî writing in his *Mağâlis al-muttaqîn*,²¹² who notes that the cognitive dignities specific to Zaynab (*al-muqâmât al-‘ifâniyya al-bâṣṣa bi-ṣaynab*) come close to the dignities of the Imamate; and that Zaynab, when she saw the condition of her nephew Zayn al-‘Âbidîn, who had seen the bodies of his father, brothers, closest relatives and the people of his house felled on the ground, butchered like blood sacrifices, his heart agitated and his face pale, set about consoling him. Al-Barağânî reports that it is transmitted in *aḥâdîṯ* from Umm Ayman that it was God Most High who commissioned this from her.²¹³

God has purified them of all uncleanness.” Among the Sunnî transmissions, cf. for e.g. Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad ‘Abd Allâb b. al-‘Abbâs b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib*, n. 3062: 708–709, vol. VI, *Ḥadîṯ Wâṭala b. al-‘Asqa’*, n. 16985: 45, vol. X, *Ḥadîṯ Umm Salama*, n. 26570: 177, n. 26612: 186–187, n. 26659: 197, n. 26808: 228, al-Tirmiḏî., *Sunan*, vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), *Manâqib abl bayt al-nabî*, bb. 77, n. 3789: 341–342, vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. *fî faḍl Fâṭima bt. Muḥammad*, n. 3870: 388, al-Hâkim al-Nisâbûrî., *Kitâb (Talḥîs) al-mustadrak ‘alâ al-ṣaḥîḥayn*, vol. II, Part 2, bk. 27 (*Kitâb al-tafsîr*), *Tafsîr sûrat al-aḥzâb*, nn. 3615, 3616: 489, vol. III, Part 3, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥâba*), *Manâqib amîr al-mu‘minîn ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*, n. 4639: 125, Ibn ‘Asâkir., *Târîḥ madînat Dimasḩ*, vol. XLII, bb. 4933 (*‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 98, 100, 112, 114, Ibn al-‘Aṭîr., *Usd al-ğâba fî ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. VI, bb. 7175 (*Fâṭima bt. Rasûl Allâb*): 225, al-Suyûtî., *al-Durr al-mantûr fî al-tafsîr bi-l-ma‘tûr*, vol. V, *Sûrat al-aḥzâb*, v. 33: 377.

²¹⁰ Cf. al-Baḥrânî., *‘Avâlim al-‘ulûm wa-l-ma‘ârif al-aḥwâl min al-âyât wa-l-aḥbâr wal-aqwâl*, vol. XI, bb. 5: 949. These sentiments are not found in early sources.

²¹¹ al-‘Asqalânî., *al-Iṣāba fî tamyîz al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. IV, n. 510: 314–315.

²¹² Muḥammad Taqî al-Barağânî, d. 1263/1847. A prominent Shî‘î cleric in Qajar Persia, his work details the sufferings of the Imâms.

²¹³ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 15.

Al-Kâshânî points us to a work entitled *al-Ṭirâḡ al-Muddabab*,²¹⁴ which offers a list of the interior cognizance and spiritual dignities of Zaynab; her virtues, her benefactions, her traits, her sublimity, her knowledge, her way of acting, her impeccability, her modesty, her light, her brightness her nobility and her beauty, all of which follow those of her mother and proxy. He also takes note of a work entitled *Ġannât al-ḥulûd*,²¹⁵ Zaynab, in her eloquence, her abstemiousness, her management and her courage, was close to her father and her mother. The arrangement of the affairs of the *abl al-bayt* and even of the Hâshimids after the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn was under her counsel and management.²¹⁶

Al-Kâshânî makes reference to Ibn ‘Inaba’s *Ansâb al-Ṭâlibiyyîn*, which informs us that Zaynab was distinguished by her abundant kindness, her sublime qualities, her praiseworthy, traits, her radiant characteristics, her conspicuous good deeds and her pure virtues.²¹⁷ He refers to al-Suyûtî’s *al-Risâlat al-Zaynabiyya*, which claims that Zaynab was born in the lifetime of her grandfather, the Messenger of God, was abundantly understanding, intelligent and powerful of heart, and that al-Ḥasan was born eight years before

²¹⁴ *Kitâb al-ṭirâḡ al-muddabab fî aḥbâr al-sayyida Zaynab* by ‘Abbâs al-Mustawfi. Shahin ascribes this work to al-Râwandî, but without further details.

²¹⁵ *Kitâb ḡannât al-ḥulûd* by Muḥammad Riḍâ b. Muḥammad Mu’min Imâmi Ḥâtûn Âbâdî Iṣfahânî.

²¹⁶ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 16.

²¹⁷ “Among the most virtuous of all women,” says al-‘Âmilî, describing her virtue as more renowned and distinct even than all that is remembered and written about her. He notes especially that Zaynab was aware of the majesty of her circumstances, the greatness of her standing, the power of her argument, the agility of her intelligence, the persistence of her tragedy, the fluency of her tongue and the eloquence of her speech. cf. al-‘Âmilî., *Aḡân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 137.

Muḥammad's 11/632 death, al-Ḥusayn seven and Zaynab five (and thus in 6/627).²¹⁸

He directs us to a work by al-Nisâbûrî entitled *al-Risalat al-ʿAlawiyya*;²¹⁹ here we are told that in her eloquence, her fluency, her abstemiousness and her worship, Zaynab was the daughter of ʿAlî, and just like her father al-Murtaḍâ and her mother al-Zahrâʾ. He refers us to the work *Fâtima bint Muḥammad* by ʿUmar Abû al-Naṣr al-Lubnânî, published in Beirut, in which he claims that Zaynab demonstrated that she was one of the greatest of the *ahl al-bayt* in terms of courage, eloquence and fluency. Her renown was spread, not only by her behaviour on the day of Karbalâʾ, but also after it, with the example she gave by argument, power, courage and eloquence; the chroniclers of history and the books bear witness to her.²²⁰

In another didactic story not found in any classical text, Karbâssî recounts that Zaynab used to recite parts of the Qurʾân within earshot of her father ʿAlî, and it seemed proper to her to ask him about the exegesis (*tafsîr*) of some of the verses. This she did, and ʿAlî, as a result of her luminous intelligence, went on to allude to some of the perils and dangers awaiting her in the future, in order to strengthen her so that she would not be dismayed by them. Zaynab, serious and composed, informed him that she already knew of these things, having been informed of them by her mother Fâtima, in order to prepare her for her future.²²¹

²¹⁸ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 16. However, I do not find these details in the al-Suyûṭî text.

²¹⁹ Neither Sezgin nor Brockelmann attribute a work by this name to Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allâh b. Muḥammad al-Ḥâkim al-Nisâbûrî b. al-Bayyîʿ (d. 404/914: cf. GAL S. I: 276), if this is in fact the al-Nisâbûrî to whom al-Kâshânî is referring. There is such a work written by Abû al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmân b. ʿUṭmân al-Karâġakî al-Shîʿî (d. 499/1057: cf. GAL S. I: 602), although not accredited to him by either Sezgin or Brockelmann.

²²⁰ AL-KÂSHÂNÎ A., *250 Karâma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidât bayt al-nubunna*, 2008: 16.

²²¹ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anṣâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâʾ*, 2009: 339.

In speaking of her intelligence, her virtue and her knowledge (*maʿrifā*), al-Kāshānī refers us to Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr's work *Balāġāt al-nisāʾ*;²²² Ṭayfūr transmits a *ḥadīth* from Aḥmad b. Ġaʿfar b. Sulaymān al-Hāshimī reporting Zaynab as saying: "The one who intends to have creatures as his intercessors before God, let him praise Him. Do you not listen to His words: God hears the one who praises him? So, fear God for His power over you and be shy before Him for His closeness to you."²²³ While the *ḥadīth* is found in works such as *Balāġāt al-nisāʾ* and *Aʿyān al-shīʿa*, Karbāssī notes that he is unable to find this extant in the biographies either of Zaynab or of Umm Kulthūm.²²⁴ It is transmitted in popular hagiographies, but in few classical texts.

Karbāssī recounts another popular story:

One day in Medina, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were sitting, remembering something they had heard from their grandfather:²²⁵ "The lawful (*al-ḥalāl*) is evident and the unlawful (*al-ḥarām*) is evident, but between them there are obscure matters about which many people have no knowledge. Whoever protects himself from these obscure things purifies his religion and his honour. Whoever falls into these obscure things is like a shepherd pasturing around the prohibited herbage (*al-ḥimā*),

²²² Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (d. 280/893: cf. GAL S. I: 210). Brockelmann transcribes the work incorrectly as *Balāġāt al-nisāʾ*.

²²³ Cf. al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. VII: 140, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 64, AL-KĀSHĀNĪ A., *250 Karāma li-l-sayyida Zaynab wa-sayyidāt bayt al-nubuwva*, 2008: 17, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr., *Balāġāt al-nisāʾ*: 62.

²²⁴ KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Muḡam anṣār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisāʾ*, 2009: 358.

²²⁵ This *ḥadīth* is found in, among others, al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. I, ch. 2 (*Kitāb al-imān*), bb. 39, n. 52: 83, Abū Dāwūd., *Sunan*, vol. IV, ch. 22 (*Kitāb al-buyūʿ*), bb. 3, nn. 3329, 3330: 60–2, al-Tirmidī., *Ġāmiʿ*, vol. III, ch. 12 (*Abwāb al-buyūʿ*), bb. 1, n. 1205: 21, al-Nasāʾī., *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. VI, ch. 51 (*Kitāb al-asrābā*), bb. 50, n. 5713: 363–4. However, Karbāssī in his transmission has left out a number of crucial words, so that the *ḥadīth* loses its sense. Instead, it is reproduced here from al-Buḥārī. Cf. KARBĀSSĪ M.S., *Muḡam anṣār al-Ḥusayn – al-nisāʾ*, 2009: 341. It is to be noted that the classical Shīʿī sources do not recount this story concerning Zaynab and her brothers.

on the verge of falling into it. Beware! Every king has a prohibited herbage! Beware! The prohibited herbage of God on His earth is His forbidden things. Beware! In the body there is a piece of flesh; when it is healthy, the whole body is healthy and when it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt. Beware! It is the heart! When Zaynab heard their conversation, she intervened, saying: "Listen, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn! Your grandfather, the Messenger of God was well instructed²²⁶ in the morals of God. God instructed²²⁷ him and perfected His instruction. He himself said: My Lord instructed me and perfected my instruction, as he was prepared in this manner by the Lord of the worlds for bearing the message of religion and the bidding to the worship of God the Mighty, whom "*Naught is as His likeness; and He is the Hearer, the Seer*".²²⁸ Who is like my grandfather, the Prophet, the Arab, the Hâshimî, the Qurayshî, whom God Most High preferred²²⁹ and whom He chose to make evident to the people the path of life, of good and evil, in his agreeable and pleasant way and his elevated, gratifying explanation, overflowing with mildness, sympathy, affection and compassion." Then she gave herself free reign, saying: "The lawful is evident and the unlawful is evident, but between them there are obscure matters, so that there are three degrees in religion,

²²⁶ The Arabic *adab* means 'manners', 'etiquette', 'right conduct' or 'norms of right conduct'; pre-Islamic Arabs used the word to mean 'a praiseworthy habit', 'a hereditary norm of conduct', 'a custom', learned from the ancestors who were looked upon as models. Islam would refine the pre-Islamic Arab meaning, which then became 'high quality of soul', 'good upbringing', 'urbanity', and 'courtesy'. To be *mu'addab*, as Zaynab here describes her grandfather Muḥammad, is to be 'well-mannered', 'civil', 'urbane'.

²²⁷ The verb is the second-form *addaba-yu'addibu*, meaning 'to teach someone the discipline of the mind and the acquisition of good qualities of mind or soul'; cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. I, 1968: 34.

²²⁸ Q. 42: 11.

²²⁹ The verb for 'preferred' is the eighth form *iṣṭafā-yastafī*, meaning 'to choose, select'. In Q. 3: 42, the same verb is used twice in the same verse of Maryam.

the lawful, the unlawful and the ambiguous. The lawful is what God Most High has declared permissible, in that the noble Qur'ân came to permit it, and the Messenger made it evident in his *Sunna*; such as the exoneration of buying and selling, or the performance of the prayer (*al-ṣalât*) at its appointed times, or the almsgiving (*al-ṣakât*) the fasting (*sawm*) of Ramaḍân, and the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the House for those in a position to do so, and the abandonment of falsehood, hypocrisy and faithlessness.²³⁰ The unlawful is what the Qur'ân prohibits, and is contrary to the lawful, while the ambiguous is something that is neither lawful nor unlawful. The believer who desires for himself happiness in the world and felicity in the Hereafter is obliged to discharge what God has made incumbent upon him, and travel on the road of the wise Qur'ân, and emulate my grandfather the Prophet, taking him as model, and keep away from the path of uncertainties as far as he is able. The one who is on guard against uncertainties purifies his religion and his honour; his religion and his honour become sound, and his honour immaculate and pure. He serves his Lord with pure worship and “*Surely pure religion is for Allah only*”.²³¹ However, the one travels on the road of uncertainties will not be safe from his foot slipping and falling into what God has forbid-

²³⁰ This sounds like Zaynab catechizing her brothers in the tenets of their religion, as she lists four of what would eventually be definitively established as the five ‘pillars’ (*arkân al-islâm*) of Sunni Islam, omitting the first, the ‘bearing witness’ (*shahâda*). It would be long after the death of Zaynab that the *imnâ ‘asharî* Shi‘a would define their five central pillars, as noted by Haider, as the belief in one God (*tawhîd*), in Muḥammad as the last Prophet (*nubuwwa*), in the Day of Judgment (*yanm al-dîn*), in God being just in a manner humans can rationally understand (*‘adl*) and in the essentiality of the divinely-inspired *a’imma* (Imâms) descended from Muḥammad. Cf. HAIDER N., *Shi‘i Islam: An Introduction*, 2014: 1. To these they add ten primary duties, which include not only the four pillars mentioned by Zaynab, but also the concepts of enjoining the good (*amr bi-l-ma‘rûf*) and forbidding what is evil (*nahî ‘an al-munkar*), both of which find a resonance in this story.

²³¹ Q. 39: 3.

den. Every king has a prohibited herbage within the realm of his dominion, and the prohibited herbage of the King of kings, Creator of the heavens and the earth and what they contain, is His forbidden things. For this reason (the Messenger) said: ‘Avoid the forbidden things and you will be the most worshipful of the people’.²³² Therefore, God has given man a piece of flesh and a refined jewel; when it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, pure from filth and malady and disobedience of the Creator, the Greatest, Lord of the worlds. This is the heart. When the heart is sound, its adherent is vigilant in the affairs of his religion and the principles of its law and sees all the happiness in the keeping to the guidance of the Qur’ân and the *Sunna*. On the Day of Judgment, he will be among the victorious. Our life on earth is a stage of the journey leading man either to Paradise or to the Fire. There is neither censure after death nor home after the world except for Paradise or the Fire.”²³³

Karbâssî recounts that that sometime in 56/676, Zaynab made a pilgrimage to the tomb of her grandfather Muḥammad, and there overheard Umayyad governor ‘Amr b. Sa‘îd al-Ashdaq saying: “The lawful is evident and the unlawful is evident, but between them there are obscure matters about which many people have no knowledge.” At once she challenged him, saying: “But, are you Nu‘mân b. Bashîr?” When he replied in the negative, she ordered him to be silent and not speak, saying that should he want to speak, he should say: “On the authority of Nu‘mân b. Bashîr, the Messenger of God said: The lawful (*al-ḥalâl*) is evident.”²³⁴

‘Abd Allâh b. al-‘Abbâs transmitted that Zaynab recited the words of the Most High: “O thou wrapped up in thy raiment! Keep vigil the night long, save a little – A half thereof, or abate a little thereof, Or add (a little) thereto – and chant the Qur’an in

²³² A truncated version of a *ḥadîth* found in al-Tirmidî: “Guard against forbidden things and you will be the most worshipful of the people” (al-Tirmidî., *Ġâmi‘*, vol. IV, ch. 34 (*Abwâb al-zuhd*), bb. 2, n. 2305: 343.

²³³ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ğam anşâr al-Husayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 341–3.

²³⁴ Op. cit.: 354.

measure”²³⁵ as far as the words of the Most High: “as do a party of those with thee”.²³⁶ Then she said: “We share with our grandfather in the words of the Most High: “as do a party of those with thee”. We, by God’s favour, are members of that party.”²³⁷ Al-Ḥasan responded to his sister by saying: “How blessed you are, pure one (al-tâhira)! Truly, you are a branch of the two youths from the blessed tree of prophecy and of the treasure trove of the noble message.”²³⁸

Karbâssî in fact attributes to Zaynab a number of incidents, which in other sources are attributed to her sister; he transmits from al-Mufid’s *Kitâb al-irshâd*, for example, but after the name ‘Umm Kulţûm’, he inserts in brackets the name ‘Zaynab’. However, al-Mufid is quite clear that there are two daughters, and since he transmits information about Zaynab, we can presume that when he uses the name Umm Kulţûm, he means Zaynab al-Şuġrâ. Thus, Karbâssî greatly increases the bulk of sayings of and encounters with Zaynab al-Kubrâ, but greatly diminishes the status and import of Umm Kulţûm. These incidents are especially around the three days leading up to the assassination of ‘Alî and the immediate aftermath. So, for example, Karbâssî carries a long transmission from *Bihâr al-anwâr* about ‘Alî breaking his fast in the house of Umm Kulţûm on the 19th night of Ramađân; while Karbâssî insists that it is Zaynab, *Bihâr al-anwâr* does not, and Ladak thinks this is Umm Kulţûm, not Zaynab.²³⁹

This is, mostly, hagiography, carried by standard works, but with few substantial references to the classical texts of Sunnî and Shî‘î Islam. Nonetheless, hagiography is not without value, expressing as it does important elements of popular piety. As Ayoub notes:

²³⁵ Q. 73: 1–4.

²³⁶ Q. 73: 20.

²³⁷ KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Mu‘ġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ’*, 2009: 354.

²³⁸ Op. cit.: 343. This title (*ma’din al-risâla*) is one of the theological names that Zaynab confers upon al-Ḥusayn during her Kûfa address.

²³⁹ al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLII, bb. 127: 276, LADAK J., *The Hidden Treasure. Lady Umm Kulthum, Daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima*, 2011: n.p.

What criterion, then, must the historian, and especially the historian of religion, use in examining the various traditions purporting to relate an event of great significance for the religious life of so many people over so many centuries...? It will not do...to limit ourselves to the bare facts as we see them, because even they have to be arbitrarily chosen. Nor can we, to be sure, take all traditions to be factual data. We must, however, choose our facts, often including those facts which, while to us they do not seem historically valid, were nonetheless considered as such by the community...²⁴⁰

Since the aim and scope of this work is an attempt to construct a theology and spirituality through an examination of Zaynab's life at the level of the texts, I have treated them specifically as religious texts and sacrosanct documents, which, read together, espouse a purposely numinous language to forge an enticing and attractive picture of Zaynab. Nevertheless, it will be by means of the more definitive and eye-witness events around Karbalâ', to which we must now turn, that we will fashion a Zaynabian theology and spirituality.

²⁴⁰ AYOUB M., *Redemptive Suffering in Islam. A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Ashura in Twelver Shi'ism*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague 1978: 137.

CHAPTER TWO.

THE PRE-KARBALĀ' NARRATIVES

In terms of a chronology of the events around Karbalā' in which we are able to situate the person of Zaynab, al-Ṭabarī in his *Kitāb al-bār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* provides the following schema:¹

1. He omits Zaynab's pre-Karbalā' vision al-Ḥuzaymiyya.
2. Zaynab hears the clamour of battle on the afternoon of Thursday 9th Muḥarram.
3. al-Ḥusayn sends his brother al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī to request a respite from the enemy forces, now fast advancing under pressure from Ibn Ziyād, so that the night of the 9th could be spent in prayer. A delay is granted by ʿUmar b. Saʿd, who is commanding the battle.
4. A dirge sung by al-Ḥusayn in front of his tent is heard by ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn and Zaynab.
5. After the morning prayer on Friday 10th Muḥarram, battle is enjoined. Both al-Ṭabarī and his editor are wrong; it was a Friday, rather than a Wednesday or a Saturday, as confirmed by other transmitters such as al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī.²
6. al-Ḥusayn sends his brother al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAlī and his son ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn to calm the women, who have been seized by panic at a farewell address delivered by al-Ḥusayn.

¹ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 112–164.

² al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn wa-tabṣīrat al-muttaʿiẓīn*: 419. Cf. also Sibṭ al-Ġawzi., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣāʾiṣ al-aʿimma*: 212, 216.

7. The threat by Shimr b. Dī al-Ġawshan to burn the tents of the women and children.
8. The death of ‘Alī al-Akbar b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, ostensibly al-Ḥusayn’s eldest son, and the emergence of a grieving Zaynab onto the battlefield.
9. The emergence of a young boy, whose face is like the first splinter of the moon. He is armed with a sword, and is wearing a shirt and waistcloth, and a pair of sandals, one of the straps of which (the left) is broken. He dies crying out “Uncle!” Al-Ḥusayn’s reaction to his death is intense. The boy is named al-Qâsim b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭâlib; curiously, Zaynab is not recorded as reacting his death.
10. The killing of al-Ḥusayn’s infant son, ‘Abd Allah b. al-Ḥusayn, sitting on his father’s knee; some accounts include Zaynab in the story.
11. The emergence and killing of an unidentified young man from the family of al-Ḥusayn; clutching a tent pole and wearing a waistcloth and a shirt, he is patently frightened, looking anxiously to the right and left. There are two pearls in his ears, which swing at every movement of his head.
12. The emergence of the boy whom Zaynab, despite an order from al-Ḥusayn, is unable to restrain. He is killed by Baḥr b. Ka‘b, crying for his mother; al-Ḥusayn calls him ‘nephew’.
13. The death of al-Ḥusayn, possibly killed by Sinân b. Anas, although others, especially Shimr b. Dī al-Ġawshan, are named as chief culprit.
14. The young and sickly ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn has his life saved by Ḥumayd b. Muslim, who dissuades Shimr b. Dī al-Ġawshan from murdering ‘a boy’.
15. Sinân b. Anas, described as ‘a poet’ and ‘slightly insane’, goes to ‘Umar b. Sa‘d’s tent and sings an appalling poem about being rewarded for killing al-Ḥusayn. He is severely chastised by ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, suggesting the somber mood that prevails immediately after the battle.
16. On the same day (Friday 10th Muḥarram), al-Ḥusayn’s head is despatched with Ḥawalī b. Yazīd and Ḥumayd b. Muslim al-Azdī to Ibn Ziyād. The next day (Saturday 11th Muḥarram) the bodies of

the dead are buried. By all accounts, on Sunday 12th Muḥarram the departures from Karbalā' to Kūfa with the women take place.

17. Zaynab's great lament as the departing women pass the graves or the battle litter (rather than the actual corpses) of al-Ḥusayn and his companions; in fact, al-Ṭabarī has already reported that the bodies had been buried on the previous day by members of the Banū Asad.

1. A NIGHT AT AL-ḤUZAYMIYYA

The night voices heard by Zaynab at al-Ḥuzaymiyya comprise, for all intents and purposes, the first significant moment in the story of al-Ḥusayn's sister at Karbalā' and fit methodically into an already well-established pattern of dreams and auguries that began before al-Ḥusayn's birth and continued after his martyrdom. The incident is found in, among others, the narratives of al-Ḥawārizmī and Ibn Shaḥrāshūb, and is transmitted by al-Maḡlisī and al-Āmilī.³ It is missing, however, from the accounts of al-Ṭabarī, even though he dedicates a substantial amount of energy to describing al-Ḥusayn's journey from Mecca to Karbalā', and to some of the well-meaning supporters (such as 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and 'Abd Allāh b. Ğa'far b. al-Muṭṭalib) who tried to dissuade him from continuing. Al-Mufid and Ibn Ṭā'ūs also omit the account.

Al-Ḥusayn is still *en route* from Mecca to Karbalā', a 913-mile (1470 kilometres) journey, and arrives a place called al-Ḥuzaymiyya, not quite halfway to Karbalā', where he encamps for a day and a night. It is difficult to determine Zaynab's mindset at this stage of the journey, although some of her words and reactions suggest strongly that she has not yet fully grasped the outcome of these events. This is not to suggest that Zaynab had forgotten the numerous predictions of her brother's eventual martyrdom; what is not certain is whether she realized that his envisioned end would come as Karbalā'. Some people had certainly attempted to dissuade

³ al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fī ḥurūġ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilā al-ʿIrāq*: 323–4, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb, *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, *faṣl fī maqatali-hi*: 95, al-Maḡlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37, n. 2: 372, al-Āmilī, *Aḡyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. VII: 137.

al-Ḥusayn from undertaking the journey; one of these was Zaynab's husband 'Abd Allāh b. Ğa'far, in bad health and who, unsuccessful in deterring al-Ḥusayn, would send his wife Zaynab and two of their sons, 'Awn and Muḥammad, to accompany him.⁴

It is here, at al-Ḥuzamiyya, that an agitated Zaynab tells her brother that she has heard a voice or voices calling in the night in a lament she does not understand:

O eye, truly, be extravagant in effort, for who will weep over the martyrs after me, over⁵ a people conveyed by death, precisely to the achievement of a promise sworn?

Al-Ḥusayn's response is a laconic declaration that all that has been decreed will come to be.

A lament on the night air by unknown voices is a prevalent genre in the Karbalā' story. In his *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* for example, al-Qummī dedicates an entire chapter to the lament of the *ġinn* for al-Ḥusayn after his death.⁶ These dirges consist of pithy verses, put on the lips of the *ġinn* by al-Qummī and most often heard in the night. A number of these are transmitted on the authority of Umm Salama: "I heard the *ġinn* lamenting over al-Ḥusayn," she is reported to have said, and, in another version: "Since the death of the Prophet, I never heard the lament of the *ġinn* except at night..."⁷

⁴ al-Maġlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 366.

⁵ al-Ḥawārizmī's text reads, correctly, *'alā*, compared to some others which read *ilā*.

⁶ Ibn Qūlūya al-Qummī, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, bb. 28, n. 23: 187, bb. 29, n.n. 1–10: 189–197. A collective noun, of disputed origin but possibly from the Latin *genius*, *ġinn* refers to corporeal beings made of mist or flame (although they can take on different visible forms), endowed with intellect and imperceptible to the senses (the Arabic root *ġanna* carries the sense of concealment). Belief in these sometimes mischievous, sometimes malevolent spirit creatures predates Islam, and they form part of those whom Muḥammad is sent to save (cf. Q. 51: 56).

⁷ Cf. for e.g. Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. XIV, bb. 1566: 242 for a *ḥadīth* in which similar lamentation poetry is put into the mouth of "a caller who cried out at night." Cf. also al-Haytamī, *Maḡma' al-ḥawā'id wa-manba' al-fawā'id*, vol. IX, bb. 95 (*Manāqib al-Ḥusayn*), n.n. 15179, 15180

Two things cause the al-Ḥuzamiyya incident to stand out: the first is that it is sparsely transmitted in the classical texts, even among the Shī'a, and the second is that the dirge is particularly close to similar laments heard by Umm Salama and others after al-Ḥusayn's death at Karbalā'. Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'ṣmān, Ibn Qūlūya al-Qummī, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb (transmitting from al-Nisābūrī and al-Ṭūsī), Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, al-Baḥrānī, al-Maḡlisī and al-Baḥrānī⁸ all place this verse in the mouths of the *ḡinn*, whom Umm Salama (or sometimes other people in Medina) hear in the night after Karbalā'. Al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb, al-Ġazā'irī, al-Maḡlisī and al-Baḥrānī⁹ also place the verse on the lips of an un-

(Maymūna, not Umm Salama), 15181: 234, al-Mufid., *al-Amālī li-l-Mufid*, n. 7: 350, al-Ṭūsī., *al-Amālī fī al-ḥadīth*, bb. 3, n. 50–131: 91, al-Ṭabarsī., *Kitāb al-iḥtiḡāḡ 'alā ahl al-ligāḡ*, vol. II: 305, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *fī āyāti-hi ba'da wafāti-hi*: 69–70, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 378, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 147, bb. 43: 236–237, bb. 44: 276 for similar accounts of unidentified speakers.

⁸ al-Nu'ṣmān b. Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr b. Aḥmad b. Ḥayyūn al-Tamīmī al-Qāḍī Abū Ḥanīfa al-Shī'a (d. 363/974: cf. GAL S. I: 324, although Brockelmann names the work differently) in his *Sharḥ al-aḥbār fī faḍā'il al-a'imma*, vol. III, n. 1107: 167, Ibn Qūlūya al-Qummī., *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, bb. 29, n. 1: 93, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'iḡīn wa-taḥsīrat al-mutta'iḡīn*, vol. I, n. 3 [409]: 388, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fī āyāti-hi*: 62, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*: 107, Ḥāshim b. Sulaymān b. Ismā'il b. 'Abd al-Ġawād b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥusaynī al-Baḥrānī (d. 1107/1695: cf. GAL S. II: 506, 533) in his *Madīnat al-ma'āḡīz fī muḡā'iḡ al-a'imma al-aḥbār*, vol. IV: 121, 194, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 43, n. 8: 238, vol. LX, bb. 2, n. 3: 65, al-Baḥrānī., *Awālim al-'ulūm wa-l-ma'ārif al-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-aḥbār wal-aqwāl*, vol. IV, n. 3: 482, transmitting from al-Ṣadūq (cf. al-Ṣadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*, n. 2: 139).

⁹ al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fī ḥurūḡ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilā al-ʿIrāq*, n. 7: 323–324, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fī maqṭali-hi*: 95, Ni'ṣmat Allāh al-Ġazā'irī (d. 1112/1701) in his *Riyāḍ al-abrār fī manāqib al-a'imma al-aḥbār*, vol. I: 217, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 372, al-Baḥrānī., *Awālim al-'ulūm wa-l-ma'ārif al-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-aḥbār wal-aqwāl*, vol. II, n. 12: 961, vol. IV: 223.

known person or people, possibly *ġimm*, although this is not clarified, heard by Zaynab on the night at al-Ḥuzamiyya.

In his *Maqṭal*, al-Muqarram, while ascribing this verse to an unknown voice heard by Zaynab on the night air in al-Ḥuzamiyya and referring us to Ibn Namâ's *Muṭîr al-abḥzân*, attributes a remarkably similar verse heard recited by a voice on the night of al-Ḥusayn's death by Umm Salama, and directs us to Ibn 'Asâkir, al-Hayṭamî and al-Suyûṭî:

O eyes! This is a day for your tears,
 So cry hard and spare not.
 Who after me shall the martyrs mourn,
 Over folks led by their fates
 To a tyrant in the reign of slaves?¹⁰

What, then, did Zaynab hear on the night air? In the al-Ḥuzamiyya narratives, there is no indication, as there is in the Umm Salama accounts, of whose voice has called out. It is not unreasonable to imagine that she heard what a number of others would report having heard; unidentified voices on the night air, bewailing al-Ḥusayn's fate. Judging by this and by later events, it is fair to say that Zaynab has not yet fully grasped the extreme jeopardy of her brother's situation. This will be seen especially in her growing sense of panic during these pre-Karbalâ' days. A failure to appreciate this trepidation would be to do her a disservice. Zaynab is embarking upon a twofold journey. The physical journey to Karbalâ' is the outer shell; the more decisive journey is the existential one, in which Zaynab is becoming Zaynab, that is, she is being forged into that woman who, standing in front of Ibn Ziyâd and Yazîd, will draw on all her inner strength and help her brother to save and to lead Islam. To negate her fear and doubt is to deny that crucial existential journey, which is far more common to the lives of most people than is the physical one.

¹⁰ Ibn 'Asâkir., *Târîḫ madînat Dimashq*, vol XIV, bb. *al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*: 241, al-Hayṭamî., *Mağma' al-ẓawâ'id wa-manba' al-fawâ'id*, vol. IX, bb. 95 (*Manâqib al-Ḥusayn*), n. 15181: 234, al-Suyûṭî., *al-Ḥaṣâ'is al-kubrâ*, vol. II: 215. Cf. AL-JIBOURI Y.T., (trans.), *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, 2014: 238–9.

There are people who have turned Zaynab into a fearless superheroine, tenacious and assured. This may be useful for some political discourse or social narrative, but it is not a true representation of the Zaynab of the texts. The Zaynab of al-Ḥuzamiyya is a woman who has not yet fully comprehended the final outcome of the Karbalā' event. As already noted, while there is a whole genre of dreams, visions and angelic visitations, to some of which Zaynab is privy, of the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn, those that pinpoint Karbalā' as the place of his death of fewer. While Zaynab may have been aware of his impending death, some of her words and actions, noted through the course this text suggest that hers was a swelling realization that the hour of his martyrdom had arrived. As the journey progresses there will be a growing cognizance that there is no turning back, again, seen especially in some of the words she speaks and some of her reactions to incidents. However, the Zaynab of al-Ḥuzamiyya is a markedly different woman from the one who will stand before Ziyād, or who will volunteer to be killed before anyone harms the new Imām, or who tells Yazīd what a savage he was. That is the Zaynab still to come.

2. RUMOURS OF WAR

A second decisive pre-battle moment for Zaynab, in which we are offered a clear picture of a genuinely distressed woman, is transmitted by al-Ṭabarī, who carries Abū Miḥnaf's report from the Shi'ī traditionist 'Abd Allāh b. Sharīk al-ʿĀmirī.¹¹ Hearing the noise of the approaching army on the day before the battle, Zaynab comes up to al-Ḥusayn, seated in front of his tent. She asks him if he has heard the distant noise; in reply, he tells her that he has had a vision, while asleep, of Muḥammad, who informed him: "You are coming to us." Zaynab is distraught, crying out: "Woe is me!" Her brother replies: "Woe is not for you, sister."

¹¹ 'Abd Allāh b. Sharīk al-ʿĀmirī (narrated from Imāms or their Companions and died in the first half of the 2nd/8th century). Cf. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 111–112.

The story is recounted by many of the Sunnî historians, who place it sometime after the *‘asr* prayer¹² on the day before the battle, therefore 9th Muḥarram. Al-Ḥusayn is sitting in front of his tent, legs drawn up and garment around him, ostensibly cleaning his sword and preparing it for battle, but in fact dozing off, his head dropping drowsily. His sister Zaynab hears the threatening noise of the approaching army, and goes to wake him, since he has not been roused by the clamour that so disturbs his sister – that of an arriving enemy force – to ask if he has not heard how near they are. “Do you not hear the sounds coming closer?”¹³ she asks. Al-Ḥusayn lifts his head and says: “I saw the Messenger of God while asleep, and he said to me: You are coming to us!” She strikes her face and cries out: “My woe!” Al-Ḥusayn replies: “Woe is not for you, my sister. Calm down and may the Merciful be merciful to you!”¹⁴

In al-Fattāl al-Nisâbûrî’s transmission,¹⁵ the sister is unnamed, but we may presume her to be Zaynab. Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, on the other hand, changes the chronology, putting the whole scene of al-Ḥusayn dozing later than the other transmitters, separating it from Zaynab hearing the sound of the approaching army and from her grieving over the dirge her brother sings. According to his narration, al-Ḥusayn is seated in front of his tent sleeping. He awakens and says to Zaynab: “My sister, I have just seen my grandfather Muḥammad and my father ‘Alî and my mother Fâtîma al-Zahrâ’ and my brother al-Ḥasan, and they said: Ḥusayn, you are coming to us soon” (in some transmitters, he notes, ‘tomorrow’).¹⁶ In practically all the other transmitters, al-Ṭabarî, Ibn al-Aṭîr, Ibn Kaṭîr, as well as numerous Shî‘î authors,¹⁷ this incident occurs just after the

¹² Thus, somewhere between the midday prayer and sunset.

¹³ al-Fattāl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâ‘izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta‘izîn*: 183.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 416–418 (who also notes that all his sisters wept upon hearing the dirge), Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XII: 529.

¹⁵ al-Fattāl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâ‘izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta‘izîn*: 416.

¹⁶ Ibn Ṭâ’ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-ṭujfûf*: 55.

¹⁷ Cf. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 112, al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma‘rifat buḡağ Allâb ‘alâ al-‘ibâd*, vol. II, bb.

‘*asr*’ prayer on the afternoon of 9th Muḥarram. Except for al-Ḥawārizmī, who puts it after the lament al-Ḥusayn has sung in front of his tent¹⁸ and Ibn Ṭā’ūs, who separates it from Zaynab hearing a noise,¹⁹ the transmitters are agreed upon almost all the details.

In the moments he was asleep, al-Ḥusayn has had a vision of his grandfather Muḥammad, or perhaps all of the ‘people of the cloak’, whom Muḥammad, in a moment that is pivotal for the theology of Shi‘ī Islam, once gathered about him and proclaimed: “These are the people of my house.”²⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, al-Mufid, al-

nuzūl al-Imām al-Ḥusayn fī Karbalā’: 89–90, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī, *Rawḍat al-wā‘iẓīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta‘iẓīn*: 183, al-Ṭabarsī, *I‘lām al-warā’ bi-a‘lām al-budā*: 235, Ibn al-Aṭīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 415–417, Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 529, al-Maḡlisī, *Biḥār al-annār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37, n. 2: 391, al-‘Āmilī, *Aḡyān al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 137 (from al-Mufid and Ibn al-Aṭīr).

¹⁸ al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fī ḥurūġ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilā al-‘Irāq*: 353.

¹⁹ Ibn Ṭā’ūs, *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-tuḡf*: 55.

²⁰ The concept of the ‘people of the house’ (*ahl al-bayt*) is one of the key poles (side by side with the specific designation of ‘Alī) around which the whole of the Shi‘ī ethos is structured. The phrase is found twice in the Qur’ān: in *sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, it is in reference to the family of Muḥammad, in the so-called ‘verse of purification’ (*āyat al-taḥīr*), so decisive for the Shi‘a: «Allah’s wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing» (Q. 33: 33). Basing their argument on the *aḥādīth* narrated by Muḥammad’s Companions and recorded in both Shi‘ī and Sunnī sources, the Shi‘ī scholars, as well as some of the Sunnī, consider the ‘people of the house’ cited in this verse to refer to Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, excluding all Muḥammad’s other wives, offspring and grandchildren. The Shi‘ī and Sunnī collections transmit accounts of the *ahl al-bayt*, grouping the *aḥādīth* in a number of strands, including the crucial *ḥadīth* of ‘the two weighty things’ (*al-ṭaqaḷayn*) and that of ‘the boat’ (*al-saḡīna*). The *ḥadīth* of ‘the cloak’ (*al-kisā*) stands at the head of these strands. Sunnī transmitters of the *ḥadīth al-kisā* (*ḥadīth* of the cloak), already listed earlier in this work, have judged it to be authentic. Ibn Ḥanbal, in his *Musnad*, quotes Umm Salama as saying: “The Holy Prophet was in my house. Fāṭima came to her father...the Holy Prophet

Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî, al-Ṭabarsî, Ibn al-Aṭîr, Ibn Kaṭîr and al-Mağlisî all transmit that al-Ḥusayn saw the Messenger of God (*rasûl Allâh*) and no one else in his dream. Al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs (and al-Mağlisî transmitting from him) add 'Alî, Fâtîma and al-Ḥasan, the other core members of the *abl al-bayt*.²¹ All the key members together would clearly establish al-Ḥusayn's legitimacy and authority, on the eve of the martyrdom his momentous decision will bring about, as one of the *ma'sûmîn* and an indispensable member of the *abl al-bayt*.

In his conversation with his interlocutor(s) al-Ḥusayn has been informed of his imminent death – it is 'soon' in most texts, although some narrations, notes Ibn Ṭâ'ûs, use the word 'tomorrow'. Zaynab's reaction is strongly physical; she is deeply perturbed,

stated: Invite your husband and two sons to come as well. 'Alî, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn also came there and all sat down to eat. Then, the Holy Prophet was sitting on a cloak in his resting place and I was reciting the prayer in the chamber. At this time, God revealed the verse "*Allah's wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folke of the household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing*". The Holy Prophet covered 'Alî, Fâtîma, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn with the cloak and then stretched his hand toward the sky and said: O God! These are the Members of my Household, so purify them of all uncleanness. Umm Salama said: I asked him: Am I also with you? He stated: You have your own place, you are virtuous (but did not say that you are a member of my Household)." Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad 'Abd Allâh b. al-'Abbâs b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib*, n. 3062: 708–709, vol. VI, *Hadîṭ Wâṭala b. al-'Asqa'*, n. 16985: 45, vol. X, *Hadîṭ Umm Salama*, n. 26570: 177, n. 26612: 186–187, n. 26659: 197, n. 26808: 228.

²¹ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 112, al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma'rîfat huṣṣağ Allâh 'alâ al-'ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *nuzûl al-Imâm al-Ḥusayn fî Karbalâ'*: 90, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâ'izîn wa-taḥsîrat al-mutta'izîn*: 183, al-Ṭabarsî., *I'lâm al-warâ bi-a'lâm al-hudâ*: 235, Ibn al-Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḫ*, vol. II: 415, Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XI: 529, al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37, n. 2: 391. Cf. al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqîlat al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fî ḥurûğ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilâ al-'Irâq*: 352, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatlâ al-ṭufûf*: 55, al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37, n. 2: 391.

crying out 'woe is me' or 'my woe' and, in some texts,²² striking her face. The texts offer three possible responses from her brother: 'Woe is not for you, sister',²³ in almost all the texts, an exhortation and wish ('calm down, and may the Merciful be merciful to you'),²⁴ and, only in Ibn Ṭā'ūs and al-Maġlisi's transmission from him, a second exhortation ('Be calm! Do not cause the people to rejoice in our misfortune').²⁵ Zaynab has now heard from her brother's own mouth that he will die; but judging by later words and reactions, she still has not grasped the gravity of the situation.

3. THE DIRGE

This third incident takes place on the night before al-Husayn's death, sometime after Zaynab's hearing the noise of an arriving army, and is carried by a number of transmitters, both Sunnī and Shī'ī. Included among the group, which comprises a significant number of historians, are al-Balāḍurī, al-Ya'qūbī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Iṣfahānī, al-Mufid, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī, al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb, Ibn al-Aṭīr, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, Ibn Kaṭīr, al-Maġlisī

²² al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī ma'rifāt ḥuǧǧ Allāh 'alā al-'ibād*, vol. II, bb. *nuzūl al-Imām al-Husayn fī Karbalā'*: 90, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'iẓīn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta'izīn*: 183, al-Ṭabarsī., *I'lām al-warā bi-a'lām al-hudā*: 235, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 415, Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-tufūf*: 55, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 529, al-Maġlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37, n. 2: 391.

²³ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 112, al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī ma'rifāt ḥuǧǧ Allāh 'alā al-'ibād*, vol. II, bb. *nuzūl al-Imām al-Husayn fī Karbalā'*: 90, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'iẓīn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta'izīn*: 183, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 415, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 529, al-Maġlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37, n. 2: 391.

²⁴ al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī ma'rifāt ḥuǧǧ Allāh 'alā al-'ibād*, vol. II, bb. *nuzūl al-Imām al-Husayn fī Karbalā'*: 89–90, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'iẓīn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta'izīn*: 183, al-Ṭabarsī., *I'lām al-warā bi-a'lām al-hudā*: 235, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 415, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 529.

²⁵ Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-tufūf*: 55, al-Maġlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37, n. 2: 391.

and al-‘Āmilī. Each of them relates the story with generally few substantial differences in the details he gives. Al-Ḥawārizmī in his *Maqṭal* and Ibn Ṭā’ūs in his *Kitāb al-lubūf* are the lone voices of dissent, situating the incident much earlier than the other transmitters do; around the second or third day of Muḥarram rather than the evening of the 9th, and thus shortly after the arrival of the group at Karbalā’. Al-Ḥusayn asks the name of the land, and when told it is Karbalā’, prays a prayer of refuge in God from distress (*al-ḵarb*) and tribulation (*al-balā’*). Ibn Ṭā’ūs then recounts the story of the lament and Zaynab’s reaction.²⁶

Abū Miḥnaf has al-Ḥusayn’s son, ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, relate the incident, and most of the transmissions follow this; al-Balāḍurī, contrastingly, places the story on the lips of a servant called Ḥuwayy (so named by Abū Miḥnaf and Ibn Kaṭīr),²⁷ and who is with al-Ḥusayn, helping him to prepare his sword before battle and make it serviceable. While al-Iṣfahānī, al-Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn Ṭā’ūs, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, (and, consequently, al-Maḡlisī at times) name this servant as Ğawn,²⁸ al-Mufid names him Ğuwayn,²⁹ and Ibn Ṭā’ūs thinks his name might be ‘Awn.³⁰ Others, like al-Ṭabarī, make no mention of

²⁶ Ibn Ṭā’ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 49. Cf. al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fī ḥurūġ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilā al-‘Irāq*: 338–339.

²⁷ al-Balāḍurī., *Kitāb ansāb al-asbrāf*, vol. III: 393, Abū Miḥnaf., *Waq‘at al-Ṭaff*, bb. *al-Imām laylat ‘Āshūrā’*: 200, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 531. Cf. also al-‘Āmilī., *A‘yān al-Shī‘a*, vol. VII: 138.

²⁸ al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*: 113, al-Ṭabarsī., *I‘lām al-warā bi-a‘lām al-budā*: 239, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fī ḥurūġ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilā al-‘Irāq*: 338, Ibn Ṭā’ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 64–65, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashġān*, Part 2: 63, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 22, 71.

²⁹ al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī ma‘rifat ḥuġġ Allāh ‘alā al-‘ibād*, vol. II, bb. *ḥuṭbat al-Ḥusayn bi-aṣḥābi-hi*: 93, al-Baḥrānī., *‘Awālim al-‘ulūm wa-l-ma‘ārif al-ahwāl min al-‘yāt wa-l-ahbār wa-l-aqnāl*, vol. XI, bb. 12: 962 (from al-Mufid).

³⁰ Ibn Ṭā’ūs., *Kitāb al-iqbāl bi-l-a‘māl al-ḥasana*, vol. II: 713.

him, or simply refer to him as 'a person' (*fulān*)³¹ although all the transmitters mention that he is in fact the retainer of Abū Ḍarr al-Ġifārī, greatly venerated by the Sunnī and the Shī'ā alike.³² Al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn Ṭā'ūs and Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī will all go on to record Ḡawn's death on the field of Karbalā'.³³

According to Abū Miḥnaf's account,³⁴ on the evening before the day on which his father would be killed, the sickly 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī recounts that he was being nursed by his aunt Zaynab, on account of whatever illness it was that would finally prevent him fighting and, eventually, help to save him from being killed. These elements are omitted by some of the transmitters;³⁵ in some, the dirge forms part of a longer prayer, without the details of 'Alī being nursed by Zaynab.³⁶ However, in the majority of trans-

³¹ al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'izīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta'izīn*, vol. I: 184 (although he also notes the name Ġuwayn), al-Maḡlisi., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37, n. 2: 2, al-Baḥrānī., *Awālim al-'ulūm wa-l-ma'ārif al-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-aḥbār wa-l-aqwāl*, vol. VII: 245.

³² Modarressi notes that Abū Ḍarr al-Ġifārī was one of the more senior Companions of Muḥammad who retained and special devotion to the members of Muḥammad's household; he is one of those, therefore, considered by the Shī'ā to be a member of their first generation. Cf. MODARRESSI H., *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam*, Darwin Press, Princeton, NJ: 1993: 1.

³³ al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 23, Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 64–65, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashghān*, Part 2: 63.

³⁴ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 117–118.

³⁵ al-Ṣadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*, maḡlis 30: 156, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fī maqṭalī-hi*: 99, Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 49–50, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashghān*, Part 1: 49, al-Maḡlisi., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 316, al-Ḡazā'irī., *Riyāḍ al-abrār fī manāqib al-a'imma al-aḥbār*, vol I: 221, al-Baḥrānī., *Awālim al-'ulūm wa-l-ma'ārif al-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-aḥbār wa-l-aqwāl*, vol. XIV: 165.

³⁶ al-Ṣadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*, maḡlis 30: 156, Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 49–50, al-Maḡlisi., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol.

missions, both ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and Zaynab hear al-Ḥusayn reciting an elegy about his approaching death. Al-Ḥusayn is seated in front of his tent,³⁷ being helped by Ğawn to ready his sword for battle.³⁸ Two or three times, notes his son, al-Ḥusayn repeats the lament, “until I knew it by heart”³⁹ or, in other texts, until the boy could not but understand what they meant:⁴⁰

Time, shame on you as friend! By sunrise and late afternoon,
how many a companion or seeker will be yours, fallen? But
time will not be content with the alternative, and the matter is
with the Majestic, for every living creature is a traveller on a
path!

Lost in the translation is the splendid rhythm and rhyme of the verse:

Yâ dabr, uff laka min ḥalil
Kam laka bi-l-isbrâq wa-l-aşîl

XLIV, bb. 37: 316, al-Ġazâ’irî., *Riyâd al-abrâr fî manâqib al-a’imma al-aṭḥab*, vol I: 201.

³⁷ While most of the transmitters (cf. for e.g. al-Mufid., *Kitâb al-irsbâd*, vol. II, bb. *ḥuṭbat al-Ḥusayn bi-aşḥâbi-hi*: 93, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâ’izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta’izîn*: 184, al-Ṭabarsî., *I’lâm al-warâ bi-a’lâm al-hudâ*, *faşl* 4: 239, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *faşl fî maqṭali-hi*: 99) place al-Ḥusayn in front of his tent, Ibn Kaṭîr has him secluded within his tent with his companions: cf. Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XII: 531.

³⁸ In al-Işfahânî, al-Ḥusayn was working on an arrow, the text reading *sibâm*, which is an arrow or a dart. Cf. al-Işfahânî., *Maqâtil al-tâlibiyyîn*: 113.

³⁹ al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 393 (although the narrator here is not clearly ‘Alī), al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fî ḥurîġ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilâ al-’Irâq*: 338.

⁴⁰ Abû Miḥnaf., *Waq‘at al-Ṭaff*, b. *al-Imâm laylat ‘Âsbûrâ’*: 200, al-Ya‘qûbi., *Târîḥ* vol. II: 243, al-Mufid., *al-Irsbâd fî ma’rifat ḥuġġ Allâb ‘alâ al-’ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *ḥuṭbat al-Ḥusayn bi-aşḥâbi-hi*: 93, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâ’izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta’izîn*: 184, al-Ṭabarsî., *I’lâm al-warâ bi-a’lâm al-hudâ*, vol. I: 239, 452, Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XI: 531, al-Maġlisi., *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 37, n. 2: 2.

Min šāhib wa tālib qatīl
Wa-l-dabru la yaqna'u bi-l-badīl
Wa innamā al-amru ilā al-Ġalīl
Wa kullu ḥayy sālik sabil

Whether she was, as in most transmissions, nursing her nephew, or, as in others, sitting in the tents with the other women,⁴¹ the reaction of Zaynab is stark, and far removed from that of the composed and forceful woman who a few days later would coerce Ibn Ziyād to back down and reduce Yazīd to a crestfallen silence. While 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn is 'choked' with tears ("I knew that affliction had come down"),⁴² Zaynab is overwrought, a reaction which her nephew explains by saying: "As for my aunt, she heard what I heard, but she is a woman, and weakness⁴³ and grief⁴⁴ are the [qualities] of women; she could not control herself."⁴⁵ Zaynab leaps to her feet, tearing at her clothes and veil, and goes, bareheaded, to her brother. Al-Ṭabarī, transmitting in his *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* from Abū Miḥnaf, and closely followed by al-Balāḍurī, al-

⁴¹ Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 50.

⁴² al-Ya'qūbī., *Tārīḥ*, vol. II: 243–4, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'iẓīn wa-taḥṣīrat al-mutta'izīn*: 184, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 531. In al-Iṣfahānī he does not hold the tears back as in other narrations: al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-tālibīyyīn*: 113.

⁴³ The Arabic *al-riqqa* carries the sense of 'delicacy', 'sensitivity of feeling' or 'weakness of resistance'. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. III, 1968: 1131.

⁴⁴ The Arabic *al-ḡaẓī'* carries the sense of 'restless', 'apprehensive', 'uneasy', 'worried' or 'sad'. WEHR H., *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Librairie du Liban, Beirut 1980: 147. The same words (*al-riqqa* and *al-ḡaẓī'*) are used by almost all the transmitters: cf. for e.g. Abū Miḥnaf., *Waq'at al-Ṭaff*, bb. *al-Mâm laylat 'Āshūrā'*: 200, al-Mufid., *al-Irsbād fī ma'rīfat ḥuḡaḡ Allāh 'alā al-'ibād*, vol. II, bb. *ḥuḡbat al-Husayn bi-aḥbābi-hi*: 93, al-Ṭabarsī., *I'lām al-warā' bi-'lām al-budā'*: 239, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, b. 37, n. 2: 3, al-Baḥrānī., *Anwālim al-'ulūm wa-l-ma'ārif al-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-aḥbār wa-l-aqwāl*, vol. XI: 962.

⁴⁵ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 118. In al-Iṣfahānī, 'anxiety' and 'weakness' (*raqqa*) 'clung to her'. Cf. al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-tālibīyyīn*: 113.

Ḥawârizmî (in a second of two narrations), Ibn Kaṭîr and al-Mağlisî (transmitting from al-Mufid), recounts the basic details, as narrated by ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn. Howard’s translation reads:

Unveiled she went to him. She said to him, “I will lose a brother! Would that death had deprived me of life today! My mother Fāṭimah is dead, and my father ‘Alî, and my brother al-Ḥasan. You are the successor (khalîfah) of those who have passed away and the guardian of those who remain!” Al-Ḥusayn said to her as he looked at her, “Sister! Don’t let Satan take away your forbearance.” She replied, “I swear by my father and mother, Abū Abdallāh (i.e., al-Ḥusayn)! You have exposed yourself to death. May God accept my life for yours!” Choking back his grief and with his eyes full of tears, he said, “If the sand grouse are left at night, they will sleep.” She lamented, “My grief! Your life will be violently wrenched from you, and that is more wounding to my heart and harsher to my soul.” She struck at her face and bent down to her dress and tore it. Then she fell down in a faint. Al-Ḥusayn got up and bathed her face with water. Then he said to her, “Sister, fear God and take comfort in the consolation of God. Know that the people of the earth will die and the inhabitants of heaven will not continue to exist forever, ‘...for everything will be destroyed except the face of God’, Who created earth by His power, Who sends forth creatures and causes them to return, Who is unique and alone. My father was better than I, my mother was better than I, and my brother was better than I. I and every Muslim have an ideal model in the Apostle of God.” By this and the like he tried to console her and he said, “Sister, I swear to you – so keep my oath – that you must not tear your clothes, nor scratch your face, nor cry out with grief and loss when I am destroyed.” Then he brought her and made her sit with me.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 118. Cf. al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 393, al-Ya‘qûbî., *Târîḥ* vol. II: 243–4, Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XI: 531, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fî ḥurûġ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilâ al-‘Irâq*: 338, al-

Some of these details vary or are missing in other transmissions,⁴⁷ but as a whole, the text merits some analysis. Zaynab's immediate

Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 37, n. 2: 1–2 (transmitting from al-Mufid, as told by 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn). Cf. also al-Ṭabarsî, *Ḥâtimat mustadrak al-wasâ'il*, vol. II, b. 71, n. 2442: 452. Although it is far outside the scope of this work, the grief-stricken actions of Zaynab, and her brother's words to her, raise the issue of one of the most tangible, precarious symbols, heavily debated both within and outside of the Shî'î community; those physical actions which include the self-infliction of wounds and the drawing of blood. It is crucial to note that the 'Âshûrâ memorials are not primarily about inflicting pain on the individual. However, in these physical actions, under the broad headings of *ma'tam* and *laṭm*, active participation rather than passive observance by the devotee is seen in a more stark way. These rituals of self-mortification have noticeably increased in the intensity of their violence, and yet remain a sensitive and compelling Shî'î mark of identity (cf. CALMARD J. & J., "Muharram Ceremonies in Tehran" in P. Chelkowski (ed.), *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, New York University Press, New York 1979: 59). While there are clearly many who insist that such dramatic and physical acts of mourning were clearly forbidden by Muḥammad (not to mention al-Ḥusayn, ostensibly, in his words to his sister), the practitioners of such rituals employ a variety of arguments to justify their actions, arguing, for example, that the self-infliction of physical suffering demonstrates the readiness of the mourners to suffer for and with al-Ḥusayn, so that in these actions, a continuity is created with his own physical suffering. Much of the criticism is aimed at those more instrumental rites in which blood is drawn (a ritual action not entirely unknown in Western Christianity); again, its adherents regard it as a proclamation that had they been in Karbalâ', they would have spilled their blood. Some members of the Shî'î community posit that emulating al-Ḥusayn's spiritual life or ethical code is a better way to honour his legacy, instead of actions that bring down accusations of fanaticism upon Shî'î Islam and which may even, through the shedding of blood, render the participant ritually impure. Cf. CLOHESSY C., "Some Notes on mağlis and ta'ziya" in *Encounter*, vol. 41/1 (2016), Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, Rome: 108–109.

⁴⁷ Sibṭ al-Ġawzi, for example, appears to combine the two events – the noise of war and the dirge of al-Ḥusayn – into one single instant, re-

preoccupation is that having lost her parents (‘Alī and Fâtīma) and her brother (al-Ḥasan), she is now about to lose al-Ḥusayn, and wishes instead that she were dead, echoing the Qur’ānic wish of Maryam.⁴⁸ Her mother Fâtīma had died young, inconsolable at the death of her father Muḥammad, her own death hastened by events immediately after Muḥammad’s demise in 11/632. ‘Alī had himself been assassinated in the mosque at Kūfa in January 40/661 by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḡam al-Murādī. Zaynab’s brother al-Ḥasan too had been killed, with Shī‘ī (and some Sunnī) historians insisting that he was poisoned by his wife at the instigation of the caliph Mu‘āwiya. Martyrdom is understood as part of the role of the Imām, who gives his very self for the good of the Islamic community, and so provides the pattern of suffering and protest that guides and inspires the Shī‘a; but this is of little consolation to Zaynab in the moment. Her words ‘I will lose a brother’ are decisive, since they suggest that she is only now beginning to realize fully the implications of what is happening around her.

Addressing al-Ḥusayn as ‘the successor of those who have passed away and the guardian of those who remain’, (*ḥalfat al-mâḍin wa timâl al-bâqîn*)⁴⁹ seems to be an attempt to persuade him not to die, since it would mean that those who remain would be without guardianship. Her brother attempts to comfort her, urging that she not allow Satan to steal her ‘composure’ (*hilm*). Although the Arabic word carries a primary sense of ‘clemency’, that is, the quality by which one forgives and forgets, Lane notes that it also refers to the way one manages one’s soul and temper on the occasion of

ording few of the details aside from Zaynab’s stark reaction. Cf. Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣā’iṣ al-a’imma*: 211.

⁴⁸ “*She said: Oh, would that I had died ere this and become a thing of naught, forgotten*” (Q. 19: 23). Zaynab’s mother Fâtīma expresses similar sentiments after the death of her father, in her struggles with Abū Bakr over the land of Fadak.

⁴⁹ al-Balâḍurī., *Kitâb Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 1319, al-Iṣfahâni., *Maqâtil al-tâlibiyyîn*: 113, al-Ṭabarsī., *I‘lâm al-narâ bi-a‘lâm al-budâ*: 239, Ibn Ṭâ‘ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 49–50, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillī., *Muṭir al-abḡân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*, Part 1: 49, Ibn Kaḡir., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XI: 531, al-Maġlisī., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 37, n. 2: 2.

excitement, emotion or anger, or maintains tranquillity on such an occasion. It is thus probably best translated here as 'calm' or 'composure' rather than 'forbearance'.⁵⁰

The proverb about the sandgrouse, which only serves to intensify Zaynab's distress, is extant only in a handful of transmitters.⁵¹ The sense of the maxim is that of being provoked into action; that even if one does not desire it, one must strike the one who causes or prompts something detestable, and that once one is roused to action, there is no going back. Al-Ṭabarī refers us to Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿArab*,⁵² while al-Mağlisī draws our attention to al-Maydānī, who tells the story of one ʿAmr b. Māma, who takes up lodging among the Murād tribe. They come to him by night, and in doing so provoke the sandgrouse from their places. His wife sees this as an omen, and awakens her husband, who says: "But they are just sandgrouse!" His wife replies: "If the sandgrouse had been left alone at night, it would have slept."⁵³ This is not the only occasion

⁵⁰ LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. II, 1968: 632.

⁵¹ Cf. for e.g. al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-ṭālibīyyīn*: 113, al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī maʿrifat huǧaǧ Allāb ʿalā al-ʿibād*, vol. II, bb. *huṭbat al-Ḥusayn bi-aṣḥābi-hi*: 93, al-Ṭabarsī., *Iʿlām al-warāʾ bi-aʿlām al-hudā*: 239, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fī huṭūǧ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilā al-ʿIrāq*: 338, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fī maqṭali-hi*: 99, Ibn Ṭāʾūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufjif*: 50, Ibn Namā al-Ḥilli., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashǧān*, Part 1: 49, al-Mağlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37, n. 2: 2, al-ʿĀmilī., *Aʿyān al-Shiʿa*, vol. VII: 138.

⁵² Ibn Manẓūr., *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. XI: 233.

⁵³ Recorded by Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ib-rāhīm al-Maydānī (d. 518/1124, cf. GAL S. I: 506) in his collection of proverbs. Cf. al-Maydānī., *Maǧmaʿ al-amṭāl*, vol. III: 97. If the meaning of the proverb is clear enough, the details of the Ibn Māma story are less lucid without some context. The Murād were an eastern Yemeni Arab tribe; according to some scholars, their correct name was Yuhābir, but they were nicknamed 'Murād' because of their rebelliousness (*tamarrada* – 'to rebel'), and the mountains of Murād and their inhabitants were well-known for outlaws and bandits. While Levi Della Vida regards this as a less than satisfactory etymology, it would explain the initial nervousness of

on which this proverb is placed on the lips of al-Ḥusayn. Al-Mağlisī recounts the moment when al-Ḥusayn, the only survivor on the field, turns to the women's tents and offers them greetings peace; a conversation ensues with his daughter Sukayna.⁵⁴ She begs him to return to the sanctuary of Muḥammad, and he quotes the sandgrouse proverb.⁵⁵

However, Zaynab is inconsolable, striking her face,⁵⁶ tearing her garments and, before falling into a faint, exclaiming: "My grief! Your life will be violently wrenched from you, and that is more wounding to my heart and harsher to my soul." Al-Ḥusayn revives her and, quoting a fragment of Q. 28: 88,⁵⁷ tries again to encourage her:

"Sister, fear God and take comfort in the consolation of God. Know that the people of the earth will die and the inhabitants of heaven will not continue to exist forever, *"everything will perish save His countenance"*, Who created earth by His power."

While al-Ya'qûbî is more succinct ("My sister! Fear God! Death comes down inevitably!"), al-Balâḍurî reports that al-Ḥusayn recites Q. 44: 20–21 (*"And lo! I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord lest ye stone me to death. And if ye put no faith in me, then let me go"*); his sisters weep at this, and he has to calm them down.⁵⁸

In response to her grief over the loss of her family, al-Ḥusayn urges her to reflect more deeply on the lives of 'Alî, Fâṭima and al-

Ibn Mâma's wife. Cf. LEVI DELLA VIDA G., "Murâd" in *The First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1987: 726.

⁵⁴ Wrongly called 'Sakîna' by the English translators of this volume; cf. SARWAR M., (trans.), *Behar al-anwar*, 2014: 304.

⁵⁵ al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 37, n. 2: 47.

⁵⁶ The text uses the Arabic verb *laṭama-yalṭimu*, from which derives *laṭam*, used to describe a particular ritual action employed by some Shî'î adherents during the 'Âshûrâ commemorations.

⁵⁷ The whole verse reads: *"And cry not unto any other god along with Allah. There is no Allah save Him. Everything will perish save His countenance. His is the command, and unto Him ye will be brought back"*.

⁵⁸ al-Ya'qûbî., *Târîḥ* vol. II: 243–4, al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol III: 397/1323.

Ḥasan, reminding her that in Muḥammad, every Muslim has an ideal exemplar, and insisting that when he is killed, she should neither tear her clothes, nor beat her face, nor wail and lament. Ibn Kaṭīr records the event quite fully:

So, I will lose him! Would that death had deprived me of life the day my mother Fâṭima died, and my father 'Alī and my brother Ḥasan, successor of those passed away, the helper of those remaining." Al-Ḥusayn looked at her and said: "My sister, Satan must not carry off your forbearance!" She replied: "May my father and mother be ransomed for you, Abū 'Abd Allāh, I would risk my very self for you!" She struck her face and ripped the collar of her robe, falling to the ground in a faint. Al-Ḥusayn went to her, pouring water on her face, and said: "My sister, fear God and take comfort in the consolation of God. Know that the people of the earth will die and the inhabitants of heaven will not continue to exist forever, for *"everything will perish save His countenance"*, Who created creation by His power, and brings them to die by His vanquishing and his might. His is matchless in his unity. Know that my father is better than me, my mother is better than me, my brother is better than me; I and they and every Muslim has the Messenger of God as an excellent exemplar." Then he forbade her to do any of this after his death, and taking her by the hand, he brings her back to 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.⁵⁹

Ibn Ṭā'ūs tells the story differently in his *Kitāb al-lubūf*; al-Ḥusayn is seated in front of his tent, but there is no mention either of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn or of Ğawn the retainer, and the dirge is, in fact, part of a longer prayer. Ibn Ṭā'ūs transmits his account in two strands; in the first, Zaynab hears the poem and goes to al-Ḥusayn and says: "My brother, this is the talk of one who is certain he will be killed!"⁶⁰ When he replies in the affirmative, she says: "So, I will lose him! Al-Ḥusayn himself announces his own the death to me!" The women weep, striking their cheeks and ripping the upper

⁵⁹ Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XII: 531.

⁶⁰ Cf. also al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī., *Itbāt al-budāt bi-l-nuṣūṣ wa-l-mu'ğẓāt*, vol. IV: 51.

opening (collars) of their garments. Umm Kulţûm begins to wail and al-Ḥusayn comforts her with words in most other transmitters addressed to Zaynab, saying:

“My sister, be fortified by the consolation of God! The inhabitants of the heavens will pass away and all the people of the earth will die, and all of creation will perish.” Then he said: “My sister, Umm Kulţûm, and you Zaynab, and you Fâtîma, and you Rubâb,⁶¹ see that when I am killed, that you do not rip a garment for me or scratch a face for me, and do not use unseemly language on my behalf.”

In the second strand, transmitted, says Ibn Ṭâʾûs from a different path, Zaynab is in another place, in seclusion with the women and the girls, when she hears the content of the verses. She emerges, unveiled and trailing her robe, and stands before al-Ḥusayn, saying:

“So, I will lose him! Would that death had deprived me of life the day my mother Fâtîma died, and my father ‘Alî and my brother al-Ḥasan, successor of those who are gone, and support of those remaining.” Al-Ḥusayn looked at her and said: “My sister, Satan must not carry off your forbearance.” She replied: “I swear by my father and my mother! I would let myself be killed for you as a ransom.” A groan broke forth from al-Ḥusayn, his eyes filled with tears and he said: “If the sandgrouse had been left alone at night, it would have slept.” She answered: “My grief! Will your life not be forcibly taken from you? That is more wounding to my heart, more calamitous for my soul.” Then she reached for the collar of her garment and ripped it, and fainting, she sank to the ground. Standing, al-Ḥusayn poured water over her until she regained consciousness. Then he tried his utmost to console her, reminding her of the calamity of the death of his father and his grandfather.⁶²

Al-Ḥawârizmî also relates the incident in two strands. In the first, al-Ḥusayn is sitting in his tent repairing his sword with Ğawn; he

⁶¹ One of al-Ḥusayn’s wives, and the mother of his daughter Sukayna.

⁶² Ibn Ṭâʾûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 49–50.

declaims the verses of the dirge. 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn narrates that his father repeated these verses, that he memorized them from his father and was choked with tears, but that he kept silence as far as he was able. However, his aunt Zaynab, when she heard the dirge, shed tears and wept, for she was delicate (*da'ifâ*) of heart, and was manifestly affected by sorrow and anxiety. Dragging the hems of her garment, she draws near to al-Ḥusayn, whom she addresses as 'coolness of my eye'. The conversation continues as in other transmissions, with al-Ḥusayn quoting Q. 28: 70, 88 ("everything will perish save His countenance. His is the command, and unto Him ye will be brought back")⁶³ and citing the example of 'Alî and Muḥammad: "for where are my father and my grandfather, who are better than me? In them, for me and for every Muslim, is an excellent exemplar!" He returns her to her quarters, but not without the warning about no wailing or violence done to self after his death.

Al-Ḥawârizmî then offers a second strand. Some of the details are familiar, but there is uncertainty as to whether the character involved, referred to as al-Ḥusayn's 'sister', and who hears the dirge and reacts to it, is Zaynab or Umm Kulṭûm; both are named in the text and both would be old enough for the reaction recorded. In fact, it is of note that al-Iṣfahânî in his *Maqâtil* does not actually name Zaynab in the text, while al-Ṣadûq records the dirge, but neither recounts any of the familiar context nor mentions Zaynab or her intervention.⁶⁴ Upon hearing the verses, the unnamed sister in al-Ḥawârizmî⁶⁵ goes to her brother and says: "My brother, this is the speech of one who is who certain of death." In fact, this is a strand transmitted in similar form about Zaynab by Ibn Ṭâ'ûs,⁶⁶ although in less detail. Al-Ḥusayn replies: "Yes, my sister." She responds: "In that case, take us back to the sanctuary of our grand-

⁶³ Q. 28: 70, 88.

⁶⁴ al-Iṣfahânî, *Maqâtil al-ṭâlibiyyîn*: 113, al-Ṣadûq, *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-ahbâdîṭ wa-l-ahbâr*, maḡlîs 30: 156.

⁶⁵ Also unnamed in al-Iṣfahânî. Cf. al-Iṣfahânî, *Maqâtil al-ṭâlibiyyîn*: 113 and al-Baḥrânî, *Avâlim al-'ulûm wa-l-ma'ârif al-aḥwâl min al-âyât wa-l-ahbâr wa-l-aqwâl*, vol. XI: 962, vol. VII: 245 (although after the words 'my aunt', 'Zaynab' is added in parentheses).

⁶⁶ Ibn Ṭâ'ûs, *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tuṣūf*: 49.

father.” Al-Ḥusayn responds with the sandgrouse proverb, and she answers: “So, I will lose him! Would that death had deprived me of life! My grandfather, the Messenger of God, died, my father ‘Alī died, my mother Fāṭima died, my brother al-Ḥasan died! There remains the support of the people of the house, and today he announces his own death!” She weeps then, “as do the other women”, with the striking of cheeks and ripping of robes. Then, al-Ḥawārizmī tells us, al-Ḥusayn’s sister, although we are not sure whether it the same one or another, cries out loudly: “My Muḥammad! Father of al-Qāsim! The day my grandfather Muḥammad died! My father, my ‘Alī. The day my father ‘Alī died! My mother! My Fāṭima! The day my mother Fāṭima died! My brother! My Ḥasan! The day my brother al-Ḥasan died! My brother! My Ḥusayn! What a loss for us after you, Father of ‘Abd Allāh!” Al-Ḥusayn fortifies her and urges patience, saying:

“My sister! Be fortified by the consolation of God and be content with the divine decree of God; the people of heaven will vanish, and the people of the earth will die, and none of the creatures will continue to exist, for *“everything will perish save His countenance”*, and blessed be God to whom all creation will return! It is He who created all creatures by His power and brings them to nought by His will and calls them forth by His volition! Sister! My grandfather, my father, my mother and my brother were better than me, and more excellent, and they have undergone death and the dust has gathered them. For me, and for you and for every believer, there is, in the Messenger of God, an excellent exemplar.” Then he said: “Zaynab! Umm Kulṭūm! Fāṭima! Rubāb! See when I am killed that there is no ripping (the collar of) the garment for me and no scratching the face for me, and do not use unseemly language on my behalf!”⁶⁷

⁶⁷ al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *fī ḥurūġ al-Ḥusayn min Makka ilā al-‘Irāq*: 338–339.

Ibn Shaḥrāshūb is worth noting; he is transmitting from a number of sources,⁶⁸ including al-Ṣadūq, who records the dirge, but neither recounts any of the familiar context nor mentions Zaynab or her intervention.⁶⁹ That being said, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb's transmission is truncated and lacks many of the better-known elements, such as 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn being nursed by Zaynab.⁷⁰ 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn narrates that he was sitting on the night before his father was killed, and his father recited the dirge. Zaynab responded: "It is as if you know well that your life will be taken by force!" to which her brother replied by quoting the sandgrouse proverb.⁷¹ Ibn Namā's narration makes no mention of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn or of Abū Ḍarr al-Ġifārī's retainer, but otherwise seems to be a mix of the two strands of Ibn Ṭā'ūs.⁷²

Of equal interest is al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī in his *Rawḍat al-wā'izīn*, who narrates all the familiar events with one exception; there is no mention of Zaynab's reaction. Considering that al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī is transmitting from a number of key Shī'ī texts (such as al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*, al-Ṣadūq's *al-Amālī*, *Kitāb al-ḥiṣāl*, *Uyūn aḥbār al-Riḍā* and *Ma'ānī al-aḥbār*, and al-Mufid's *al-Amālī* and *al-Irshād*), this is an enigmatic omission. In fact, he goes on to omit almost all the battlefield details of Zaynab.⁷³ Like al-Iṣfahānī, writing his *Maqātil* more than a century before him, al-Fattāl does not hesitate

⁶⁸ al-Ṣadūq's *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*, 'Alī al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī's *Rawḍat al-wā'izīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta'izīn*, al-Iṣfahānī's *Maqātil al-ṭālibīyīn*, al-Mufid's *al-Irshād fī ma'rīfat ḥuḡaḡ Allāh 'alā al-'ibād*, al-Ya'qūbī's *Tārīḥ*, al-Ṭabarṣī's *I'lām al-warā bi-'lām al-hudā* and al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*.

⁶⁹ al-Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*, maḡlis 30: 156.

⁷⁰ Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fī maqṭali-hi*: 99. Cf. also al-Ġazā'irī., *Riḡāḍ al-abrār fī manāqib al-a'imma al-aḥbār*, vol. I: 217.

⁷¹ Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fī maqṭali-hi*: 99.

⁷² Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-abḡān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 1: 49.

⁷³ al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'izīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta'izīn*: 418.

to use ‘moral qualifiers’,⁷⁴ regularly inviting the curse of God on the perpetrators.

Just hours before battle is engaged, Zaynab has been given a clear intimation by her brother of what lies ahead. For the rest of the night, she is confined to her quarters with the other women and the children. When she emerges onto the field at a fateful mo-

⁷⁴ HUSSEIN A.J., *A Developmental Analysis of Depictions of the Events of Karbalā’ in Early Islamic History*, 2001: 21. In his *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, Ibn Qays al-Hilālī (d. c. 80/662: cf. MODARRESSI H., *Tradition and Survival*, 2003: 82, 424), used the moral qualifier ‘may God curse him’ (لعنه الله) against Iblīs, against those who attacked the house of Fāṭima, against Ibn Muḡam, killer of ‘Alī, against Mu‘āwiya and against Yazīd (al-Hilālī, *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, vol. II: 579, 586, 588, 671, 774, 866). Kohlberg notes that the *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* was named after its supposed author, the pro-‘Alid Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī al-‘Āmirī, who died during the governorship of the Umayyad al-Ḥaġġāġ b. Yūsuf (75/694 – 95/714). The Shī‘ī bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995 or 388/998) regarded it as the first Shī‘ī work, but later Shī‘ī scholars took a much more skeptical view (shared by Goldziher), and some openly declare it a fabrication. Cf. KOHLBERG E., “Shī‘ī *Hadīth*” in A.F.L. Beeston et al., (eds.), *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983: 301. The qualifier occurs in a few other early texts, most regularly against Iblīs; Imām al-Riḍā (d. 202/818) in his *al-Fiqh al-mansūb* and in the *Ṣaḥīfat al-Imām al-Riḍā* uses it against the enemies of the Imāms, while al-Qummī in the *Tafsīr* attributed to him (alive in 307/1440, claims Modarressi, but the work is not by him; MODARRESSI H., *Tradition and Survival*, 2003: xvii, 410) employs it against various enemies of Muḡammad such as Abū Ġahl, as well as against Yazīd (al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, vol. I, *sūrat al-Baqara*: 45, *sūrat Āl ‘Imrān*: 119, 124, *sūrat al-A‘raf*: 242, vol. II, *sūrat as-Isrā’*: 13, *sūrat al-Ḥaġġ*: 84). In two other early texts it is used against al-Ḥaġġāġ (al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. I, bb. 3: 203) and against ‘Umar b. Sa‘d, Ibn Ziyād and Yazīd, the principle enemies involved in the Karbalā’ event, in a chapter about the words of Zaynab (Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Balāġāt al-nisā’*: 34). By the time Imām al-‘Askarī’s companion al-Ṣaffār (d. 290/903) was composing his *Baṣā’ir al-daraġāt* in the 3rd/9th century, the Karbalā’ narratives had increased exponentially and the moral qualifier was becoming more common against the enemies of the *ahl al-bayt*, and especially those see as responsible for the death of al-Ḥusayn.

ment of the conflict the next morning, it will be as a woman transfigured; no less anguished by the murder of her family, but with an audacity and assurance drawn from some hidden source and inconceivable to the eyewitnesses of Karbalâ'.

CHAPTER THREE.

ON THE FIELD OF KARBALĀ'

According to al-Ṭabarī's chronology, the battle of Karbalā' was engaged on the morning of 10th Muḥarram, after *ṣalāt al-fağr* (the morning prayer). It was not fought in any manner familiar to conventional warfare, with two armies facing each other. Rather, individual members of al-Ḥusayn's small band of around seventy-two men went out, mostly individually and often reciting poetry, to face the might of the opposing army (at least five thousand, but possibly more)¹ led by al-Ḥurr b. Yazīd al-Tamīmī (until his dramatic and emotional defection to the tents of al-Ḥusayn), with 'Umar b. Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ appointed to command the actual battle (until a querulous Ibn Ziyād replaced him with Shimr b. Ḍī al-Ġawshan).²

¹ al-Ṭabarī, al-Ṣadūq and al-Mufid mention at least five thousand (one thousand with al-Ḥurr b. Yazīd al-Tamīmī and four thousand with 'Umar b. Sa'd). However, the number varies dramatically, with some claiming up to twenty or thirty thousand. Cf. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 93, 103, al-Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-abādāt wa-l-ahbār*, mağlis 30: 154–155, al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī ma'rifat huğāğ Allāb 'alā al-ṣibād*, vol. II, bb. *wāqi' Karbalā' wa baṭūla Imām al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḥābi-hi*: 106.

² Shimr (or Shamir) b. Ḍī al-Ġawshan b. Shuraḥbīl b. al-A'war b. 'Umar b. Mu'âwiya al-Āmir; he had fought, notes Howard, on 'Alī's side at the battle of Şiffin but later switched sides and would be assassinated in retribution for the role he played in al-Ḥusayn's death. (Cf. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990, nt. 192: 49). Shī'ī Islam clearly place the responsibility of al-Ḥusayn's death on the shoulders of two men. One is al-Ziyād, Yazīd's governor in Kūfa. The other is Shimr; for it was this military man who had urged al-Ziyād to deal puni-

Al-Ḥusayn had taken great pains to ensure that not only were the women and children confined to their tents, but that they were almost entirely inaccessible to the enemy; at one stage in the battle, a threat by Shimr b. Ḍī al-Ġawshan to burn the tents and their occupants was met with disbelief by an appalled al-Ḥusayn. In the course of the hours that followed, al-Ḥusayn was destined to lose almost all the male members of his family; he would be the last to die, so that he endured the prolonged agony of seeing his sons and nephews killed one by one.

Almost all the transmitters agree that the first of al-Ḥusayn's immediate family to die was 'Alī al-Akbar b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, born to al-Ḥusayn by his wife Laylā bt. Abī Murrah b. 'Urwah b. Mas'ūd al-Taqaḥfi.³ Both his age and his identity are, as noted in an appendix to this work, considerably problematic in the sources; for the moment, it is his death that concerns us, since it brings Zaynab out of the confines of her tent and onto the field of Karbalā' for the first time. Transmitting from Abū Miḥnaf, al-Ṭabarī tells the story of how this boy steps in front of the opposing army with the words: "I am 'Alī, son of Ḥusayn, son of 'Alī! We are, by the Lord of the House, first in respect of the Prophet! No son of a bastard will pass judgment on us!"⁴ He is killed, although al-Ṭabarī omits

tively with al-Ḥusayn and had incited an Umayyad army more than a little reluctant to take up arms against the Muḥammad's grandson. If al-Ziyād's culpability is somewhat tempered by his distance from the battlefield (and the subsequent regret he expresses, apparently treating the survivors quite well, at least at the beginning), Shimr will be ever despised by Shi'ī Muslims.

³ Cf. for e.g. al-Balāḍurī, *Kitāb ansāb al-asbrāf*, vol III: 361–362, 406, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 428, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 545, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-amwār*, vol. XLV, b. 37, n. 2: 43, 45. The texts give a variety of names when reporting the first to die, but a distinction should be maintained between 'Alids, members of the *abl al-bayt* and al-Ḥusayn's immediate family members.

⁴ al-Ṭabarī., *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, vol. V: 446. Cf. also Abū Miḥnaf., *Waq'at al-Ṭaff*, bb. *al-Imām laylat 'Āshūrā'*: 242, al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī ma'rīfat ḥuḡāḡ Allāh 'alā al-'ibād*, vol. II, bb. *wāqī' Karbalā' wa baṭ'ila Imām al-Ḥusayn wa aḥbābi-hi*: 106, al-Ṭabarsī., *I'lām al-warā bi-'lām al-hudā*: 246,

an important detail; he dies in his father's arms, crushed less by his wounds than by his agonizing thirst,⁵ one of the enduring themes of the Karbalā' tragedy.

1. THE RISING SUN

It is at this instant, reports Abū Miḥnaf, that Ḥumayd b. Muslim al-Azdi⁶ sees a woman hurrying from her tent. It is worth noting that Ḥumayd is a pivotal eyewitness to the Karbalā' events, attentive as he is to numerous small details. Among other things, he is on hand when Ibn Ziyād sends a missive ordering that al-Ḥusayn and his men be barred from access to water, as well as when Ibn Ziyād sends the brutal Shimr to take control of a situation that seems to be slipping under the vacillating 'Umar b. Sa'd. He witnesses the first shot fired in battle and mortified, challenges Shimr who is threatening to burn the tents of the women as, after the battle, he will challenge him a second time when he wants to kill the ailing 'Ali b. al-Ḥusayn (who lives to thank him for his intervention). He is witness to the death of al-Ḥusayn's eldest son as well as that of an unknown nephew, and Zaynab's intervention on both occasions. He notes the radiant qualities of Zaynab's face, and the broken sandal strap of a boy with a face like the moon as he wanders onto the field. He is able to describe exactly the clothing that al-Ḥusayn is wearing as he dies and observes the killing of al-Ḥusayn and the plundering of his corpse. He serves as a messenger for 'Umar b. Sa'd after the battle, accompanying al-Ḥusayn's head to Ibn Ziyād, where he sees its ill-treatment. He is a crucial bystander

Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fī maqṭali-hi*: 106, 109 (slightly extended), Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashghān*, Part 1: 68, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 43, 65 (from Ibn Shaḥrāshūb), vol. XCVIII, bb. 19: 269, al-Ġazā'iri., *Riyāḍ al-abrār fī manāqib al-a'imma al-aṭḥbār*, vol. I: 314, al-Baḥrānī., *Avālim al-'ulūm wa-l-ma'ārif al-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-aḥbār wa-l-aqwāl*, vol. XIV: 286.

⁵ al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 35, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashghān*, Part 2: 68.

⁶ Written 'Ḥulayd' in the Arabic text, but this is certainly an error. Howard designates him an eyewitness of the battle. Abū Miḥnaf posits he was a member of Shimr's army.

during the ‘Alī-Ibn Ziyād dialogues and overhears the governor branding both al-Ḥusayn and ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib as liars.⁷

The woman Ḥumayd has noticed comes from her tent “like the rising sun” and crying “my brother, my nephew!” He asks after her identity and is informed that this is Zaynab, the daughter of Fāṭima. She throws herself on the body of the young ‘Alī, and her brother al-Ḥusayn comes, takes her by the hand and leads her back to her tent.

Al-Iṣfahānī recounts a Zaynab emerging with slightly different words on her lips: “O my love, O son of my brother,” she cries as she comes and leans over the boy’s lifeless body, before being led away by al-Ḥusayn. Al-Ḥawārizmī and al-Maḡlisī also put a slightly different wording to her grief (“Oh my love, fruit of my heart, light of my eyes!”), while a number of key transmitters – Abū Miḥnaf, al-Mufid, Ibn Ṭā’ūs and Ibn Namā, for example – omit any reference to the imagery of the sun rising.⁸ Still others, like al-Balāḍurī, omit any reference at all to Zaynab in the incident.⁹

⁷ Cf. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 107–167, WELLHAUSEN J., *Die religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien in alten Islam*, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin 1901: 87.

⁸ Abū Miḥnaf., *Waq‘at al-Ṭaff*, bb. *al-Imām laylat ‘Ashūrā’*: 242, al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-ṭālibīyīn*: 115, al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī ma‘rifat ḥuḡaḡ Allāh ‘alā al-‘ibād*, vol. II, bb. *wāq‘ Karbalā’ wa batūla Imām al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḥābi-hi*: 112, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 35, Ibn Ṭā’ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufjif*: 68, Ibn Namā al-Ḥilli., *Munīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 2: 68, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 44.

⁹ al-Balāḍurī., *Kitāb ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol III: 361–362, 406. Curiously, Ibn ‘Asākīr transmits a version of this incident in which it is Zaynab daughter of al-Ḥusayn and not Zaynab daughter of ‘Alī who emerges ‘like the sun’ at the death of ‘Alī al-Akbar, crying out ‘my brother!’ Ibn ‘Asākīr himself notes that he does not find such a recollection about Zaynab bt. al-Ḥusayn in the *Kitāb al-nasab* of al-Zubayr. His reference is to the partially extant work by al-Zubayr b. Bakkār al-Zubayrī (d. 256/870). Cf. Ibn ‘Asākīr., *Tārīḡ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9349 (*Zaynab bt. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*): 169, JUDD S. & SCHEINER J., (eds.), *New Perspectives on Ibn ‘Asākīr in Islamic Historiography*, Brill, Leiden 2017: 191.

The three problematic texts are al-Mufid, al-Ḥawârizmî and Ibn Namâ, specifically because while al-Mufid puts the boy at nineteen years of age and al-Ḥawârizmî at eighteen, Ibn Namâ merely says that he was 'older than ten'.¹⁰ Such statements create difficulties not only in determining the age of al-Ḥusayn's successor as Imâm, but also in establishing which of his sons it was that survived him. This issue is dealt with briefly in the appendix to this work.

One of Zaynab's biographers notes that "when the tragedy of Karbala befell her in her mid-fifties she was forced to go out uncovered. It was then that some people remarked that she appeared as a 'shining sun' and a 'piece of the moon'."¹¹ This seems a banal and minimalist interpretation; this is not the only time that this particular eyewitness, Ḥumayd b. Muslim, will use such language. He will witness a boy, identified as Qâsim b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib, al-Ḥusayn's nephew, who emerges onto the field with a broken sandal strap and a face "like the first splinter of the moon" and takes his stand.¹² In both cases, Ḥumayd seems to be describing a distinct transfiguration; the small boy with his otherwise inexplicable courage and Zaynab, transformed from the frightened woman of the day before. Ibn Kaṭîr, for example, describes Zaynab, despite her being in her fifties, as "a girl, who was like the sun in loveliness", suggesting some sort of metamorphosis that made her

¹⁰ al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma'rîfat huğāğ Allâh 'alâ al-'ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *wâqi' Karbalâ' wa baṭûla Imâm al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḥâbi-hi*: 106, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 34, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abḥân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 2: 68.

¹¹ Cf. BILGRAMI M.H., *The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint 'Alî*, 1986: 'Womanhood', n.p.

¹² al-Ṭabarî., *Kitâb abḥâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, vol. V: 446, al-Iṣfahâni., *Maqâtil al-ṭâlibiyyîn*: 115 (from al-Ṭabarî), al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma'rîfat huğāğ Allâh 'alâ al-'ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *wâqi' Karbalâ' wa baṭûla Imâm al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḥâbi-hi*: 107, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 31, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abḥân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 2: 69. Cf. also HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 152–153.

barely recognizable at that moment.¹³ Bearing in mind those *aḥādīṭ* that insist upon the superiority of the moon when it is full, or over all the other celestial bodies,¹⁴ the phrase ‘first splinter of the moon’ has mystical and eschatological undertones, and links Zaynab intimately to her grandfather, since it used by a handful of transmitters to describe Muḥammad. A number of *aḥādīṭ* tell of his face being like the moon when it is full, or like a piece of the moon,¹⁵ or that his face was like the moon whenever he was happy.¹⁶ Others relate that when Muḥammad was seen in the darkness of night, his face had a light ‘like the first splinter of the moon’.¹⁷ Moreover, the first group of believers to enter Paradise is described as glittering like the moon, an image used throughout the books of *aḥādīṭ* to describe people’s faces on the Day of Resurrection.¹⁸ In the course of the famous *ḥadīṭ al-keisā*,² Fāṭima describes her father’s face as being like the full moon;¹⁹ and she herself is said to have

¹³ Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 545.

¹⁴ Abū Dāwūd., *Sunan*, bk. 24 (*ʿAwwal kitāb al-ʿilm*), bb. 1, n. 3641: 207, bk. 39 (*Abwāb al-ʿilm*), bb. 19, n. 2682: 77–78.

¹⁵ al-Buḥārī., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, bk. 61 (*Kitāb al-manāqib*), bb. 23, n. 3552: 460, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, bk. 43 (*Kitāb al-ḥajj*), bb. 30, n. 6084: 190, Abū Dāwūd., *Sunan*, bk. 46 (*Abwāb al-manāqib*), bb. 8, n. 3636: 331.

¹⁶ al-Buḥārī., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, bk. 61 (*Kitāb al-manāqib*), bb. 23, n. 3556: 461, bk. 64 (*Kitāb al-maḡāzī*), bb. 80, n. 4418: 432, bk. 65 (*Kitāb al-tafsīr*), bb. 18, n. 4677: 154, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, bk. 49 (*Kitāb al-tawba*), bb. 9, n. 7016: 156, Abū Dāwūd., *Sunan*, bk. 46 (*Abwāb tafsīr al-qurʿān*), bb. 9, n. 3102: 409.

¹⁷ Cf. for e.g. al-Kulaynī., *al-Kāfī fī ʿilm al-dīn*, vol. I, bb. *mawlid al-nabī*, n. 20: 446, al-Ṭabarsī., *Makārim al-ahlāq*: 24, al-Kāshānī., *Kitāb ḡāmiʿ al-wāḥī*, vol. III: 904, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XIV, bb. 8: 190.

¹⁸ al-Buḥārī., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, bk. 59 (*Kitāb badʿ al-ḥalq*), bb. 18, nn. 3245–7: 292–293, n. 3254: 295, bk. 60 (*Kitāb al-aḥādīṭ al-anbīyāʾ*), bb. 1, n. 3327: 326–327, bk. 77 (*Kitāb al-libās*), bb. 18, n. 5811: 387, bk. 81 (*Kitāb al-riqāq*), bb. 50, nn. 6542–3: 294–295, n. 6554: 298, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, bk. 1 (*Kitāb al-īmān*), bb. 94, n. 523: 346, n. 526: 347, bk. 51 (*Kitāb al-ḡanna*), bb. 6, n. 7147: 230, n. 7149: 230–231, n. 7150: 231, bb. 7, n. 7151: 232.

¹⁹ al-Baḥrānī., *ʿAwālim al-ʿulūm wa-l-maʿārif al-aḥwāl min al-āyāt wa-l-aḥbār wa-l-aqwāl*, vol. XI: 935.

had a face radiant as the moon.²⁰ Al-ʿAbbās, half-brother to al-Ḥusayn and Zaynab, and whose martyrdom on the Karbalā' field came at the end of an act of superhuman strength and courage, is referred to as 'the moon of the Banû Hāshim' (*qamar banî hāshim*).²¹ Later, in Kūfa, Zaynab, from her carriage, will catch sight of al-Ḥusayn's head, which seemed to her as a 'radiant, moonlike...a rising moon' (*ẓubrī qamarī...qamar tālī*).

2. A BOY

It is the tenacious stand and death of another child that brings Zaynab out onto the field for a second time. From the tents of the women emerges a boy, whom most of the texts observe is 'not yet an adolescent' (said of more than one victim at Karbalā') and who, resisting all attempts to stop him, takes his stand next to al-Ḥusayn, where he will be badly wounded and die within minutes. Al-Ṭabarī, transmitting from Abū Miḥnaf's account, does not name the boy, and notes that his identity is uncertain, since the man named as his killer is not known to have killed any of al-Ḥusayn's nephews;²² nor do al-Balāḍurī, al-Iṣfahānī (who, like al-Ṭabarī, refers to him 'a boy from the family') or Ibn al-Aṭīr name him.²³ However, besides the fact that al-Ḥusayn addresses him as 'son of my brother', and he in turn refers to al-Ḥusayn as 'my uncle', a number of the texts give us his name; he is almost certainly 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan and, as son of al-Ḥasan, nephew both to al-Ḥusayn and to Zaynab.

These are the bare bones of a more elaborate and evocative story. As the boy emerges, Zaynab, urged on by al-Ḥusayn, pursues

²⁰ al-Ṭabarī., *Dalāʾil al-imāma*, n. 63, 151, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. III, bb. *faṣl fī ḥiyati-hā*: 356, al-Maḡlisī., *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XLIII, bb. 6, n. 7: 6.

²¹ Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *faṣl fī maqtali-hā*: 108, al-Maḡlisī., *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 39–40.

²² HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 158.

²³ al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*: 116, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol. II: 431. Al-Balāḍurī relates the story very briefly, with few of the usual details and with no mention of Zaynab; al-Balāḍurī., *Kitāb ansāb al-asbrāf*, vol. III: 408.

him from the tents in an attempt to prevent him from taking the field. The boy puts up a fierce resistance: “By God,” he says, “I will not be separated from my uncle,” giving us a first clue to his identity. Within minutes of his arrival at al-Ḥusayn’s side, an enemy soldier, whose identity is disputed, plunges at al-Ḥusayn, sword in hand. Al-Ṭabarī names the soldier as Bahr b. Kaʿb b. ʿUbayd Allāh, the man who would later go on to rob the dead body of al-Ḥusayn. Ibn al-Aʿt̄ir and Ibn Namā concur, while al-Iṣfahānī and al-Mufid both call him Abġar b. Kaʿb and Ibn Ṭāʾūs refers to him as Ḥarmala b. Kāhil. Al-Maġlisī notes two of the possibilities, Abġar b. Kaʿb or Ḥarmala b. Kāhil.

The youthful ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan, standing by his uncle’s side, calls his killer by a different name; ‘Ibn al-Ḥabīta’ – ‘son of an abominable woman’ (the suggestion being that he was born out of wedlock, impacting both upon him and upon his mother). “Would you kill my uncle?” he shouts, attempting to shield al-Ḥusayn from the blows, almost losing his arm in the process and receiving a mortal wound. In Ibn Ṭāʾūs, to whom we shall return shortly, the wounded boy is then killed by an arrow while in the arms of his uncle, seemingly fired by Ḥarmala b. al-Kāhil, a detail missing from most other transmissions.²⁴ It may be that Ibn Ṭāʾūs is here conflating two different deaths, for this is how al-Ḥusayn’s infant son will be killed while in his father’s arms.

At this stage, his attacker appears to step back; the boy, crying out “O my mother” (in most texts) dies in al-Ḥusayn’s arms as his uncle tries to console him, urging him to be patient in his sufferings, and promising that soon he will be reunited with his righteous ancestors. Some texts name them, although not always in the same order, as the Messenger of God, ʿAlī, Ḥamza, Ğaʿfar and al-Ḥasan.

As it stands, the story is carried with minor variants by al-Ṭabarī, al-Iṣfahānī, al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsī, Ibn al-Aʿt̄ir, Ibn Ṭāʾūs, Ibn Namā al-Hillī and al-Maġlisī.²⁵ Ibn Namā al-Hillī, in whose narra-

²⁴ Ibn Ṭāʾūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 72.

²⁵ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 158, al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-ṭālibīyyīn*: 116, al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī maʿrifat ḥuġaġ Allāh ʿalā al-ʿibād*, vol. II, bb. *wāqiʿ Karbalāʾ wa baṭūla Inām al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḥābi-hi*: 110, al-Ṭabarsī., *Iʿlām al-warāʾ bi-aʿlām al-hudā*: 249, Ibn al-Aʿt̄ir., *al-*

tive the story is immediately preceded by the death of al-Ḥusayn's oldest son, changes two details; he does not record al-Ḥusayn ordering Zaynab to restrain the boy, and the boy dies crying out for his uncle rather than for his mother. Al-Ḥawârizmî, and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs writing one hundred years or so after Ibn Namâ, are worth examining, for while both have a chronology at odds with the other transmitters, al-Ḥawârizmî omits the incident entirely, replacing it with a similar one and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs transmits it with disparate details.

The incident is preceded by three, in some transmitters four, key events: in al-Ṭabarî, al-Mufid and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs, the death of al-Ḥusayn's son 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, already examined and, shortly afterwards, the curious emergence onto the field and subsequent death of al-Qâsim b. al-Ḥasan, the boy with a face like the moon. Al-Ḥawârizmî reverses the order of these two boys' deaths but keeps most of the details. The third event, transmitted by al-Ṭabarî, al-Mufid, al-Ḥawârizmî and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs (with some added details) is the killing of the infant son of al-Ḥusayn and the fourth – only in al-Ṭabarî and, with a different chronology, al-Iṣfahânî – is the story of the boy with the pearl earrings. Schematically, the sources adhere to the following order:

1. al-Ṭabarî (death of 'Alî al-Akbar, death of the moon-faced al-Qâsim, death of al-Ḥusayn's infant son, death of the boy with the pearl earrings, death of the unrestrainable boy)
2. al-Iṣfahânî (death of 'Alî al-Akbar, death of the unrestrainable boy, death of the boy with the pearl earrings)
3. al-Mufid (death of 'Alî al-Akbar, death of the moon-faced al-Qâsim, death of al-Ḥusayn's infant son, death of the unrestrainable boy)
4. al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî (death of 'Alî al-Akbar, death of the moon-faced al-Qâsim, death of al-Ḥusayn's infant son)

Kâmil fî al-târîḫ, vol. II: 431, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-tubîf fî qatlâ al-tufîf*: 72, Ibn Namâ al-Hillî., *Muṭîr al-aḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*, Part 2: 73, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 53–54.

5. al-Ḥawârizmî (death of ‘Alî al-Akbar, death of the moon-faced al-Qâsim, emergence and restraining of ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, the future fourth Imâm, death of al-Ḥusayn’s infant son)
6. Ibn Ṭâ’ûs (death of ‘Alî al-Akbar, death of the moon-faced al-Qâsim, death of al-Ḥusayn’s infant son, death of the unrestrainable boy)
7. Ibn Namâ al-Hillî (death of ‘Alî al-Akbar, death of the moon-faced al-Qâsim, death of al-Ḥusayn’s infant son, death of the unrestrainable boy)

Al-Ḥawârizmî omits entirely the narrative of the boy whom Zaynab was unable to restrain, thus setting himself apart from al-Ṭabarî, al-Mufîd and Ibn Ṭâ’ûs. Instead, he turns his attention to ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, identified in his narrative as Zayn al-‘Âbidîn, who emerges from his tent, undeterred by his father’s strict prohibition; he was, notes the text, smaller than his brother recently killed, and was sick. He would be the one, says al-Ḥawârizmî, who would continue the family of Muḥammad, but at this stage he was not strong enough even to carry his sword. From behind him, his aunt Umm Kulṭûm shouts: “My child, come back!” He replies: “My aunt! Let me fight in front of the son of the Messenger of God!” At this point al-Ḥusayn intervenes, telling Umm Kulṭûm to seize hold of the boy and return him to his tent, since the earth could not continue devoid of the progeny of the family of Muḥammad, that is, without the members of the *ahl al-bayt*. As the only surviving son, ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn will be the only one who can continue the line and the Imamate.

This story is intensely similar to the story of the boy who would not be restrained, omitted by al-Ḥawârizmî, although here, Zaynab is substituted by Umm Kulṭûm and the boy (‘Abd Allâh b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alî) by al-Ḥusayn’s own son, with a wholly different outcome. Shahin, in his biography, notes that in bidding his final farewell to the women, al-Ḥusayn had ordered Zaynab to prevent ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn from fighting, and that she does this quite force-

fully; Shahin gives no references to any classical text and does not repeat the story told by al-Ḥawârizmî.²⁶

Al-Ḥawârizmî precedes the narrative of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn's emergence onto the field with a highly poignant story, also carried by al-Ṭabarī. It is not a story that in any way involves Zaynab, but is worth telling, since it falls into a common Karbalā' genre of boys, often pre-adolescent, dying in the battle. It is of a young boy who emerges onto the field, wearing, an onlooker notes, earrings in his ears. It is one of those minor details, like the broken sandal strap of Qâsim, observed by eyewitnesses and which lends a powerful credibility to the narrative. The boy is quite patently terrified, looking anxiously to right and to left, his earrings swinging from side to side. He is killed almost at once by a soldier named Hânî b. Baʿt.²⁷ His earrings are of note, since at a later stage in the battle, Zaynab will be noticed for her earrings, swinging violently as she emerges, resolute, onto the field for a third and last time.

Al-Ṭabarī, having related the death of al-Ḥusayn's infant son, ʿAbd Allah b. al-Ḥusayn, while sitting on his father's knee, follows the account with the emergence and killing of this unidentified boy from the family of al-Ḥusayn; besides the 'two pearls' in his ears, al-Ṭabarī notes that he is clutching a stick from the tents and wearing a waistcloth and a shirt. Al-Ṭabarī names the eyewitness himself, Hânî b. Ṭubayt al-Ḥaḍramî, as the killer, noting that years later, as an old man, Hânî would deny it. It is then that al-Ṭabarī relates the death of the boy whom Zaynab could restrain, called 'nephew' by al-Ḥusayn and who dies crying for his mother.²⁸

Between the death of the moon-faced al-Qâsim b. al-Ḥasan and the emergence of the boy who would not be restrained, following the chronology of al-Mufīd and to a lesser extent al-Ṭabarī, Ibn

²⁶ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 184.

²⁷ al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqālat al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqālat al-Ḥusayn*: 36. Cf. al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 45–46, who places it where al-Ṭabarī does, before the incident of the boy whom Zaynab could not restrain.

²⁸ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 155–156.

Ṭâ'ûs²⁹ recounts the gruesome death of al-Ḥusayn's infant son. Al-Ḥusayn, almost all his companions now slain and aware that he will be next, goes to the tent and asks Zaynab to bring his infant son, Abd Allâh b. Ḥusayn b. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib, whose mother was Rubâb, so that he might say his farewells. As al-Ḥusayn embraces him, the infant is struck in the throat by an arrow, fired, says Ibn Ṭâ'ûs, by Ḥarmala b. al-Kâhil. Al-Ḥusayn thrusts him back into the arms of Zaynab, scoops up some of his blood and flings it heavenwards. In the other transmissions, Zaynab is not involved in this incident.

It is after this that Ibn Ṭâ'ûs recounts the story of 'Abd Allâh b. al-Ḥasan, the boy who would not be held back, but with a detail missing in the other transmitters; that he is killed by an arrow while already dying in the arms of his uncle, seemingly also fired by Ḥarmala b. al-Kâhil. As already noted, while Ibn Ṭâ'ûs involves Zaynab in the death of the infant 'Abd Allâh, he omits any order from al-Ḥusayn to Zaynab to restrain the boy who would not be deterred, just as he omits any reference to Zaynab's appearance 'like the rising sun'.³⁰

In Ibn Namâ's account, the deaths of the infant son and then of the unrestrainable boy are separated by the death of al-'Abbâs, al-Ḥusayn's last surviving brother.³¹ After the death of the moon-faced al-Qâsim b. al-Ḥasan, his narrative reports al-Ḥusayn going to the women's tent and asking to see his infant son 'Abd Allâh (also known as 'Alî), who is subsequently shot and killed in his father's arms. In Ibn Namâ's narration, Zaynab makes no appearance in this pericope.³²

Al-Ḥawârizmî narrates the death of Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allâh b. Ğā'far b. Abî Ṭâlib followed by 'Awn b. 'Abd Allâh b. Ğā'far b. Abî Ṭâlib. He does not mention that these are the two sons of Zaynab, although in other cases (such as that of Abû Bakr b. 'Alî, 'Uṭmân b. 'Alî and the other brothers of al-Ḥusayn) he does indeed

²⁹ Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 69–72.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibn Namâ al-Hillî., *Muṭîr al-abzân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*, Part 2: 71.

³² Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 69–70.

report the name of the deceased's mother. However, he is uncertain who emerges next, noting that according to some transmitters, the next to come out and die was 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and according to other transmitters, al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan, the latter described as a boy who had not yet reached puberty. When al-Ḥusayn sees him, he embraces him and both are overwhelmed with weeping. The boy then asks permission to fight; his uncle al-Ḥusayn refuses to permit it, but the boy persists, standing resolutely in front of him until it is given. He then enters into battle and is killed, and al-Ḥawārizmī relates how his face was like a 'half-moon'. Al-Ḥawārizmī immediately narrates Ḥumayd b. Muslim al-Azdī's eyewitness account of a boy, describing his shirt and his broken sandal strap, and whom Ḥumayd attempts unsuccessfully to prevent his being killed.³³

3. A CHALLENGE

One last time, Zaynab makes an appearance on the Karbalā' field. While a number of her biographers record her anguish upon hearing of the gallant death of her half-brother al-'Abbās, ("O, for my brother! O, for al-'Abbās! We have certainly lost everything as we lost you"), this intervention is not carried by the classical texts.³⁴ It is now virtually the end of the battle; al-Ḥusayn, exhausted, all his companions dead, is surrounded by enemy soldiers. Al-Ṭabarī and a number of other transmitters note a general tone of reluctance; few of the soldiers attacking al-Ḥusayn seem eager to kill him, and they hold back in the hope that this task would fall to someone else. Ultimately, al-Ḥusayn will be killed because an irritated and impatient Shimr harangues and intimidates his troops. Whoever it was who ultimately struck the death blow,³⁵ there is no one who bears responsibility for al-Ḥusayn's death more than Shimr.

³³ Cf. al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 30–32.

³⁴ AL-JIBOURI Y.T., (trans.), *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, 2014: 221, SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 183.

³⁵ Sibṭ al-Ġawzī names five possibilities, with Sinān in first place and Shimr in fifth. Cf. Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīkr ḥaṣā'is al-a'imma*: 214.

It is while al-Ḥusayn is being attacked from all sides that Zaynab emerges one last time from her tent, at an extremely perilous moment in the battle and in a defiant intervention recorded even by al-Balāḍurī, although he omits almost all other references to her in his Karbalāʾ account.³⁶ One eyewitness reports a seeing her earrings “bobbing between her ears and her shoulders,”³⁷ not the first time a bystander has taken note of such a small detail. On her lips is a lament of harrowing despair: “My brother! My master! People of my house! Would that the heaven covered the earth, and that the mountains were levelled on the plain!”³⁸ is Ibn Ṭāʾūs’ rendition. In other transmitters, it is a more succinct “would that the heaven covered the earth,”³⁹ while al-ʿIṣāmī has her emerge ‘calling out’, although he records no actual lament.⁴⁰ When she catches sight of ʿUmar b. Saʿd,⁴¹ commander of the enemy forces, she accosts him, demanding to know whether he is going to do nothing more than look on while her brother is being killed. According to the narrator ʿAmmār, ʿUmar turns his head from her, weeping.

³⁶ al-Balāḍurī., *Kitāb ansāb al-asbrāf*, vol. III: 409, HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 160–161, al-Mufīd., *al-Irshād*, vol. II, bb. *wāqīʿ Karbalāʾ wa baṭūla Imām al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḥābi-hi*: 112, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 40, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 431–2, Ibn Ṭāʾūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 73, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 548, al-ʿIṣāmī., *Simṭ al-nuḡūm al-ʿawālī*, vol. III: 71, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annār*, vol. XLIV, bb. 36: 306, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 55, al-ʿĀmilī., *Aḡyān al-Shiʿa*, vol. VII: 138.

³⁷ ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmmār al-Bāriqī, a witness to the battle and to the death of al-Ḥusayn.

³⁸ Ibn Ṭāʾūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 73, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 54.

³⁹ al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 40, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 431–2, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya* vol. XI: 548, al-ʿIṣāmī., *Simṭ al-nuḡūm al-ʿawālī*, vol. III: 71, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 55.

⁴⁰ al-ʿIṣāmī., *Simṭ al-nuḡūm al-ʿawālī*, vol. III: 71.

⁴¹ Son of Saʿd b. Abī al-Waqqāṣ, one of the Companions of Muḥammad.

As al-Mufid recounts it, al-Ḥusayn's sister Zaynab came to the door of the tent and called out to 'Umar b. Sa'd: "Woe to you, 'Umar! Is Abū 'Abd Allāh being killed while you watch?" However, 'Umar does nothing to help, and Zaynab cries out in desperation: "Woe upon all of you! Is there not a Muslim among you?" But no one responds to her plea. Al-Mufid omits the detail of her lament and the tearful reaction of 'Umar b. Sa'd, but adds the second appeal, in the face of 'Umar's failure to respond, to all the other soldiers. It is immediately after this second appeal that, in al-Mufid's narration, Shimr berates the troops for not finishing the job.⁴²

The challenge to 'Umar b. Sa'd and his subsequent tears of mortification are omitted by Ibn Ṭā'ūs, but recorded by al-Ṭabarī, al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn al-Aṭīr, Ibn Kaṭīr and al-'Iṣāmī. In al-Mufid's narrative, it appears to be a desperate appeal for help which, when it fails, causes Zaynab to turn to others. In Ibn Kaṭīr, it is clearly a moral rebuke: "Are you satisfied that Abū 'Abd Allāh is being killed while you watch?"⁴³ If it is indeed that – a moral upbraiding more than a desperate appeal – it marks yet another crucial stage in the transformation of Zaynab, preparing her for the two critical encounters that now lie ahead of her on a different field of battle.

4. TO KŪFA

The immediate aftermath of al-Husayn's death is a frenzy of rapid events, although the chronology is not always straightforward. According to al-Ṭabarī, on the same day that he was killed (in this narrative, by Sinān b. Anas),⁴⁴ that is, 10th Muḥarram, al-Ḥusayn's head was despatched with Ḥawālī b. Yazīd and Ḥumayd b. Muslim al-Azdī to Ibn Ziyād.⁴⁵ The next day (11th Muḥarram), the bodies

⁴² al-Mufid., *al-Irshād*, vol. II, bb. *wāqī' Karbalā' wa baṭūla Imām al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḥābi-hi*: 112.

⁴³ Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 548.

⁴⁴ al-Ṭabarī., *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, vol. V: 453.

⁴⁵ While some agree with al-Ṭabarī (cf. for e.g. Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol. II: 434), others think it was with Ḥawālī b. Yazīd alone (cf. for e.g. al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 44, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *fī maqṭali-hi*: 111).

of al-Ḥusayn and his companions were buried. By all accounts, on 12th Muḥarram the departure to Kûfa with the women and children took place.⁴⁶ Somewhere in these three days, between al-Ḥusayn's death and the withdrawal from Karbalâ', but from a chronological point of view almost certainly on 10th Muḥarram and not later than that, there were a number of other events: the looting of the women and their tents (with the intervention of 'Umar b. Sa'd), the attempt to kill 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn (with the intervention of Ḥumayd b. Muslim) and the lament of Zaynab (and others) upon seeing the bodies of the dead.

The looting of the dead body of al-Ḥusayn and, immediately after that, of the women and their tents, is described by many transmitters. Ibn al-A'tîr notes that al-Ḥusayn's body was stripped of everything, and that the women's robes were literally torn from them, leaving them unveiled and with almost nothing.⁴⁷ A number of transmitters record the extremely callous looting of one of al-Ḥusayn's daughters, usually unnamed, but identified by Ibn Namâ al-Hillî as Fâtîma.⁴⁸ In the midst of this brutality, 'Umar b. Sa'd, to whom Zaynab had so fruitlessly appealed a short while before, arrives at the women's tents. The women, horrified by the appearance of a senior army commander, begin to shriek with fear; in fact, 'Umar b. Sa'd intervenes and stops the looting. The women petition him that their possessions be returned, and 'Umar b. Sa'd complies by ordering: "Do not enter into even one of the houses of these women...whoever takes anything from their belongings must return it." However, note the texts laconically, nobody returned anything.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 163–4. Cf. Ibn al-A'tîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 434.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-A'tîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 432–3. Cf. also al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 43.

⁴⁸ Ibn Namâ al-Hillî., *Mu'tîr al-abzân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 2: 76.

⁴⁹ al-Mufîd., *al-Irshâd*, vol. II, bb. *wâqî' Karbalâ' wa ba'tûla Imâm al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḥâbi-hî*: 113, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâ'izîn wa-tabâ'irat al-mutta'izîn*: 428, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 43, Ibn al-A'tîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 432–3, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb*

It is Shimr who, coming upon the ailing 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn in the tents of the women, wants to kill him, and Ḥumayd b. Muslim ("Glory be to God! Would you kill the youth?")⁵⁰ and 'Umar b. Sa'd who intervene to save the life of the next Imām. Transmitting from Abū Miḥnaf, Ibn Kaṭīr narrates:

"Shimr b. Dī al-Ġawshan intended to kill 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Aṣḡar Zayn al-Ābidīn, who was young and sick, but was dissuaded from doing that by one of his companions, Ḥumayd b. Muslim. 'Umar b. Sa'd came and said: 'No one is to enter upon these women, and no one is to kill this youth.'"⁵¹

Two days after the death of al-Ḥusayn, notes Ibn al-Aṭīr,⁵² and thus 12th Muḥarram, the journey from Karbalā' to Kūfa commences. The women, bareheaded and in full view, are mounted in litters on female camels, and entrusted by 'Umar b. Sa'd to someone to guard and protect them.⁵³ In Abū Miḥnaf's account⁵⁴ from, among others, Qurra b. Qays al-Ḥanzalī al-Tamīmī, an eyewitness at Karbalā',⁵⁵ it is 'Umar b. Sa'd who orders the departure, taking

al-lubūf fī qatlā al-tufūf: 77–78, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 2: 76, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 550, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 58.

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 432–3. Quite clearly, this happens before Ḥumayd leaves the scene bearing the head of al-Ḥusayn.

⁵¹ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 161–2, al-Mufīd., *al-Irshād*, vol. II, bb. *wāqī' Karbalā' wa baṭūla Imām al-Ḥusayn wa aṣḡābi-hi*: 113, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'izīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta'izīn*: 428, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 43, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 432–3, Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣā'is al-a'imma*: 218, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 550.

⁵² Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 434.

⁵³ Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 560.

⁵⁴ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 164–167.

⁵⁵ Qurrah b. Qays al-Ḥanzalī al-Tamīmī, an eyewitness of the battle and member of the opposing forces, who witnessed the severing of the heads.

with him the daughters and sisters of the dead al-Ḥusayn, the children with them and the sick ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn.⁵⁶ There were also female servants in the retinue.⁵⁷ Al-Hayṭamī, transmitting from Ibn Saʿd, provides a list of the survivors who were moved from the site of the battle and sent to Ibn Ziyād; he names ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, Fâtima bt. al-Ḥusayn and Sukayna bt. al-Ḥusayn. Curiously, Zaynab is omitted from the list, although admittedly, al-Hayṭamī seems to be interested here primarily in al-Ḥusayn's children. He notes that ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, who was despatched with the others, was a boy who had already reached puberty; it is an important detail for the later questions that Ibn Ziyād will raise about his manhood.⁵⁸

It is at the very start of this exodus from the battle site, at least according to some of the transmitters (al-Balâḍurî, al-Ṭabarî, al-Ḥawârizimî, Ibn al-Aʿrî, Ibn Kaṭîr, al-ʿÂmilî), that Zaynab raises a lamentation upon seeing the dead bodies of her brother, his family and his companions. This introduces a problem of chronology; for despite the words of Zaynab about bodies under the open sky, al-Ṭabarî has reported that the bodies of al-Ḥusayn and his companions had been buried by members of the Banû Asad the previous day, 11th Muḥarram.⁵⁹ It may be that al-Ṭabarî has inserted an Abû Miḥnaf report about the lament after his description of the burials without thought for timing; or, it may be that when Ibn Kaṭîr⁶⁰ notes that they saw al-Ḥusayn and his companions 'on the ground', it is a reference to the freshly-dug graves or even to battle litter, rather than the actual corpses. However, the most likely explana-

⁵⁶ Cf. also al-Ḥawârizimî., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 44, Ibn al-Aʿrî., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḫ*, vol. II: 434, Ibn Ṭaʿûs., *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 77–78, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-aḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashghân*, Part 2: 75.

⁵⁷ al-Dīnawarî., *Kitâb al-ahbâr al-ṭinvâl*: 270.

⁵⁸ al-Hayṭamî., *Maḡmaʿ al-ḥawâʿid wa-manbaʿ al-fawâʿid*, vol. IX, bb. 95 (*Manâqib al-Ḥusayn*), n. 15148: 227.

⁵⁹ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 163. Cf. Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî maqtali-hi*: 111.

⁶⁰ Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XI: 560.

tion is that it is transmitters like Ibn Ṭā'ūs⁶¹ and Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî who have gotten it correct; that the lament was not sung by Zaynab as the survivors were leaving Karbalā' on 12th Muḥarram, but two days earlier, immediately after the death of al-Ḥusayn, when the women were being driven from their burning tents.

The length and wording of the lament differ in various transmissions, as noted by, among others, al-ʿĀmilî in his *Aʿyân al-Shiʿa*.⁶² As they pass the remains of al-Ḥusayn and the other dead, notes al-Ṭabarî, the women shriek and tear at their faces. Qurrah b. Qays remarks that he had never seen women as beautiful.⁶³ "By God," he remarks, "they were more beautiful than the wild cows at Yabrîn."⁶⁴ He then reports the exquisite lament of Zaynab as she passes the dead body of her brother:

"O Muḥammad! O Muḥammad! May the angels⁶⁵ of heaven bless you. Here is Ḥusayn in the open, stained⁶⁶ with blood

⁶¹ Curiously, al-ʿĀmilî, transmitting from Ibn Ṭā'ūs, still puts the lament on the wrong day. Cf. al-ʿĀmilî, *Aʿyân al-Shiʿa*, vol. VII: 138.

⁶² al-ʿĀmilî, *Aʿyân al-Shiʿa*, vol. VII: 138.

⁶³ Literally, "I never ever saw a sight of women that was more beautiful than the sight I saw of them that day."

⁶⁴ These details are not in Abû Miḥnaf. Yabrîn refers to an oasis in Saudi Arabia, near the town of al-Ḥunn.

⁶⁵ While al-Balâḍurî uses 'sovereign' (*malîk*), al-Ṭabarî uses *malâ'ika* ('angels'); al-Ḥawârizimî and Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, writing two-and-a-half centuries after al-Ṭabarî, transmit the word as *malîk*, which means 'sovereign' or 'king'. Forty years after Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, Ibn al-Aʿtîr returns to *malâ'ika*; so does one of his contemporaries, Ibn Ṭā'ūs, while another, Sibṭ al-Ġawzî, changes it to 'the God of heaven' (Sibṭ al-Ġawzî, *Taḍkîrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-ḍîker ḥaṣâ'is al-a'imma*: 216–217). Writing a few years later, Ibn Namâ, although he follows very closely the Ibn Ṭā'ūs narrative, reverts to *malîk*; a century after him, Ibn Kaṭîr uses *malâ'ika*. Al-Maġlisî, transmitting from Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, retains his use of *malîk*. It seems, therefore, unlikely that this is merely a mistake in transmission, with the Arabic for angel (*malak* or *malâk*, with its plural *malâ'ika*) devolving into *malîk*. Instead, I have chosen to follow the possibility that these are two different strands, and following the definition given by Arthur Jeffery, I have translated the word *malîk*, not as a corruption of the Arabic for 'angel' or 'angels', but as

and limbs torn off. O Muḥammad! Your daughters are prisoners, your progeny killed, and the east wind blows dust over them.”⁶⁷

Many transmitters add the reaction of those standing around: “By God, she caused enemy and friend alike to weep.”⁶⁸ This will not be the last time that groups of people will weep upon hearing Zaynab speak. It is a Zaynab who is less distraught; her words are becoming more measured and restrained, as the metamorphosis from the terrified woman at al-Ḥuzaymiyya to the woman who confutes Ibn Ziyād and Yazīd continues.

A number of transmissions provide longer, more detailed and quite diverse laments.⁶⁹ Al-Ḥawārizmī writes in his *Maqṭal* that when the survivors (al-Ḥusayn’s daughters, sisters, ‘Alī b. al-

‘sovereign’. Cf. JEFFERY A., “The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur’ān” in G Böwering and J D McAuliffe (eds.), *Texts and Studies of the Qur’ān*, Brill, Leiden 2007: 269.

⁶⁶ al-Ṭabarī’s text (like others after him such as Sibṭ al-Ġawzī’s) employs the term *murammal*, different from the *muẓammal* of al-Balāḍurī, and which Howard translates as ‘stained’. In all other places, I have chosen to translate this word as ‘soiled’. Al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn al-Aṭīr and Ibn Kaṭīr, transmitting some centuries after al-Ṭabarī, have read the word as *muẓammal*, which I have rendered as ‘wrapped’.

⁶⁷ al-Balāḍurī, *Kitāb ansāb al-asbrāf*, vol. III: 411–412, HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 164. Cf. also al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 44–45 (with a slight variation in the wording), Ibn al-Aṭīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 434, Sibṭ al-Ġawzī, *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣā’iṣ al-a’imma*: 216–217, Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 560.

⁶⁸ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 164. Cf. also al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 44–45, Ibn al-Aṭīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 434, Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 560.

⁶⁹ al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 44–5 (with only slight changes), Ibn Ṭā’ūs, *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 78–79, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb, *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālīb*, vol. IV, bb. *fī maqṭali-hi*: 113, Ibn Namā al-Hillī, *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-aḥgān*, Part 2: 77, 84, al-Maḡlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 58–59.

Ḥusayn and their offspring – al-Ḥawârizmî fails to mention the wives of al-Ḥusayn, but they were surely present) pass the bodies of al-Ḥusayn and his companions, the women cry out and strike faces. Zaynab exclaims:

“O Muḥammad! The Sovereign⁷⁰ of heaven bless you! Here is Husayn in the open air, wrapped with blood, begrimed with dust, dismembered of limbs! O Muḥammad! Your daughters, captives of the army, your offspring killed, the sand scattered over them, this son of yours, head cut off at the nape; he is neither absent and anticipated, nor wounded and curable.” She was still speaking when her listeners, friend and foe alike, began to weep.

Ibn Ṭā'ûs records a slightly longer dirge by Zaynab, following the looting of the women's tents. Stripped of head covering and bare-foot, their tents on fire, the captured women see the dead of Karbalâ' lying on the ground. Ibn Ṭā'ûs transmits from the narrator Ḥumayd b. Muslim; this is a crucial detail, for it places the lament before his departure for Kûfa, which al-Ṭabarî says is 10th Muḥarram. Ḥumayd says:

By God! I will never forget Zaynab daughter of 'Alî, bewailing al-Ḥusayn, and crying with a sad voice and grief-stricken heart: “O Muḥammad! May the angels of heaven bless you! This is Ḥusayn, soiled with blood, dismembered of limbs, and your daughters, captives. To God, this complaint, to Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafâ (the Chosen), to 'Alî al-Murtaḏâ (the Approved), to Fâṭima al-Zahrâ' (the Radiant) and to Ḥamza, master of the martyrs. O Muḥammad! This is Ḥusayn in the open air, the wind covering him with sand, killed by the children of harlots. The grief of it! The torment of it! Today my grandfather the Messenger of God has died! Companions of Muḥammad! These are the offspring of the Chosen, driven like the driving of captives.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ The Arabic *malik*.

⁷¹ Ibn Ṭā'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tuṣūf*: 78, al-Maḡlisi., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 59.

Ibn Ṭāʾûs follows this with a second, longer narration, which combines elements from many of the others and is followed immediately by an account of the looting of al-Ḥusayn after his death:

“O Muḥammad! Your daughters are captives, your offspring killed, the wind spreading sand upon them! This is Ḥusayn, head cut from the nape, turban and gown plundered. May my father be⁷² ransomed for his army plundered on Monday! May my father be ransomed for his tent, its ties lacerated! May my father be ransomed for the one who is not absent and expected back, not wounded and treatable. May my father be ransomed for the one for whom my soul is a ransom! May my father be ransomed for the one grief-stricken until he was killed! May my father be ransomed for the one thirsty until he departed! May my father be ransomed for the one whose beard drips with blood May my father be ransomed for the one whose grandfather is Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafâ! May my father be ransomed for the one whose grandfather is the Messenger of the God of heaven! May my father be ransomed for the one who is the grandson of the prophet of guidance! May my father be ransomed for Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafâ! May my father be ransomed for Ḥadiġa al-Kubrâ! May my father be ransomed for ‘Alî al-Murtaġâ! May my father be ransomed for Fâṭima al-Zahrâ’, Mistress of the women of the worlds! May my father be ransomed for whom the sun went back until he had prayed.”⁷³ The transmitter said: By God, she made every enemy and friend weep.⁷⁴

⁷² The Arabic *bi abî* here is, ostensibly, a shortened version of a longer formula, *bi abî anta wa ummî* (lit. ‘you are to me as my father and mother’). The sense is sacrificial; had I something as precious as my own mother and father to offer as a ransom for you, I would do so. Muhammad Sarwar suggests “how earnestly I wish to sacrifice something as dear, beloved and extremely important to me as my father for...” Cf. SARWAR M., (trans.), *Behar al-anwar*, vol. 43, 2015: 317.

⁷³ It is reported that on two occasions, once during the life of Muḥammad and once after his death, ‘Alî caused (through prayer) the sun to return to its earlier position. On one of these occasions, on the authori-

Ibn Shaḥrāshūb's *Manāqib* seems little concerned with chronology; Zaynab eulogizes her brother, using the lament found in al-Ḥawārizmī and in extended form in al-Maḡlisī, but adding a number of phrases from a longer lament in Ibn Ṭā'ūs and later in al-Maḡlisī. Ibn Shaḥrāshūb gives little indication of timing; he notes that the bodies were buried one day after they were killed,⁷⁵ but in his narration, Zaynab's lament is squeezed between a list of those killed and the account of Sinān arriving with al-Ḥusayn's head at the palace of Ibn Ziyād.⁷⁶

In Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, Zaynab and the other women are driven bareheaded from their burning tents; upon passing the body of al-Ḥusayn on the ground, she laments for him in an anguished voice and with a wounded heart, in the words of Ibn Ṭā'ūs' first narration. The narrator notes that at her words, hardened hearts and 'coarse faces melted', and that in another (less trustworthy) manuscript, 'coarse faces were broken'.⁷⁷ Ibn Namā uses 'Sovereign' instead of 'angels'; he omits the name of Muḥammad, transmitting the phrase "To God, this complaint, to 'Alī al-Murtaḏā, to Fāṭima al-Zahrā' and to Ḥamza, master of the martyrs." He also changes 'the children of harlots' (*al-baḡāyā*) to 'the children of imposters' (*al-ad'iyā*), although this word can also mean 'bastards'. Then, based on the account of Qurra b. Qays, Ibn Namā records a second version of the complaint (*shakwā*) of Zaynab to her grandfather Muḥammad about the slaying of the people of his house:

ty of well-known transmitters like Umm Salama, al-Anṣārī and al-Ḥudrī, Muḥammad was resting on 'Alī's thigh and receiving revelation, so that 'Alī was unable to make the afternoon prayer. Muḥammad tells him to ask God to send the sun back for him, so that he may pray the prayer standing and at its proper time. This he does. Cf. al-Mufid., *al-Irsbād*, vol. I, bb. *fī radd al-shams li-'Alī maratayn*: 346.

⁷⁴ Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 78–79.

⁷⁵ Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *fī maqtali-hi*: 111.

⁷⁶ Op. cit.: 112–113.

⁷⁷ Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-abḡān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 2: 77.

Qurra b. Qays said: “I will never forget the words of Zaynab, daughter of ‘Alī, as she passed by her brother on the ground. She said: ‘O Muḥammad, the Sovereign of heaven bless you! This is Ḥusayn in the open air, soiled with blood, dismembered of limbs! O Muḥammad, your daughters, captive, your offspring killed, the sand scattered over them!’ Friend and foe alike wept at these words.”⁷⁸

It is noteworthy that in this version, Qurra b. Qays’ words (‘I will never forget the words of Zaynab’) are, with a small variation, the same opening words attributed by Ibn Ṭā’ūs to Ibn Ḥumayd b. Muslim (‘I will never forget Zaynab’).

Ultimately, it is in Ibn Ṭā’ūs and al-Maḡlisī that we find the longest laments. Al-Maḡlisī begins by transmitting from Ibn Ṭā’ūs the dirge of Zaynab, immediately after the looting of the women’s tents, as bareheaded and barefoot, their tents on fire, the captured women see the dead of Karbalā’ lying on the ground. The lament is narrated by Ḥumayd b. Muslim who, as already noted and if al-Ṭabarī is correct, was not there by the time the survivors left for Kūfa, so that the lament had to be earlier than 12th Muḥarram.⁷⁹ Al-Maḡlisī follows this with a longer, more detailed lament which, he says, is found in ‘some transmitters’ (*fī ba‘d al-ruwāyāt*) but without identifying them. Besides the fact that Ibn Shaḥrāshūb inserts bits of it into the lament he records from Zaynab, and which Ibn Ṭā’ūs carries it in almost the same form, it is not transmitted in this complete form by any major Shī‘ī author:

And in some transmitters: “O Muḥammad! Your daughters are captives, your offspring killed, the wind spreading sand upon them! This is Ḥusayn, head cut from the nape, turban and gown plundered! May my father be ransomed for his army plundered on Monday! May my father be ransomed for his tent, its ties lacerated! May my father be ransomed for the one who is not absent and expected back, not wounded and treatable. May my father be ransomed for the one for whom my soul

⁷⁸ Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-abzān wa munīr subul al-ashghān*, Part 3: 83–84.

⁷⁹ al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 37: 58–59.

is a ransom! May my father be ransomed for the one grief-stricken until he was killed! May my father be ransomed for the one thirsty until he departed! May my father be ransomed for the one whose beard drips with blood! May my father be ransomed for the one whose grandfather is the Messenger of the God of heaven! May my father be ransomed for the one who is the grandson of the prophet of guidance. May my father be ransomed for Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā! May my father be ransomed for Ḥadiġa al-Kubrā! May my father be ransomed for 'Alī al-Murtaḍā! May my father be ransomed for Fāṭima al-Zahrā', mistress of the women! May my father be ransomed for whom the sun went back until he had prayed!"⁸⁰

Shahin in his biography records a prayer uttered by Zaynab as she passes the body of her brother: "God, accept this offering and reward him for his deed." He gives no references for the prayer, and in fact it is not transmitted by the major Shī'ī sources. It is, Shahin notes, prayed at the very moment that the *abl al-bayt* is being removed by force from the political arena of Islam.⁸¹

There are two addenda to the account of Zaynab's lament and the departure to Kūfa. The first is that in his history, al-Ṭabarī transmits a bizarre incident involving Sinān b. Anas, sometimes named as al-Ḥusayn's killer (and if not, certainly present at the moment of his death), and described by al-Balāḍurī and al-Ṭabarī as 'a poet' and 'a bit insane'. He goes to 'Umar b. Sa'īd's tent and sings a song for which he will be severely chastised:

"Fill my saddlebags with silver and gold, for I have killed the hidden sovereign! I have killed the best of people as regards his mother and father, and the best of them when they speak of lineage."⁸²

The song is compelling not only for its callousness, but also because its singer and the place it is sung are substantially disputed in

⁸⁰ Op. cit., vol. XLV, bb. 37: 59.

⁸¹ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 43.

⁸² al-Balāḍurī., *Kitāb ansāb al-asbrāf*, vol. III: 410, HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 162.

the texts. Ibn al-Aʿt̄ir⁸³ and Ibn Kaʿt̄ir follow the al-Ṭabarī narrative, including the stern reaction provoked by the verses. ʿUmar b. Saʿd orders Sinān brought into the tent, and when he enters, ʿUmar flings his whip at him and shouts: “Woe to you, you are mad! By God, had Ibn Ziyād heard you say this, he would have had you beheaded!”⁸⁴ Ibn Shaḥrāshūb, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī and al-Ṣadūq, on the other hand, have Sinān b. Anas actually reciting these words to Ibn Ziyād, who replies: “Woe to you! If you knew he was the best of people as regards his mother and father, why in that case did you kill him?” and orders Sinān’s execution.⁸⁵

In his *Usd al-ġāba fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*,⁸⁶ Ibn al-Aʿt̄ir places the verses on the lips of one of those regarded as the killer of al-Ḥusayn, either Shimr or ʿUmar b. Saʿd, and has them sung to Ibn Ziyād by the killer when he brings to Ziyād the head of al-Ḥusayn. His contemporary, Sibṭ al-Ġawzī, grandson of the more famous Ibn al-Ġawzī, places the words on the lips of either Sinān or Shimr, and has them sung at the door of ʿUmar’s tent.⁸⁷ Others, like Ibn ʿAsākir and al-Ḥawārizmī, report the verse being recited by Ḥawālī b. Yazīd al-Aṣbaḥī, tasked with transporting the head to Ibn Ziyād. Ziyād reacts angrily to the poem (“if you knew he was so great, why did you kill him?”) and has the reciter executed.⁸⁸ Whatever

⁸³ Ibn al-Aʿt̄ir., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 433. Ibn al-Aʿt̄ir describes Sinān as ‘courageous’ (*shuḡāʿ*), ‘a poet’ (*shāʿir*) but ‘a little crazy’ (*bi-bi lūta*). The first two terms will crop again later, in a conversation between Zaynab and Ibn Ziyād.

⁸⁴ Ibn Kaʿt̄ir., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 551.

⁸⁵ al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn wa-tabṣirat al-muttaʿiẓīn*. b. *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, n. 8 [414]: 429, al-Ṣadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*: 144, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib ʿalī Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *fī maqṭali-hi*: 113.

⁸⁶ Ibn al-Aʿt̄ir., *Usd al-ġāba fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*, vol. I, bb. 1173 (*al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī*): 570.

⁸⁷ Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣāʾiṣ al-aʿimma*: 215.

⁸⁸ Ibn ʿAsākir., *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. XIV, bb. 1566 (*al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāsbīm b. ʿAbd al-Manāf*): 252, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 45.

the details of the poem in terms of the reciter and his fate and the recipient of the verses, it is a crucial anecdote recorded by the Sunnī scholars, indicating as it does that in the immediate aftermath of Karbalā', the authorities knew that something terrible had transpired. This realization is clearly seen in the vacillations and mood swings of Ibn Ziyād and Yazīd.

A second addendum is the curious tangent taken by al-Ṣadūq in his *Kitāb al-amālī* and al-Fattāl al-Nīsābūrī in his *Rawḍat al-wā'iẓīn*. Al-Ṣadūq recounts the instant of al-Ḥusayn's death; at that moment, it is, in al-Ṣadūq's narrative, Umm Kulṭūm, daughter of al-Ḥusayn, who emerges, bareheaded, her hands on her head, and laments with words that most other authors have put into the mouth of Zaynab: "O Muḥammad! This is al-Ḥusayn in the open air, robbed of turban and outer garment!"⁸⁹ In fact, this is not the only time that al-Ṣadūq put words that traditionally belong to Zaynab into someone else's mouth. He records another incident, also found in al-Iṣfahānī, in which Ibn Ziyād sends a delegate (*qāṣid*) to Umm Kulṭūm. The text here is uncertain and offers the possibility that this is either al-Ḥusayn's sister or his daughter; in this case, considering the age of al-Ḥusayn's daughter, his and Zaynab's sister seems the more likely candidate. The delegate, in words reminiscent of those Ibn Ziyād would speak to Zaynab, says: "Praise be to God, who has killed your men! How do you see what He has done to you?" Umm Kulṭūm replies:

"Ibn Ziyād, if indeed you are delighted by the killing of al-Ḥusayn, how often did his grandfather not delight in him, kissing him and kissing his lips and placing him on his shoulder! Ibn Ziyād! Consider his grandfather in answering, for on a future day he will be your adversary!"⁹⁰

Al-Fattāl al-Nīsābūrī also recounts the story of al-Ḥusayn's horse; it drew near, bespattered with his fragrance (the author notes that other texts say 'soiled with his blood'), the front of its head stained with the blood of al-Ḥusayn. It is galloping and whinnying, and

⁸⁹ al-Ṣadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīṯ wa-l-abyār*, maḡlis 30: 163.

⁹⁰ Op. cit.: 164. Also in al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-ṭālibīyyīn*, bb. *maḡtal al-Ḥusayn*, n. 8 [414]: 469–470.

hearing these sounds, the womenfolk (‘the daughters of the prophet’) emerge. Seeing the riderless horse, they realize at once that al-Ḥusayn is dead. This causes Umm Kulṭûm, whom, like al-Ṣadûq, the author names as daughter of al-Ḥusayn, one of the women who has emerged bareheaded, to place her hands on her head and begin a lament, using words that most other authors have put into the mouth of Zaynab: “O Muḥammad! This is al-Ḥusayn in the open air, robbed of turban and outer garment!”⁹¹

Besides the questions about which Umm Kulṭûm this is, and whether Zaynab’s words have, mistakenly, been put into her mouth, it is a curious text; it appears to mark the moment of realization by the women that al-Ḥusayn is dead; the women, that is, aside from Zaynab, whom the texts quite patently reveal to be an eyewitness to his death, in the very last moments challenging his killers. The death of her brother marks Zaynab’s final intervention on the field of Karbalâ’; transformed and empowered by the example of the martyrs, Zaynab will now take the leading role in defending the justice of al-Ḥusayn’s cause and making Karbalâ’ the indestructible paradigm of struggle that it has become for every generation of the Shi‘a.

⁹¹ al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî, *Rawḍat al-wâ‘izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta‘izîn*: 428.

CHAPTER FOUR.

IN THE HALLS OF THE KINGS

1. THE FIRST PROTEST

It is a journey of approximately 46 miles (79.4 kilometres) from Karbalá' to Kûfa; al-Ṭabarî in his history gives no indication of how long it took the survivors and their captors to cover this distance. However, it is upon their arrival, in a busy market square crowded with inquisitive onlookers, that Zaynab delivers the first of two momentous protests. Her words are carried, with some slight variations, by a number of transmitters;¹ al-Mufid in his *al-Amâlî*, for example, is reporting from Ḥaḍlam b. Saṭîr,² who says: "I arrived in Kûfa in Muḥarram of the year 61, with the departure

¹ al-Mufid., *al-Amâlî li-l-Mufîd*, *mağlis* 38: 321–323, al-Ṭûsî., *al-Amâlî fî al-ḥadîṯ*, *mağlis* 3: 92–93, al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-iḥṡâğğ 'alâ abl al-liğğğ*, vol. II: 304, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 45, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî maqṭalî-hî*: 115, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-ṭufûf*: 86–87, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 3: 86, al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 1: 108–110 (from Ibn Ṭâ'ûs), vol. XLV, bb. 39: 163–164 (from al-Ṭabarsî), vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 1: 108–110 (from al-Mufid and al-Ṭûsî), al-Shablangî., *Nûr al-abḥzân fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥṡâr*. 20, al-Âmilî., *Ayân al-Shî'a*, vol. VII: 138.

² The editor notes he is called Ḥaḍlam b. Bashîr in other texts, Ḥaḍim Ibn Sharîk al-Asadî in al-Ṭabarsî (al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-iḥṡâğğ 'alâ abl al-liğğğ*, vol. II: 304), Bashîr b. Ḥaḍlam in Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî and in al-Mağlisî (Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*: 112, al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 147), and Bashîr b. Ḥazîm al-Asadî in al-Ḥawârizmî and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs (al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 45, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-ṭufûf*: 86).

of ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn with the women from Karbalā’, and with them the soldiers guarding them. The people went to look at them.” Then Ḥaḍlam catches sight of Zaynab: “I had never seen such a modest one³ more articulate than her; it was as though she was cast⁴ from the tongue of the Commander of the Faithful.” Zaynab⁵ motions to the crowd to be quiet, and their voices⁶ fall silent as the people literally hold their breath. Then she begins her declaration:

“Praise be to God and blessing upon my grandfather the Messenger of God.⁷ O people of Kūfa! O people of deception and desertion!⁸ Let the tears not cease flowing or the cry subside. Your similarity is nothing but “*like unto her who unravelleth the*

³ ‘A shy woman’ notes the editor.

⁴ 4th form verb *afraġa-yufriġu*; cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. VI, 1968: 2381, al-‘Āmili, *A‘yān al-Sbi‘a*, vol. VII: 137. Al-Maġlisī, transmitting from Ibn Ṭā’ūs, employs the 2nd for verb *farra‘a-yufarri‘u*, which could carry the sense of ‘to be superior to’ (LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. VI, 1968: 2378). Al-Ḥawārizmī adds the verb *naṭāqa-yantūqu* “as if she spoke with the tongue of the Commander of the Faithful ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and was cast from it” (al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqtal al-Ḥusayn*: 45).

⁵ It must be noted that Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr places almost the same protest, with much the same detail (including the narration by one who he names Ḥiḍām al-Asadī) on the lips of Umm Kulthūm, ostensibly the sister of Zaynab. He has not mixed up the two women, since he has a chapter dedicated to each, although while he clearly identifies Zaynab as daughter of ‘Alī, he does do the same for Umm Kulthūm. It seems certain enough that he means Zaynab’s sister; to her, he attributes what others attribute to Zaynab, that is, the protest at Kūfa. He then goes on to record Zaynab’s protest before Yazīd. Cf. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Balāġāt al-nisā’*: 38–39.

⁶ In al-Mufid, ‘voices’ (*al-aṣnāt*), but in al-Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn Ṭā’ūs, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī (and also Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, recounting the story about Umm Kulthūm), ‘(animal) bells’ (*al-aġrās*).

⁷ al-Ḥawārizmī adds: ‘and upon his pure and righteous family, the family of God’ (al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqtal al-Ḥusayn*: 46).

⁸ al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn Ṭā’ūs and Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī add here: ‘Do you weep?’

thread, after she bath made it strong, to thin filaments, making your oaths⁹ a deceit between you”.¹⁰ Is there nothing among you but conceit, the stain of vice, the hateful heart? Cowards in the encounter, powerless against the enemies, faithless in allegiance, neglecters of the covenant!¹¹ What wretchedness your souls have sent ahead of you, that God is angry with you and you will remain forever in torment!¹² Do you weep?¹³ Yes, by God, weep a great deal and laugh little! Already you are dismayed¹⁴ by its ignominy and its disgrace, and you will never ever wash its stain from yourselves! You have deserted and turned from¹⁵

⁹ Wrongly transcribed in both al-Ḥawârizmî and Ibn Ṭâ’ûs as ‘your faith’ (*imâni-kum*) instead of ‘your oaths’ (*aymâni-kum*), as in the other texts. Al-Ḥawârizmî changes the last part of the Qur’ânic citation, turning it into a question: “Do you make your oaths a deceit between you?”, but this is not how it reads in the Qur’ânic text (cf. al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 46).

¹⁰ Q. 16: 92. Referring their readers to a number of classical works of exegesis (al-Maḥallî and al-Suyûṭî’s *Tafsîr al-Ġalâlayn*, al-Râzî’s *Tafsîr al-kabîr* and al-Ṭabarsî’s *Ġâmi‘ al-bayân ‘an ta’wîl al-qur’ân*) the editors of ‘The Study Quran’ suggest that “weaving strands of yarn together to form a strong thread, only to senselessly unravel it, was reportedly the practice of a mentally impaired woman in Makkah, who did this as a regular habit. In this verse, it is used as a metaphor for those who take oaths to form strong bonds of alliance, only to break those oaths and undo those bonds when they seem to have lost their political expediency...” Cf. NASR S.H. et al., (eds.), *The Study Quran*, HarperOne, New York 2015: 682.

¹¹ This phrase is also found in al-Ṭûsî (al-Ṭûsî., *al-Amâlî fî al-ḥadîṯ, maḡlîs* 3: 92) but is missing from al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, al-Ṭabarsî, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî and Ibn Shaḥrâshûb.

¹² Cf. Q. 5: 80. Similar words were spoken by Fâṭima on her death-bed.

¹³ al-Ṭabarsî reads: “Do you weep over my brother? Yes, by God, weeping is most appropriate for you!” (al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-iḥtîgâg ‘alâ ahl al-ḥîgâg*, vol. II: 304).

¹⁴ al-Ṭabarsî reads ‘tested’, while al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, and Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî read ‘destroyed’.

¹⁵ al-Ṭabarsî, al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Ṭâ’ûs and Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî read ‘in what way will you wash away the killing...’

the scion of the seal of the prophecy, the leader of the youths of the people of paradise, the shelter in your confusion, the refuge in your calamity, the sign of your destination and the spokesman of your proof! Is it not an evil that you have taken upon yourselves, and wretchedness and degeneration! The endeavour is dashed, hands are covered with dust, the deal is forfeited, and you have been “*visited with wrath from Allah*” “*and humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon*” you.¹⁶ Alas for you! Are you aware which side of Muḥammad you have split lengthwise, and which blood of his you have shed and which precious thing of his you have deceived? “*Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins*”¹⁷ filling the earth and the heaven – does it astonish you that the sky drips blood? Truly, the torment of the Afterlife is more ignominious. Let not leisure cheer you, for haste does not induce Him, nor does He fear that vengeance will slip by. No, for “*Lo! thy Lord is ever watchful*”.¹⁸

Al-Ṭūsī transmits closely from al-Mufīd, but two centuries after al-Mufīd, Ibn Ṭāʾūs’ transmission contains some noticeable differences:¹⁹

Bashīr b. Ḥuzaym al-Asadī said: “On that day, I looked at Zaynab, daughter of ‘Alī, and by God I have not seen such a reserved person more eloquent than her; it was as though she

¹⁶ A paraphrase of Q. 2: 61 “*And humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them and they were visited with wrath from Allah*”, repeated, although with a different word order, in Q. 3: 112 “*They have incurred anger from their Lord, and wretchedness is laid upon them*”. In the latter verse, aside from the change in word order, Pickthall is incorrect in his translation of the Arabic ‘*Allāh*’ as ‘their Lord’.

¹⁷ Q. 19: 89–90. Cf. also Q. 42: 5.

¹⁸ Q. 89: 14.

¹⁹ Ibn Ṭāʾūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-tufūf*: 86–87.

surpassed²⁰ the eloquence of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. She motioned to the people to become quiet; breathing was reduced, the bells became still. Then she said: ‘Praise be to God and blessings upon my father Muḥammad and upon his pure and righteous family. O people of Kūfa! People of deception and desertion! Do you weep? May the tears not cease to flow, the lament²¹ not abate!²² Truly, your likeness is similar “unto her who unravelleth the thread, after she hath made it strong, to thin filaments, making your oaths a deceit between you”.²³ Is there among you anything except conceit, the stain of vice, the hating heart, the flattering of slaves,²⁴ the winking²⁵ of the enemies, like grassland over a ruin or like silver²⁶ over a grave?²⁷ Is it not an evil²⁸ that your souls have sent ahead of

²⁰ In al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥawārizmī and Ibn Namā, the verb is *tafarraġa* (‘to be cast from’). Ibn Ṭā’ūs (and al-Maġlisī transmitting from him), uses *tafarra’a* (‘to surpass’).

²¹ al-Ṭabarsī and Ibn Shaḥrāshūb read ‘sighs’ (*al-ḥafra*).

²² Here, al-Shablanġī adds ‘or the sighs’ (*al-ḥafra*).

²³ Q. 16: 92.

²⁴ al-Shablanġī reads in the singular ‘the (female) slave’ (*al-ama*) rather than the plural *al-imā*?: cf. al-Shablanġī., *Nūr al-abṣār fī manāqib āl bayt al-nabī al-muḥtār*: 203.

²⁵ al-Shablanġī reads ‘prevention’ or ‘containment’ (*ḥaġḡ*); cf. al-Shablanġī., *Nūr al-abṣār fī manāqib āl bayt al-nabī al-muḥtār*: 203.

²⁶ al-Ḥawārizmī reads ‘gypsum’ (*qaṣṣa* or *qīṣṣa*), with a footnote explaining that this is a type of plaster; cf. al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 46 and LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. VII, 1968: 2527.

²⁷ The phrase from ‘the flattering of slaves’ until ‘like silver over a grave’, is entirely omitted by al-Mufid, who replaces it with: ‘cowards in the encounter’ (*ḥawmārūn fī-l-liqā*), ‘powerless before the enemy’ (*‘aġḡzūn ‘an al-a’dā*), ‘faithless to the allegiance’ (*nākiṭūn li-l-bayya*) and ‘neglecters of the covenant’ (*mudayyi’ūn li-l-dimma*): cf. al-Mufid., *al-Amālī li-l-Mufīd*, maġlis 38: 322.

²⁸ al-Ṭabarsī and Ibn Shaḥrāshūb read ‘wretchedness’.

you,²⁹ that God is angry with you and that you will remain forever in anguish? Do you weep and lament? Yes, by God, weep a great deal and laugh little! Certainly, its ignominy and its disgrace³⁰ have destroyed you, and you will never wash it with any ablution after this. In what way will you wash away the killing of the descendant of the seal of the prophethood,³¹ the treasure trove³² of the message, the leader of the youths of the people of paradise,³³ the shelter of your confusion,³⁴ the refuge of your calamity,³⁵ the minaret of your proof³⁶ and the spokesman³⁷ of your *sunna*?³⁸ Is it not an evil that you take³⁹

²⁹ At this point, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb's narration changes quite dramatically from that of Ibn Ṭā'ūs. Al-Shablanġi reads: "Is it not an evil that you have taken upon yourselves?" which is a later phrase in al-Ḥawārizmī and Ibn Ṭā'ūs. Cf. al-Shablanġi, *Nūr al-abṣār fī manāqib āl bayt al-nabī al-muḥtār*: 203.

³⁰ While most of the texts read 'disgrace' (*shānār*), al-Maġlisī reads 'hatred' (*shān'ān*) (cf. al-Maġlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 1: 109). He notes the alternative reading in works such as al-Ṣadūq's *Kitāb al-biṣāl*.

³¹ Also in al-Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥawārizmī, al-Maġlisī and al-Shablanġi. Al-Ḥawārizmī and al-Maġlisī read 'the prophets' (*al-anbiyā'*) rather than 'the prophecy' (*al-nubuwwa*) of Ibn Ṭā'ūs (Ibn Ṭā'ūs, *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufjif*: 87), Ibn Namā (Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muṭīr al-abḥān wa munīr subul al-ashġān*, Part 3: 86) and al-Shablanġi (al-Shablanġi, *Nūr al-abṣār fī manāqib āl bayt al-nabī al-muḥtār*: 203).

³² The Arabic *ma'dīn* means the 'place of the origin or source of some treasure'. Also in al-Ṭabarsī and al-Shablanġi.

³³ Also in al-Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥawārizmī, al-Maġlisī and al-Shablanġi.

³⁴ Transcribed in al-Ḥawārizmī and al-Maġlisī as *ḥayrati-kum* ('your treasure') and in Ibn Ṭā'ūs as *ḥayrati-kum* ('your bewilderment').

³⁵ Also in al-Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥawārizmī and al-Maġlisī.

³⁶ Also in al-Ḥawārizmī and al-Maġlisī.

³⁷ Mistakenly transcribed in Ibn Ṭā'ūs, and should read *midrah*, as in al-Ḥawārizmī.

³⁸ Also in al-Maġlisī. While both he and Ibn Ṭā'ūs read 'your *sunna*', al-Ḥawārizmī reads 'your tongues' (*alsinati-kum*), with an editorial footnote that clarifies that this ought to be understood as 'accentuating' or 'stress-

upon yourselves, a far removal for you, and crushing?⁴⁰ Certainly, the course has already failed, the hands have perished,⁴¹ the deal is forfeited, and you have been “visited with wrath from Allah” “and humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon” you. Alas for you, people of Kûfa! Are you aware⁴² which side of the Messenger of God you have split lengthwise, and which precious thing of his you have exposed, and which blood of his you have shed,⁴³ and which holiness of his you have desecrated?⁴⁴ You have brought them,⁴⁵ bald-headed,⁴⁶ white

ing’. Al-Ṭabarsī, as will be noted in the main text, adds a number of names that are not found in our other authors.

³⁹ Mistaken transcription in al-Ḥawârizmī, which should read *tazîrûna*.

⁴⁰ Here, al-Shablangī reads instead: “Alas for you, people of Kûfa! Is it not an evil into which your souls have seduced you, that God is angry with you and that you will remain forever in anguish?” Cf. al-Shablangī, *Nûr al-abṣâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr*: 43.

⁴¹ al-Mufid reads ‘have become dusty’ in the sense of suffering an enormous loss, such as from riches to poverty (cf. al-Mufid., *al-Amâlî li-l-Mufid*, *mağlis* 38: 323).

⁴² Omitted by al-Mağlisī.

⁴³ These two phrases are reversed in al-Ḥawârizmī and al-Shablangī. Al-Ḥawârizmī adds: “And which sacred precinct of his you have assaulted?”

⁴⁴ Here, al-Ḥawârizmī and al-Shablangī insert a Qur’ânic verse: “*Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing, Whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins*” (Q. 19: 89–90).

⁴⁵ The heads of al-Ḥusayn and his martyred companions.

⁴⁶ That is, without turbans, which were stripped from the dead during the post-Ḳarbalâ’ looting of the bodies. Al-Ṭabarī takes note in his history that al-Ḥusayn was wearing his turban in the run-up to the battle, that he put a turban back on after receiving a head wound, and that he was wearing it at his death (HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 92, 153, 160). As noted earlier in this work, her brother being stripped of his gown and turban forms part of Zaynab’s lament.

necked,⁴⁷ blackened,⁴⁸ distorted (and some of them) clumsy and misshapen,⁴⁹ as though sufficient for filling the earth or like the gathering⁵⁰ of heaven.⁵¹ Were you astonished that the heavens rained blood? Truly, the affliction of the Afterlife is far worse,⁵² and you will not be helped. Do not let leisure⁵³ make you estimate it lightly, for haste does not induce⁵⁴ Him, nor

⁴⁷ Literally, ‘long-necked’, with special reference to the whiteness of neck of a bird of legend such as the griffon; but the root also carries a sense of ‘calamity’. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. V, 1968: 2177–2178, HAVA J.G., *Arabic English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 2008: 497.

⁴⁸ Mistaken transcription in al-Ḥawârizmî, which should read *sawdâ*?. Al-Mağlisî reads *sawmâ*?, which seems to be an error in transcription.

⁴⁹ In the Arabic text, this list of adjectives has a poetic sequence: *ṣal'â*?, *'anqâ*?, *sawdâ*?, *faqmâ*?, *ḥarqâ*? and *shawbâ*?. Ibn Namâ, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb and al-Shablangî omit all but the last two.

⁵⁰ According to Lane, a ‘gathering’, with specific reference to nobles, chiefs or principle persons. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. VII, 1968: 2792. Al-Shablangî omits this phrase.

⁵¹ Most of this phrase is omitted by al-Mufid.

⁵² al-Ḥawârizmî: “Truly, the affliction of the Afterlife is worse and viler...”

⁵³ That is, of the arrival of the Afterlife with its concomitant reward or punishment.

⁵⁴ I have followed al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsî, al-Ḥawârizmî and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs in their *lâ yahfizû-hu al-bidâr* (“haste does not induce Him”). Ibn Shaḥrâshûb and al-Shablangî both employ the verb *ḥaqara* (“to scorn, disdain”) while Ibn Namâ uses instead the verb *ḥafara* (“to watch over, protect’ or, alternatively, ‘to be shy, diffident, bashful’). Ibn Namâ also uses *al-badra*, while the other texts employ *al-bidâr* (“haste”).

does He fear that vengeance⁵⁵ will slip by. “*Lo! thy Lord is ever watchful*”.⁵⁶

The transmitter said: By God, truly, I saw the people that day, bewildered, weeping, putting their hands over their mouths. I saw an old man standing at my side, weeping until his beard was soaked. He said: ‘May my parents be ransomed for you! Your elders are the best of elders, your youth the best of youth, and your women the best of women. They will be neither disgraced nor overcome.’”

While al-Ṭabarsî and al-Ḥawârizmî list three accusations made by Zaynab again the people of Kûfa – ‘deception’ (*al-ḥatl*, which he clarifies as *ḥidâ*), ‘treachery’ (*al-ḡadr*) and ‘desertion’ (*al-ḥadl*)⁵⁷ – Ibn Shaḥrâshûb records five: they have committed ‘betrayal’ (*al-ḥatr*), ‘treachery’ (*al-ḡadr*), ‘deception’ (*al-ḥatl*), ‘desertion’ (*al-ḥadl*) and ‘cunning’ (*al-makr*).⁵⁸ Ibn Ṭâ’ûs maintains only ‘deception’ (*al-ḥatl*) and ‘treachery’ (*al-ḡadr*) (as, therefore, does al-Maḡlisî transmitting from him) while al-Mufid, Ibn Namâ and al-Shablangî catalogue only deception’ (*al-ḥatl*) and ‘desertion’ (*al-ḥadl*).⁵⁹

Later in the text, al-Mufid and Ibn Ṭâ’ûs list a further three indictments – ‘conceit’ (*al-ṣalaf*), ‘being stained with vices or crimes’

⁵⁵ Mistaken transcription in al-Ḥawârizmî, which should read *ṭa’r*. The editor of *Muṭṭir al-aḥzân* notes that some transmitters render this as *al-nâr* (the Fire). As in in al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Namâ’s text reads *al-ṭâr* instead of *al-ṭa’r* (‘vengeance’).

⁵⁶ Q. 89: 14. Al-Ḥawârizmî adds here a curious phrase “and they awaited the first of *al-Nahl* and the last of *Ṣâd*”, meaning the first verse of *sûrat a-Nahl*, “*The commandment of Allah will come to pass, so seek not ye to hasten it. Glorified and Exalted be He above all that they associate (with Him)*” (Q. 16: 1) and the last verse of *sûrat Ṣâd*, “*And ye will come in time to know the truth thereof*” Q. 38: 88.

⁵⁷ al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-iḥtiḡâḡ ‘alâ abl al-liḡâḡ*, vol. II: 304, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maḡtal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maḡtal al-Ḥusayn*: 46.

⁵⁸ Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. X, bb. *fî maḡtali-hi*: 378.

⁵⁹ al-Mufid., *al-Amâli li-l-Mufid*, *maḡlis* 38: 321, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭṭir al-aḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashḡân*, Part 3: 86, al-Shablangî., *Nâr al-abṣâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr*: 203

(*al-naṭaf*) and ‘the hating heart’ (*al-ṣadr al-shanaṭ*).⁶⁰ Al-Ṭabarsî and Ibn Shaḥrâshûb list four: ‘conceit’ (*al-ṣalaf*), ‘vanity’ (*al-ʿuğb*), ‘enmity’ (*al-shanaṭ*) and ‘deceit’ (*al-kiḏb*).⁶¹ Al-Ḥawârizmî also lists four, but different: ‘conceit’, ‘intrinsically corrupt’ (*al-ṭanaf* or *al-ṭaniṭ*), ‘hatred’ and ‘being stained with vices or crimes’. An editor’s footnote defines the first as ‘insolence’, the second as ‘a rottenness of morals’, the third as ‘enmity’ and the fourth as ‘impurity’.⁶² Al-Shablangî lists ‘conceit’, *al-ṣanaf*, which may be a mistaken transcription of ‘intrinsically corrupt’ (*al-ṭanaf* or *al-ṭaniṭ*) and ‘the disease of the hating heart’ (*dâʿ al-ṣadr al-shanaṭ*).⁶³ Al-Mağlisî, transmitting from Ibn Ṭâʿûs, omits ‘the hating heart’, maintaining only ‘conceit’ and ‘being stained with vices or crimes’.⁶⁴ Ibn Namâ lists ‘conceit’ and ‘being stained with vices or crimes’, adding ‘the ignominy of the hating servant’ (*dull al-ʿabd al-shanaṭ*).⁶⁵

In spite of the severity of these charges, they pale in comparison to Zaynab’s devastating quotation from Q. 19: 89–90; the verse is omitted by Ibn Ṭâʿûs and Ibn Namâ, but carried by al-Mufid, al-Ṭûsî, al-Ṭabarsî, al-Ḥawârizmî and Ibn Shaḥrâshûb. The context of Q. 19: 89–90 is the accusation of ascribing to God a son:

“And they say: The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son. Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins, that ye ascribe unto the Beneficent a son, when it is not meet for (the Majesty of) the Beneficent that He should choose a son” (Q. 19: 88–92).

⁶⁰ al-Mufid., *al-Amâlî li-l-Mufîd*, mağlis 38: 322, Ibn Ṭâʿûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-ṭufûf*: 87

⁶¹ al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-iḥtîğâğ ʿalâ abl al-lîğâğ*, vol. II: 304, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. fî maqtali-hî: 115.

⁶² al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. fî maqal al-Ḥusayn: 46. Cf. STEINGASS F., *Learner’s Arabic English Dictionary*, 1993: 1128.

⁶³ al-Shablangî., *Nûr al-abṣâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr*: 203.

⁶⁴ al-Mağlisî., *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 1: 109.

⁶⁵ Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abḏân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 3:

The implicit suggestion is that Zaynab regards the murder of al-Ḥusayn as being on the same level as the sin of *shirk*, the ascribing of a partner to God, described by Q. 4: 48 as unforgivable. While the possibility of forgiveness for al-Ḥusayn's killers remains a debated question, on the Day of Judgment Fāṭima will stand before God holding in her hand the bloodied shirt of her son and demand that his killers be punished.⁶⁶

One could understand that between them, the texts propose a Zaynabian theology, that is, a number of 'beautiful names' or theological titles for al-Ḥusayn articulated by his sister as she paints a portrait of him. He is 'the scion of the seal of the prophethood' (*salīl ḥātim al-nubuwwa*),⁶⁷ 'the treasure trove of the message' (*ma'dīn al-risāla*),⁶⁸ 'the leader of the youths of the people of paradise' (*sayyid shabāb abl al-ġanna*),⁶⁹ 'the shelter for your confusion' (*malād ḥayrati-kum*)⁷⁰ or of 'your good deed' (*malād ḥayrati-kum*),⁷¹ 'the shelter for your warfare' (*malād ḥarbi-kum*),⁷² 'the refuge of your party' (*ma'ād*

⁶⁶ CLOHESSY C., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 176–178.

⁶⁷ In al-Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn Ṭā'ūs, Ibn Namā, al-Maġlisī and al-Shablangī. Al-Mufid transcribes *al-risāla* rather than *al-nubuwwa*.

⁶⁸ In al-Ṭabarsī, Ibn Ṭā'ūs, Ibn Namā and al-Shablangī.

⁶⁹ In al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥawārizmī, Ibn Ṭā'ūs, Ibn Namā, al-Maġlisī and al-Shablangī. In a well-known *ḥadīth* carried both by Sunnī and Shi'ī transmitters, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the two sons of 'Alī and Fāṭima, are named by Muḥammad as 'the leaders of the youths of paradise' (*sayyidā shabāb al-ġanna*). Cf. for e.g. Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. IX, *Ḥadīth Ḥudġfa*, n. 23389: 91, Ibn Māġa., *Sunan*, vol. I, *al-Muqaddima*, bb. 11 (*Faḍā'il aṣḥāb rasūl Allāh, Faḍl 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*), n. 118: 44, al-Tirmidī., *Sunan*, vol. IX, bk. 50 (*Kitāb al-manāqib*), bb. *manāqib al-Ḥasan wa-l-Ḥusayn*, n. 3771: 331, al-Ṭabarī., *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, vol. V: 168, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 1, bb. *faḍā'il Fāṭima al-Zabrā' bt. rasūl Allāh*, n. 42: 108–109, n. 66: 125, Ibn 'Asākir., *Ta'rīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. XIV, bb. 1566 (*al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim b. 'Abd al-Manāf*): 130, 132, al-Shablangī., *Nūr al-absār fī manāqib āl bayt al-nabī al-muḥtār*: 43.

⁷⁰ In Ibn Ṭā'ūs.

⁷¹ In al-Mufid, al-Ḥawārizmī and al-Maġlisī.

⁷² In al-Ṭabarsī.

hiẓbi-kum),⁷³ ‘the abode of your peace’ (*maqarr silmi-kum*),⁷⁴ ‘the sorrow of your speech’ (*âsî kalîmi-kum*),⁷⁵ ‘the refuge for your calamity’ (*mafẓa‘ nâẓilati-kum*),⁷⁶ ‘the minaret of your proof’ (*manâr huġġati-kum*),⁷⁷ ‘the spokesman of your *sunnâ*’ (*midrah sunnati-kum*),⁷⁸ ‘the spokesman of your tongues’ (*midrah alsinati-kum*),⁷⁹ ‘the minaret of your destination’ (*manâr maḥaġġati-kum*),⁸⁰ ‘the spokesman of your arguments’ (*midrah huġġâġi-kum*)⁸¹ and ‘the one to whom to turn in your struggle’ (*al-marġa‘ ilay-hi ‘ind muqâatalati-kum*).⁸² While a number of these appellations are unique to al-Ṭabarsî, and some could even represent transcription errors rather than actual names, they nonetheless fashion an image of al-Ḥusayn in popular piety.

Ibn Namâ’s transmission is missing a number of words from the end of the sermon,⁸³ while Ibn Shaḥrâshûb⁸⁴ too offers a slightly altered text, omitting a number of lines:

Until her speech ultimately reached her statement: “Is it not an evil that you have sent ahead for yourselves, an evil that you have taken upon yourselves) to the day of your resurrection, and wretchedness, wretchedness, and degeneracy, degeneracy! The course has already failed, the hands have perished, the deal

⁷³ In al-Ṭabarsî.

⁷⁴ In al-Ṭabarsî.

⁷⁵ In al-Ṭabarsî.

⁷⁶ In al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsî, al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Ṭâ’ûs and al-Maġlisî.

⁷⁷ In al-Mufid (who reads *madraġâ*), al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, Ibn Namâ (who reads *midrah* rather than *manâr*) and al-Maġlisî.

⁷⁸ In Ibn Ṭâ’ûs and al-Maġlisî.

⁷⁹ In al-Ḥawârizmî.

⁸⁰ In al-Ṭabarsî, Ibn Namâ and al-Shablangî. Al-Mufid transcribes *amâra* (‘sign’, ‘token’, ‘mark’) rather than *manâr*.

⁸¹ In al-Ṭabarsî. Al-Mufid transcribes *madraga* (‘course’, ‘way’, ‘road’).

⁸² In al-Ṭabarsî.

⁸³ Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abẓân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*, Part 3: 86.

⁸⁴ Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî maqtali-hi*: 115. Cf. al-Mufid’s *al-Amâlî li-l-Mufid*, al-Ṭûsî’s *al-Amâlî fî al-ḥadîṯ*, al-Ṭabarsî’s *Kitâb al-iḥtiġâġ ‘alâ abl al-liġâġ* and al-Ḥawârizmî’s *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*.

is forfeited, you have been contaminated with anger from God! Vileness and avarice have struck you. Are you aware, alas for you, which side of Muḥammad you have split lengthwise? And which commitment have you violated? And which precious thing of his you have exposed, and which blood of his you have shed? “Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing, Whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins”.⁸⁵ You have come with them, misshapen, clumsy, sufficient for the filling earth and heaven. Were you astonished that the heavens rain blood? Truly, the affliction of the After-life will suffice, and they will not be helped. Do not let leisure excite you to levity, for haste does not disdain Him, mighty and lofty, nor does He fear that vengeance will slip by. No indeed, “*Lo! thy Lord is ever watchful*” over us and over them.”⁸⁶

Al-Ṭabarsî records ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn telling his aunt to quieten down after the sermon, saying to her: “Among those remaining, there is esteem in respect to those who have passed away. You, by the praise of God, are erudite without a teacher, discerning without instruction. Weeping and yearning do not bring back what destiny has caused to pass away.”⁸⁷

These are not the only words Zaynab will speak in front of the people of Kûfa. Al-Mağlisi⁸⁸ reports that at a particular moment, ostensibly after the public protest but before the appearance before Ibn Ziyâd, the heads of the murdered men are brought into view, and Zaynab, in her carriage, catches sight of al-Ḥusayn’s head which seems to her ‘radiant, moonlike...a rising moon’ (*zubrî*

⁸⁵ Q. 19: 89–90.

⁸⁶ A paraphrase of Q. 89: 14.

⁸⁷ al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-iḥtîğâğ ‘alâ abl al-liğğâğ*, vol. II: 305, al-Mağlisi., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 164. Cf. SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 65. Al-Mufid’s editor notes this, but it is not included in al-Mufid’s narration: cf. al-Mufid., *al-Amâlî li-l-Mufid*, *mağlis* 38: 323.

⁸⁸ al-Mağlisi., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 1: 115. Cf. also al-Ğazâ’iri., *Riyâḍ al-abrâr fî manâqib al-a’imma al-aṭḥbâr*, vol. I: 342, al-Baḥrâni., *‘Awâlim al-‘ulûm wa-l-ma‘ârîf al-aḥwâl min al-âyat wa-l-aḥbâr wa-l-aqwâl*, vol. II, bb. 15: 975, vol. XVII: 373.

qamarî...qamar tâlî). She strikes her head against the front side of the carriage, causing blood to follow, and gestures with a piece of rug at her brother's head, saying:

“O new moon, when it is complete, perfect
 Its cloud snatches it unawares
 And setting, it is revealed!
 I never imagined, O half of my heart
 That this was foreordained, written.
 My brother! *Fâtîma al-saqîra*, talk to her!
 Her heart is on the point of melting!
 My brother, your heart was affectionate to us
 What is wrong with it, stern and become hard?
 My brother, were you to see ‘Alî among the captives, with the
 orphans!
 He cannot bear what is imposed!
 Whenever he is hurt with beating, he calls out to you in degradation,
 dwindling away, from tears poured out.
 My brother, embrace him to yourself and bring him close!
 Calm his frightened heart!
 What an abasement for an orphan, that calling upon his father
 He finds in him no answer.”

This lament is carried by no major transmitter, and al-Mağlisî gives few clues as to where he found it.

2. ‘UBAYD ALLÂH B. ZIYÂD

If indeed Zaynab functions as an archetype of defiant resistance against injustice in its manifold forms, it is in the moment she steps into the presence of ‘Ubayd Allâh b. Ziyâd that this role becomes incontestable. A man close to thirty years of age at the time of Karbalâ’, Ibn Ziyâd would die a matter of six or seven years after his encounter with this daughter of ‘Alî. Standing before him, she would not only competently defend her father and her brother but would save the life of ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, throwing herself over him in a maternal embrace. It would be her words, together with this

dauntless action, that would be pivotal in preserving both the truth about Karbalá' and the future of the Imamate. The account of the Zaynab-Ibn Ziyâd confrontation is carried by numerous Sunnî and Shî'î transmitters,⁸⁹ but al-Ṭabarî serves as our base text for the chronology of events, since his history preserves much of the verbal skirmish. Al-Ṭabarî presents a drama that unfolds in a number of acts.

In the first, the heads of the slain and the survivors are brought before Ibn Ziyâd. It is not entirely apparent in al-Ṭabarî's account whether they were all brought before him together, or whether the head of al-Ḥusayn was already in Ibn Ziyâd's palace when the women and children were led in. This latter possibility is Ibn Ṭâ'ûs' reading of it.⁹⁰ According to al-Ṭabarî, the head was despatched to Ibn Ziyâd immediately after the battle; by all accounts it arrived on the night of 'Āshûrâ, but since the palace gates were locked, it remained overnight with the luckless Ḥawâlî b. Yazîd as-Ashbahî (whose wife, appalled that her returning warrior husband had brought not silver or gold, but the head of the Prophet's grandson, banished him from the marriage bed) and was only

⁸⁹ al-Balâdurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 412 (in a much less detailed narrative than the other transmitters), HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 165–167, al-Şadûq., *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-ahbâdî wa-l-ahbâr*, maġlis 31: 165, al-Mufid., *al-Irsbâd fî ma'rifat huġaġ Allâb 'alâ al-'ġbâd*, vol. II, bb. *mâ ġarâ fî-l-Kûfa ba'da qatlî Imâm al-Ḥusayn*: 115, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawġat al-wâ'izîn wa-tabşirat al-mutta'izîn*, vol. I: 190, al-Ṭabarsî., *I'lâm al-warâ bi-a'lâm al-hudâ*: 252, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 47–48, Ibn 'Asâkir., *Târîḥ madînat Dimasbq*, vol. XLI, bb. 4875 ('*Alî b. al-Husayn b. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib b. Hâshim b. 'Abd al-Manâf*): 367, Ibn Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 434–5, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tuġûf*: 93–95, Ibn Namâ al-Hillî., *Muṭîr al-abḫân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*, Part 3: 90–91, al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma'rifat al-a'ġmma*, vol. II: 64, Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nibâya*, vol. XII: 560, al-'Asqalânî., *Tabḏîb al-tabḏîb*, vol II, (*Husayn b. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 323, al-'Işâmî., *Simṭ al-nuġûm al-'awâlî*, vol. III: 58–87, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 116, n. 3: 154, al-'Âmilî., *Aġyân al-Shi'a*, vol. VII: 138–139.

⁹⁰ Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tuġûf*: 93.

the next day brought to Ibn Ziyâd.⁹¹ It is unlikely that the survivors would have arrived before or even simultaneously with heads. Al-Ṭabarî, transmitting from Abû Miḥnaf, notes that the head of al-Ḥusayn⁹² was brought, together with his children, sisters and womenfolk, to Ibn Ziyâd.⁹³ Ibn Ṭâ'ûs, on the other hand, writes that Ibn Ziyâd was seated in his palace for a public meeting; the head of al-Ḥusayn was placed before him, and al-Ḥusayn's women and children were ushered into his presence.⁹⁴ Whether it was brought with them, or whether it was already there, it would have been a gruesome spectacle; the caliph Yazîd b. Mu'âwiya would prove more amenable to protecting the children from such a sight than would his governor Ibn Ziyâd.

The second act begins with Zaynab, disguised in shabby clothes, sitting among her maids. Three times Ibn Ziyâd will demand to know who she is and will receive no answer. Al-Ṭabarî intimates that he noticed her because she sat down in his presence ("who is that woman who is sitting down?" he asks).⁹⁵ Al-Ḥawârizmî's text suggests the same, although a little more provocatively; Zaynab comes in, throws a look towards Ibn Ziyâd, and then sits.⁹⁶ He responds by demanding to know who the seated woman is. Others adduce that it was because she had segregated herself and her maidservants from everyone else.⁹⁷ It is not always easy to tell whether Ibn Ziyâd directs his questions to her expressly,

⁹¹ Cf. for e.g. al-Balâdurî, *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 411.

⁹² Despatched from Karbalâ' with Ḥawâlî b. Yazîd as-Aṣbahî and Ḥumayd b. Muslim al-Azdî to Ibn Ziyâd and left for the night under a washtub in his house by Ḥawâlî (having found the palace door locked).

⁹³ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 165.

⁹⁴ Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 93.

⁹⁵ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 165.

⁹⁶ al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 47.

⁹⁷ Cf. for e.g. al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma'rifat ḥuḡaġ Allâh 'alâ al-'ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *mâ ġarâ fî-l-Kûfa ba'da qatli Imâm al-Ḥusayn*: 115, al-Ṭabarsî., *I'lâm al-warâ' bi-a'lâm al-hudâ*: 252, al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma'rifat al-a'imma*, vol. II: 64.

or merely asks about her; in some of the texts, like al-Ṭabarī, we are told quite distinctly that Zaynab did not respond to him, and nor did anyone else. Finally, a maid will tell him that this is Zaynab daughter of Fâṭima. In almost all the texts, she is referred to more than once as ‘the daughter of Fâṭima’ rather than ‘the daughter of ‘Alī’. In an earlier encounter, before the arrival of the women and children, when Zayd b. Arqam had challenged Ibn Ziyâd for poking at al-Ḥusayn’s teeth with his staff, al-Ḥusayn too is referred to as ‘the son of Fâṭima’. In itself, this suggests something evocative and powerful about the status of the daughter of Muḥammad, and the influence of her memory; more so, it is a considered and brazen provocation of the dictator, as the unidentified maid indelicately reminds him whose grandchildren he is ill-treating, clearly linking this badly-dressed prisoner with God’s Messenger and his daughter.

Although al-Ṣadûq omits the details of a disguise in dirty clothes and the questions of the governor, al-Mufid and those like al-Ṭabarsī and al-Irbilī who transmit from him, fill out the picture. The survivors are brought into the presence of Ibn Ziyâd; Zaynab, named as ‘the sister of al-Ḥusayn’ enters as part of the group, but in disguise, wearing the worst of her robes, and proceeds to sit on the side of the palace hall, surrounded by her handmaids. Ibn Ziyâd asks who this is, who has segregated herself on the side with her women, but Zaynab makes no answer. A second and third time he asks about her, and one of her handmaids informs him that this is Zaynab, now named as ‘daughter of Fâṭima’, daughter of the Messenger of God. The conversation, which we will examine shortly, now proceeds almost exactly as recorded by al-Ṣadûq and numerous other transmitters.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 165, al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma‘rifat huḡaḡ Allâh ‘alâ al-‘ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *mâ ḡarâ fî-l-Kûfa ba‘da qatlî Imâm al-Ḥusayn*: 115, al-Ṭabarsī., *I‘lâm al-warâ bi-a‘lâm al-budâ*: 252, Ibn Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḡ*, vol. II: 435, al-Irbilī., *Kashf al-ḡumma fî ma‘rifat al-a‘imma*, vol. II: 64, al-‘Iṣâmī., *Simṭ al-nuḡûm al-‘awâli*, vol. III: 72 (who does not relay the conversation in detail), Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XII: 560. Ibn Kaṭîr does not make any mention of Zaynab before Ibn Ziyâd in his main text, but in a long footnote records how she enters before him disguised in her vilest robe and surrounded by

Ibn Ṭāʾûs, followed closely by Ibn Namâ (although a substantial amount of the detail provided by Ibn Ṭāʾûs is missing from his account) transmits that Zaynab sits disguised, and asking about her, Ibn Ziyâd is informed that this is Zaynab, daughter of ʿAlî (in Ibn Namâ, ʿdaughter of ʿAlî b. Abî Ṭâlibʼ). All our other texts have named her as the daughter of her mother Fâṭima. Ibn Namâ omits Ibn Ṭāʾûs’ details about Ibn Ziyâd being in his palace, noting that Zaynab appears before Ibn Ziyâd disguised in her ʼvilest dressʼ, and that three times Ibn Ziyâd asks who she is. Ibn Namâ reports that she refuses to speak, suggesting the possibility that the questions are addressed directly to her, rather than merely about her. Eventually, someone whose rank or status is not identified, tells him that she is Zaynab, daughter of ʿAlî b. Abî Ṭâlib.⁹⁹

In his ʼReliving Karbalaʼ, Syed Akbar Hyder recounts a sermon he heard preached in Damascus in 1996 by Rashid Turabi, in which the preacher reshaped this moment, placing it in the court of Yazîd rather than that of Ibn Ziyâd, and putting a feisty response onto the lips of Zaynab:

Among the captives, Yazid noticed a woman, encircled by other women, whose very demeanor signified defiance. Yazid lashed out, asking, “Who is this arrogant woman?” A surreal silence enveloped the court. The defiant woman rose to respond to this question, and made her way through the women who surrounded her. Finally, face to face with Yazid, she retorted: “Why are you asking them [the women]? Ask me. I’ll tell you [who I am] I am Muhammad’s granddaughter. I am Fatima’s daughter. Ask me, Yazid.”¹⁰⁰

The third act of the drama then begins, initiated by Ibn Ziyâd’s first verbal encounter with Zaynab; he commences with the words ʼpraise to be Godʼ, as does Zaynab in her rebuttal. He asks his

her maids. He asks after her but no one replies, until finally one of her maids says: “That is Zaynab, daughter of Fâṭima.”

⁹⁹ Ibn Ṭāʾûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tujjûf*: 93–94, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-aḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashgân*, Part 3: 90–91.

¹⁰⁰ HYDER S.A., *Reliving Karbala. Martyrdom in South Asian Memory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2006: 97.

goadng question, ‘how do you see things now?’ to which Zaynab makes her magnificent reply, diversely recorded in the texts, but which greatly affronts Ibn Ziyâd. Al-Şadûq’s transmission of the dialogue reads:¹⁰¹

Zaynab, the daughter of ‘Alî was among them, and Ibn Ziyâd said: “Praise be to God, who has disgraced you, and killed you, and given the lie to your fables.”¹⁰² Zaynab replied: “Praise be to God, who has honoured us with Muḥammad and has cleansed us¹⁰³ “with a thorough cleansing”.¹⁰⁴ Instead, God disgraces the dissolute¹⁰⁵ and gives the lie to the deviant.”¹⁰⁶ (Ibn Ziyâd) answered: “How do you see what God has done with

¹⁰¹ al-Şadûq, *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-ahâdîth wa-l-ahbâr*, mağlis 31: 165.

¹⁰² al-Şadûq and al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî use the word *ahâdîth*, which includes a range of meanings such as ‘speech’, ‘telling lies or fables’, ‘gossip’ or ‘tale’, and can carry the sense of an ‘innovation’ or ‘invention’. The other transmitters employ *uḥdûṭa*, which carries the same range of meaning; it can signify ‘a wonderful thing told or narrated’, with some insisting that it refers specifically to a story in which there is no profit. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. II, 1968: 529.

¹⁰³ Here, al-Mufid, as well as those transmitting from him (al-Ṭabarsî and al-Irbilî) adds “from filth” (*al-rîğs*).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Q. 33: 33.

¹⁰⁵ *Fâsiq* (pl. *fussâq*, *fasaqa*) from the verb *fasaqa-yafsuqu* or *yafsiqu*, meaning ‘to stray from the right course, to stray, deviate, to act unlawfully, sinfully, immorally, to lead a dissolute life’. The primary meaning is ‘to go forth from another thing in a bad or corrupt manner’. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1997, vol. VI: 2398.

¹⁰⁶ *Fâğîr* (pl. *fugğâr* or *fağara*), from the verb *fağara-yafğuru*, the primary meaning of which is ‘to cleave, dig up, break up (ground), cut, divide, break open’. It also means ‘to incline, decline, lean, deviate, to err or lie, to commit a foul deed, an unlawful action, to act immorally, unrighteously, wickedly or sinfully, to transgress, to quit or depart from the way of truth or the right road’. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1997, vol. VI: 2340. Here, al-Mufid and Ibn Namâ add “and he is other than us, praise be to God”; cf. al-Mufid., *al-Irsbâd fî ma‘rifat huğğ Allâh ‘alâ al-‘ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *mâ ġarâ fî-l-Kûfa ba‘da qatli Imâm al-Ḥusayn*: 115, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-ahğân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 3: 90–91.

you, people of the house?”¹⁰⁷ She replied: “To be killed was prescribed for them and they have gone forth to the places where they were to lie.¹⁰⁸ God will bring you and them together¹⁰⁹ and you will summon one another before Him.”¹¹⁰

There are a number of textual issues that bear a closer look. Zaynab’s quote of Q. 33: 33 (“*Allah’s wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing*”) firmly roots the victims of Karbalâ’, both those killed and the surviving prisoners, into this crucial verse about Muḥammad’s family. It is, like the titles of al-Ḥusayn and Zaynab as ‘son’ and ‘daughter’ of Fâṭima, a stark reminder to Ibn Ziyâd of who he is maltreating; those of whom Muḥammad spoke when, at the moment Q. 33: 33 was revealed, he wrapped ‘Alî, Fâṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn in a cloak and and prayed: “O God! These are the members of my Household, so purify them of all uncleanness.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ al-Mufid reads “what God has done to the people of your house.”

¹⁰⁸ A slightly paraphrased Q. 3: 154 (“*those appointed to be slain would have gone forth to the places where they were to lie*”).

¹⁰⁹ al-Ṭabarsî, transmitting from the al-Mufid narrative, adds: “on the Day of Resurrection.” Cf. al-Ṭabarsî, *I’lâm al-warâ bi-a’lâm al-hudâ*: 252.

¹¹⁰ al-Mufid reads “you will plead excuses with Him and contend before Him”; cf. al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma’rifat ḥuḡaḡ Allâh ‘alâ al-‘ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *mâ ḡarâ fî-l-Kûfa ba’da qatlî Imâm al-Ḥusayn*: 115. Additionally, in Sibṭ al-Ḡawzî in a truncated form; cf. Sibṭ al-Ḡawzî., *Tadkîrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-dîker ḥaṣâ’is al-a’imma*: 218.

¹¹¹ Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. I, *Musnad ‘Abd Allâh b. al-‘Abbâs b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib*, n. 3062: 708–709, vol. VI, *Hadîṭ Wâtala b. al-‘Asqa*, n. 16985: XLV, vol. X, *Hadîṭ Umm Salama*, n. 26570: 177, n. 26612: 186–187, n. 26659: 197, n. 26808: 228. Cf. also al-Ṭabarî., *Ḡâmi‘ al-bayân ‘an ta’wîl al-qur’ân*, vol. XXII, Part 22, *sûrat al-Aḥzâb*, v. 33: 6–7. Cf. also al-Suyūṭî., *al-Durr al-manṭûr fî al-tafsîr bi-l-ma’tûr*, vol. V, *sûrat al-Aḥzâb*, v. 33: 376. Cf. also Ibn al-Aṭîr., *Usd al-ḡâba fî ma’rifat al-ṣaḡâba*, vol. V, bb. *ḥarf al-jâ’*: 521–522.

A further point of note is the use by some transmitters of verbs in different voices; in al-Mufid (and al-Ṭabarsî and al-Irbilî from him), Ibn Ṭâ'ûs (and al-Mağlisî from him) and Ibn Namâ, these verbs are in the passive: “the dissolute is disgraced, and the lie is given to the deviant.” In al-Ṭabarî and al-Şadûq, it is more clearly God Himself who disgraces the dissolute and gives the lie to the deviant.

Of further interest is that al-Ṭabarî, al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsî, Ibn al-Aṭîr, Ibn Namâ, Ibn Kaṭîr and al-Irbilî read, “how do you judge what God has done to the people of your house”, while al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs and al-Mağlisî transmitting from him read “what God has done to your brother and to the people of your house?” Al-Şadûq and al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî rephrase the question: “what God has done to you (pl.), people of the house?” Although the possibility exists that Ibn Ziyâd is, at this moment, asking the question of the whole group of survivors, the context suggests that ostensibly it is addressed to Zaynab alone. The implication is that at this moment, she encompasses within her person and in some sense carries the whole of the *ahl al-bayt*. Only three of our major transmitters record the famous answer of Zaynab, which has been deeply woven into popular piety and the retelling of the events: “I see nothing but beauty!”¹¹²

Finally, there is the issue of the eventual outcome, since each transmitter presents one or more consequences on the Day of Judgment. Al-Ṭabarî, al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsî, al-Ḥawârizmî and al-Irbilî all read “you (pl.) will dispute” with God (*tuhâğğûna*), while al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsî, al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn al-Aṭîr and al-Irbilî have “you (pl.) will quarrel” (*tahtaşimûna* or *tuhâşimûna*). Al-Şadûq reads “you (pl.) will summon one another” (*tatahâkamûna*) while al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî reads “they will summon one another” (*yatahâkamûna*). Only Ibn Ṭâ'ûs and Ibn Namâ keep the verbs in the singular, as referring to Ibn Ziyâd alone; “You will dispute and you will argue,” read their texts, “but watch (that day) to whom belongs victory!

¹¹² al-Ḥawârizmî, *Maqatal al-Husayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Husayn*: 47, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatla al-ḥujjîf*: 93, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abḫân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 3: 90. Cf. also al-‘Âmilî., *Aḡân al-Shî‘a*, vol. VII: 139.

Your mother will be bereaved of you, Ibn Marġāna!”¹¹³ This title, which is placed on someone’s lips more than once during the Karbalā’ event, is a not uncommon but damning reference, attributing him to his mother and thus recalling his apparent birth out of wedlock and, consequently, to a woman of loose morals.

It is of note that al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī, transmitting from Imām al-Bāqir¹¹⁴ (who notes that he himself was present at these proceedings) and who follows al-Šadūq word for word, begins his narrative with a curious detail, found also in al-Šadūq and al-Išfahānī’s *Maqātil*. Ibn Ziyād sends a message to Umm Kulthūm, daughter of al-Ḥusayn, saying: “Praise be to God who has killed your men! How do you judge what God has done to you?” She replies: “Ibn Ziyād, if indeed you are delighted by the killing of al-Ḥusayn, how often did his grandfather not delight in him, kissing him and kissing his lips and placing him on his shoulder! Ibn Ziyād! Consider his grandfather (in) answering, for on a future day he will be your adversary!”¹¹⁵ As already noted, it seems likely that if such a message had been sent, it would have been to Umm Kulthūm, sister of Zaynab, rather than to the very young daughter of al-Ḥusayn.

The fourth act of this drama opens with the anger of Ibn Ziyād to Zaynab’s response; he is so enraged, some texts note, that

¹¹³ Cf. al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 47, Ibn Ṭā’ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-tufūf*: 93, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-abḡān wa munīr subul al-ashġān*, Part 3: 90. Ibn Ziyād would be referred to by this name more than once, by Zayd b. Arqam, by ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Afif al-Azdī al-Ġamādī (a devout partisan of ‘Alī who heard Ibn Ziyād refer to al-Ḥusayn as ‘the liar and son of the liar’) and by Yazid himself. Cf. al-Balāḍurī., *Kitāb ansāb al-asrāf*, vol. III: 413, HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Tabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 165, 167, 171. Sibṭ al-Ġawzī has ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Afif al-Azdī turn on Ibn Ziyād, saying: “No, Ibn Marġāna, it is you and your father who are the liar and the son of the liar!” Cf. Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥasā’iṣ al-a’imma*: 218.

¹¹⁴ al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā’iẓīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta’iẓīn*, vol. I: 190.

¹¹⁵ Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-abḡān wa munīr subul al-ashġān*, Part 3: 90, al-Šadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-ahādīth wa-l-abbār*, maġlis 30: 164, al-Išfahānī., *Maqātil al-ṭālibīyyīn*, bb. *maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, n. 8 [414]: 469–470.

he ‘had evil designs’ (*hamma bi-hâ*) and ‘Amr b. Ḥurayṭ is forced to intervene and calm him down. ‘Amr b. Ḥurayṭ al-Maḥzûmî played an ambiguous role in the Karbalâ’ event. Both al-Ṭabarî and Ibn Sa’d claim he was chief of police, although Abû Miḥnaf names another, al-Ḥusayn b. Tamîm, in this position. Whatever he was, it is difficult to imagine that ‘Amr should be particularly worried over the fate of Zaynab. Appointed by Ibn Ziyâd (after the arrival of al-Ḥusayn in Karbalâ’) to manage the affairs of Kûfa, it was ‘Amr who played a substantial role in preventing people from joining al-Ḥusayn; he was, without doubt, responsible for a number of ‘Alid deaths, and would continue to play a significant role in Kûfa until his death in 78/697 or 85/704–5.¹¹⁶ In the fifth volume of his *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, al-Ṭabarî records the event:

Ibn Ziyâd became angry and fumed with rage. ‘Amr b. Ḥurayṭ said to him: “May God prosper the governor! She is just a woman! Can a woman be censured for something in her logic? Really, do not censure her for words, or blame her for prattle!” Ibn Ziyâd said to her: “God has cured my soul from your tyrant and the seditious members of your family.” Zaynab wept, and then she said: “By my life! You have killed my mature men, defamed¹¹⁷ my family, cut my young branches to pieces and uprooted my lineage! If this cures you, then you are cured!” ‘Ubayd Allâh said to her: “By my life! This is bravery! Your father was brave, a poet!” She answered: “What has a woman to do with bravery? I am too distracted for bravery, but what I speak is my very soul.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Cf. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 21, 53, Ibn Sa’d., *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr*, vol. VI: 14.

¹¹⁷ Ibn al-Aṭîr’s editor has a footnote to say that al-Ṭabarî’s transmission reads ‘you have defamed’ (*abarta*) and that this is clearer than Ibn al-Aṭîr’s reading, which is ‘you have exposed’ (*abraḡta*). Probably, ‘defamed’ is a better translation than ‘ruined’, which is Howard’s translation of *abarta*. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1968, vol. I: 5, Ibn al-Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 435.

¹¹⁸ al-Ṭabarî., *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, vol. V: 457. In al-Mufîd’s account: “but, my heart gives voice to what I say!”

Ibn Kaṭīr, (in a long footnote), follows al-Ṭabarī exactly, but stops abruptly after the advice of ‘Amr b. Ḥurayṭ and does not continue the conversation.¹¹⁹ Al-Ṣadūq, on the other hand, followed by al-Fattāl al-Nisâbûrî, has a much shorter version. He notes, as does al-Ḥawârizmî,¹²⁰ that Ibn Ziyâd had evil designs on Zaynab, but omits entirely the words of ‘Amr b. Ḥurayṭ,¹²¹ the malicious verbal assault by Ibn Ziyâd, the weeping of Zaynab and the discussion about bravery:

Ibn Ziyâd, may God curse him, grew angry with her and planned to deal with her, but ‘Amr b. Ḥurayṭ calmed him, and Zaynab said: “O Ibn Ziyâd, are you satisfied with what you have perpetrated against us? You have killed our men, severed our lineage, made our sanctum public property, taken our women and our progeny captive. If this is the seeking of a cure, then you are cured!”¹²²

Al-Mufid follows al-Ṭabarī quite closely, except for one noticeable change in the response of Ibn Ziyâd to Zaynab; she answers his taunts articulately and with immense courage, and, according to Abû Miḥnaf, al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsî, al-Ḥawârizmî, Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, Ibn Namâ and al-Irbilî, he responds in words that suggest a tempering of his anger or even a change of heart: “This is rhymed prose (*sağğâ‘a*)! By my life, your father was one who spoke in rhymed prose (*sağğâ‘a*), a poet (*shâ‘ir*)!” Al-Ṭabarî, Ibn al-Aṭîr and al-‘Iṣâmî record the words as: “This is courage (*shağğâ‘a*)! Your father was courageous, (*shuğğâ‘a*) a poet (*shâ‘ir*). The editor of Abû Miḥnaf seems to suggest that perhaps al-Ṭabarî has recorded the words wrongly, and that the *sağğâ‘a-sağğâ‘a* reading is more appropriate and suitable in terms of context. In this case, the error in transcription has been handed down from one transmitter to the next.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XII: 561.

¹²⁰ al-Ṣadūq., *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-ahbâdîṭ wa-l-ahbâr*, *mağlis* 31: 165–166, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 47.

¹²¹ As does Ibn al-Aṭîr: cf. Ibn al-Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḫ*, vol. II: 435.

¹²² al-Ṣadūq., *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-ahbâdîṭ wa-l-ahbâr*, *mağlis* 31: 165.

¹²³ Cf. LIMBA M., (trans.), *The Event of Taff, the Earliest Historical Account of the Tragedy of Karbala*, Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project,

In the final act of this drama in the courts of Ibn Ziyâd, he turns his attention, abruptly, to the young ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, until now a silent presence, symbolic of the quietude that will pervade his entire life; this moment perhaps marks the beginning of his rightful assumption of the Imamate after his father. Ibn Ziyâd expresses doubt over whether he has reached manhood and has him examined in a crude and invasive manner. When it is determined that he has indeed matured, Ibn Ziyâd orders him killed, and ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn persuasively challenges this sentence. He is, in these moments, strongly reminiscent of the Christian gospel figure of Jesus, silent before Pilate, physically and verbally abused but employing an economy of words.

There follows a curious interlude in two strands. In the first, Abû Miḥnaf, transmitting from al-Muġâlid b. Sa‘îd al-Hamdânî,¹²⁴ says that Ibn Ziyâd looks at the young ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn and demands that one of his police officials check him (i.e. his genitals) to see if he has attained manhood; when his manhood is confirmed, his execution is ordered. ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn breaks his silence to respond with Qur’anic quotes, further enraging Ibn Ziyâd and provoking his doubts about ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn’s boyhood; the ability to quote the text seems to Ibn Ziyâd to be a sign of maturity. ‘Alî then tells Ibn Ziyâd that since there is kinship between Ibn Ziyâd and the women, it would fall upon his shoulders to find someone to care for them: “If there is any kinship between you and these women,” Ibn Kaḫr has him saying, “dispatch a man with them to

2012: n.n., HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 165, al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî ma‘rifat buġaġ Allâh ‘alâ al-‘ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *mâ ġarâ fî-l-Kûfa ba‘da qatlî Imâm al-Ḥusayn*: 116, al-Ṭabarsî., *I‘lâm al-warâ bi-a‘lâm al-budâ*: 252, al-Hawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 48, Ibn Aḫr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḫ*, vol. II: 435, Ibn Ṭâ‘ûs., *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 94, al-‘Iṣâmî., *Simṭ al-nuġûm al-‘awâlî*, vol. III: 72, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥilli., *Muṭîr al-aḫzân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*, Part 3: 90, al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma‘rifat al-a’imma*, vol. II: 64–65, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 2: 116.

¹²⁴ Al-Muġâlid b. Sa‘îd al-Hamdânî, a renowned Kûfan historian (d. 144/762).

watch over them.” At this, Ibn Ziyâd relents.¹²⁵ In al-Balâḍurî’s account, when ‘Alî says to him, “if there is any kinship between you and these women, you will send a man with them to watch over them,” Ibn Ziyâd replies: “You are the man!”¹²⁶ Symbolically, in this moment, the Imamate is secured.

Al-Ṭabarî’s second, variant strand is a longer and more detailed transmission about the Ibn Ziyâd-‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn encounter; a substantial conversation between a volatile governor and a taciturn young Imâm, in which ‘Alî’s silence profoundly annoys an already irate Ibn Ziyâd. According to Abû Miḥnaf’s account, from Sulaymân b. Abî Rashîd on the authority of Ḥumayd b. Muslim al-Azdî:

I was standing by Ibn Ziyâd when ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn was displayed before him. Ibn Ziyâd said to him: “What is your name?” and he replied: “I am ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn.” Ibn Ziyâd retorted: “Except, did God not kill ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn?” He remained silent, so Ibn Ziyâd said to him: “What is the matter with you that you do not speak?” He replied: “I had a brother, who was also called ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, but the people killed him.” Ibn Ziyâd replied: “In truth, God killed him.” ‘Alî remained silent, so Ibn Ziyâd said to him: “What is the matter with you that you do not speak?” He answered: ““*Allah receiveth (men’s) souls at the time of their death*”:¹²⁷ “*No soul can ever die except by Allah’s leave*”.”¹²⁸ Ibn Ziyâd said: “By God, you are one of them! Woe to you! Have a look;¹²⁹ has he reached maturity? By

¹²⁵ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 165, Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nibâya*, vol. XII: 567, al-‘Asqalânî., *Tabḍîb al-tabḍîb*, vol II, (Ḥusayn b. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib): 323, al-‘Iṣâmî., *Simṭ al-nuḡûm al-‘awâlî*, vol. III: 72 (a less detailed account).

¹²⁶ al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 413. Cf. also Sibṭ al-Ġawzî., *Tadkîrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-dîker ḥaṣâ’iṣ al-a’imma*: 218.

¹²⁷ Q. 39: 42. Al-Maḡlisî, transmitting from Ibn Ṭâ’ûs and Ibn Nâma, adds the second part of Q. 39: 42, omitted by most other texts: “*and that (soul) which dieth not (yet) in its sleep*”. Cf. al-Maḡlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 117.

¹²⁸ Q. 3: 145.

¹²⁹ In the plural, and thus addressed to a group of police or officials.

God, I believe he is a man!" Murri b. Mu'âd al-Aḥmarî uncovered him, and said: "Yes, he has reached maturity," to which Ibn Ziyâd replied: "Kill him!" 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn spoke up: "Who will you put in charge of these women?" Zaynab his aunt clung to him and said: "Ibn Ziyâd! Have we not satisfied you? Have you slaked your thirst with our blood?¹³⁰ Will you spare even one of us?" She threw her arms around 'Alî's neck and said: "I ask you by God, if you are a believer, if you kill him, then kill me with him!" 'Alî called to him, saying: "Ibn Ziyâd! If there is kinship between you and them, send a righteous man with them to accompany them with the companionship of Islam." Ibn Ziyâd looked at him for a while, and then looked at the people and said: "What an astonishing thing kinship is! By God, I think she really wishes that if I kill him, I would kill her with him! Leave the boy! Depart with your women!"¹³¹

Both Ibn Kaṭîr and al-'Iṣâmî are closer to al-Ṭabarî's first strand, although Ibn Kaṭîr makes changes in the word order and al-'Iṣâmî adds Zaynab's insistence that if 'Alî is to be killed, she should be killed with him, followed immediately by 'Alî's appeal to kinship. Ibn Kaṭîr's text, which adds 'Zayn al-Ābidîn' to 'Alî's name, is incorrect, reading 'on the authority of al-Muġâlid, on the authority of Sa'îd' instead of 'on the authority of al-Muġâlid b. Sa'îd'. While al-'Iṣâmî offers a reduced narrative, giving only bare details of the

¹³⁰ The word occurs here, as in a number of other places, in the plural; 'bloods'. Although unusual in English, this poses little problem for the Semitic languages. In both Hebrew and in Greek, for example, the word 'blood' is used in the plural to describe the discharge of blood after an act of violence, as in murder or battle.

¹³¹ al-Ṭabarî, *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, vol. V, 1973: 457–458, Ibn 'Asâkir, *Târîḥ madînat Dimashq*, vol. XLI, bb. 4875 ('*Alî b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib b. Hâsbim b. 'Abd al-Manâf*): 367 (with fewer details), Ibn al-Aṭîr, *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 434–6, Sibṭ al-Ġawzî, *Tadkîrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-dîker ḥaṣâ'is al-a'imma*: 218 (in truncated form; simply as a response to Ibn Ziyâd wondering how 'Alî has survived, Zaynab asks whether he is still not satisfied with their blood and that if he kill the boy, he kill her with her), Ibn Kaṭîr, *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XI: 561.

strands of conversation, Ibn Kaṭīr goes on to transmit al-Ṭabari's second strand, with a slight variation in Zaynab's words: "Ibn Ziyād! Are you not (yet) satisfied with what you have done to us, that you have slaked your thirst with our blood? Will you spare even one of us?"¹³²

Transmitting the event in *al-Irsbād*, al-Mufid, followed by al-Ṭabarsī and later by al-ʿĀmilī¹³³ does not record the silences on the part of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, or the quotation of Q. 39: 42. He also has a variance in some of the words that pass between Ibn Ziyād and Zaynab. After the quotation of Q. 3: 145, Ibn Ziyād grows heated and rebukes ʿAlī: "You have an audacity in answering me and within you is the residue of opposition against me!"¹³⁴ Ibn Ziyād then summons his police, ordering them: "Take him way and behead him!" Zaynab intervenes, clinging to her nephew: "Ibn Ziyād, our blood is sufficient for you! She throws her arms around ʿAlī's neck and says: "By God, I will not be parted from him! If you kill him, then kill me."¹³⁵ In some texts, Zaynab's words seem to be less of a threat ("if you kill him you will have to kill me first")¹³⁶ and more a request ("if you are going to kill him, then I ask you to kill me with him").

Like al-Mufid, Ibn Namâ and al-Irbilī do not record the silences of the young Imâm and omit the quotation of the second Qurʾānic verse (Q. 39: 42), as well as Zaynab's declaration ("By God, I will not be parted from him"), but in her other words, they more or less follow al-Mufid.¹³⁷ Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillī makes a slight

¹³² Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 561, al-ʿIṣāmī., *Simṭ al-nuḡūm al-ʿawālī*, vol. III: 72.

¹³³ al-Ṭabarsī., *Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā*: 252, al-ʿĀmilī., *Aʿyān al-Shiʿa*, vol. VII: 139.

¹³⁴ Cf. also al-ʿĀmilī., *Aʿyān al-Shiʿa*, vol. VII: 139.

¹³⁵ al-Mufid., *al-Irsbād fī maʿrifat ḥuḡaḡ Allāh ʿalā al-ʿibād*, vol. II, bb. *mā ḡarā fī-l-Kūfa baʿda qatli Imām al-Ḥusayn*: 116, al-ʿĀmilī., *Aʿyān al-Shiʿa*, vol. VII: 139.

¹³⁶ Cf. for e.g. al-Ḍahabī., *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. III, bb. 48: 309–310. Al-Ḍahabī offers an extremely truncated version of the events.

¹³⁷ Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-abḡān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 3: 90, al-Irbilī., *Kashf al-ḡumma fī maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. II: 66–67.

change of wording in Ibn Ziyâd's accusation: "You have a liveliness (*ḥarâke*) in answering me!"¹³⁸

Al-Ḥawârizmî and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs offer narrations containing substantially different details. Al-Ḥawârizmî follows al-Ṭabarî closely, with some changes; he includes the silence after the first question (but not the second), notes the discrepancy in the text, which can read 'the people killed him' or 'they killed him' and adds to 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn's words a phrase about his older brother and the men who killed him: "He has a claim on them on the Day of Resurrection." When Ibn Ziyâd replies, No, rather, God!" (missing but presuming as understood the words 'killed him' as found in Ibn Ṭâ'ûs), 'Alî quotes the two Qur'ânic verses, adding to Q. 3: 145 the words "at a term appointed" omitted by most other transmitters. Al-Ḥawârizmî omits Ibn Ziyâd's rebuke about an insolent answer, and names the police official who inspected him as Marwân b. Mu'âḍ al-Aḥmarî. Zaynab is named 'daughter of 'Alî', but not immediately identified as 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn's aunt as in the other texts; al-Ḥawârizmî also omits the words 'if you are a believer' in Zaynab's appeal to Ibn Ziyâd, as well as Zaynab's talk of 'our blood' and Ibn Ziyâd's praising of kinship.

Where al-Ḥawârizmî makes a radical departure from most other transmitters is in his inclusion of an instruction by 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn to his aunt to be quiet, so that he can talk to Ibn Ziyâd. It is made immediately after Zaynab's appeal: "I ask you by God, Ibn Ziyâd, if you kill him, that you kill me with him." 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn now turns to Zaynab and says: "Aunt, be quiet, so that I can speak to him."¹³⁹

In Ibn Ṭâ'ûs' *Kitâb al-luhûf*, Ibn Ziyâd's question is asked about 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn rather than posed directly to him: "He said: who is this? He was told: 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn". It is remarkably similar to his noticing Zaynab and asking about her; quite patently, these two figures stand out among the rest. The second question,

¹³⁸ Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî, *Muṭîr al-abḥân wa munîr subul al-ashḡân*, Part 3: 90.

¹³⁹ al-Ḥawârizmî, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 48, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatlâ al-ṭufûf*: 95, al-Maḡlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 164, al-Âmilî., *A'yân al-Shi'a*, vol. VII: 139.

about God killing ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn is directed to and answered by ‘Alī directly. Ibn Ṭā’ûs records the quotation of Q. 39: 42 but not of Q. 3: 145, and omits Zaynab’s reference to the blood of the *abl al-bayt*. He does, however, include ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn asking his aunt to be quiet. It is a consummate moment, marking the end of Zaynab’s protective role and ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn taking his legitimate place as Imâm. Zaynab will make one final protest; when Ibn Ziyâd orders that these surviving members of the *abl al-bayt* be lodged in a house near the mosque, Zaynab says: “No Arab woman except for a slave girl (*umm walad* and *mamlûka*) should enter, because they are captives just as we are!”¹⁴⁰

Three times Zaynab is asked to be quiet; by her brother al-Ḥusayn, when she breaks down after hearing his dirge,¹⁴¹ by her nephew ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn when people break down after her Kûfa protest,¹⁴² and again by ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn in front of Ibn Ziyâd.¹⁴³ Never is there, in these texts, any hint of harshness or impatience towards her. A later incident will describe Yazîd telling Zaynab to speak and she herself deferring to ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, saying: “He is the speaker.”¹⁴⁴

Despite sparing their lives, Ibn Ziyâd still then enters the pulpit for the *ṣalât* and says in his *ḥutba*: ‘Praise be to God, who has revealed the truth and its adherents, and who has assisted the Commander of the Faithful, Yazîd and his party, and has killed the liar and son of the liar, al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, and his Shī‘a’.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Ṭā’ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tujûf*: 95. Cf. al-Mağlisi., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 117, al-‘Âmilî., *A’yân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 139.

¹⁴¹ al-Mufid., *al-Irsbâd fî ma’rifat ḥuğāğ Allâb ‘alâ al-‘ibâd*, vol. II, bb. *nuzûl Imâm al-Ḥusayn fî Karbalâ’*: 90, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûri., *Rawdat al-wâ‘izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta‘izîn*: 183, al-Ṭabarsi., *I‘lâm al-narâ bi-a‘lâm al-hudâ*: 239, al-Mağlisi., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 391.

¹⁴² al-Ṭabarsi., *Kitâb al-ihtijâğ ‘alâ abl al-lūğāğ*, vol. II: 305, al-Mağlisi., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 164.

¹⁴³ al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 48, Ibn Ṭā’ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tujûf*: 95, al-Mağlisi., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 164.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Ibn Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 439, al-Mağlisi., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 22: 175.

There is one addendum to this incident worth noting; in his *Maqâtil*, al-İsfahânî attributes the whole of this conversation to Yazîd instead of Ibn Ziyâd, moving it from the governor's residence to the caliph's palace. Yazîd asks 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn his name, and when he is told "Alî", remarks: "Did God not kill 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn?" 'Alî speaks his heartrending line: "I had an older brother called 'Alî, but they killed him," to which Yazîd replies: "No, God killed him." This marks the start of an exchange of Qur'ânic verses. 'Alî begins with the first phrase of Q. 39: 42 ("Allah receiveth (men's) souls at the time of their death") and Yazîd responds with Q. 42: 30 ("Whatever of misfortune striketh you, it is what your right hands have earned"), but, as in Ibn al-A'îr, omitting the last phrase: "And He forgiveth much". 'Alî replies with Q. 57: 22–23 ("Naught of disaster befalleth in the earth or in yourselves but it is in a Book before we bring it into being – Lo! that is easy for Allah – That ye grieve not for the sake of that which hath escaped you, nor yet exult because of that which hath been given. Allah loveth not all prideful boasters"). In response, Yazîd quotes Q. 42: 30 ("Whatever of misfortune striketh you, it is what your right hands have earned"). At this moment, the narrative moves to the intervention by a Syrian man. Notes Hussein:

Al-İsfahânî then inserts his own narrative voice directly into the text, providing the explanation that no such scenario ever occurred at 'Ubaydullah b. Ziyad's court, and that historians prior to him have mistakenly attributed the rhetorical confrontations with Yazîd to 'Ubaydullah b. Ziyad instead. Although not impossible, it seems that this explanation is unsatisfactory, especially when considering numerous other aspects that betray the highly manipulated nature of İsfahânî's work as a whole.¹⁴⁵

3. YAZÎD B. MU'ÂWIYA

Once again, the journey from Kûfa to Damascus is a drama that unfolds in a number of acts. Al-Ṭabarî's chronology is a useful skeleton, although he omits a number of crucial details:

¹⁴⁵ HUSSEIN A.J., *A Developmental Analysis of Depictions of the Events of Karbalâ' in Early Islamic History*, 2001: 112.

1. The head is despatched; Yazîd expresses a certain distress in seeing it, leading us to ask whether this would temper his treatment of the survivors. He expresses his distress in lament and poetry.
2. Ibn Ziyâd orders the survivors be made ready for travel.
3. Yazîd's reacts angrily to the insults against the arriving prisoners, specifically from Muḥaffiz al-Ṭa'labā.
4. The survivors are summoned into the presence of Yazîd and the Syrian nobles he has gathered.
5. He addresses 'Alî, who answers with Qur'ânic quotes; Yazîd orders his own son to match these, but he proves unable to do so.
6. Yazîd looks at the survivors and is distressed by their condition, expressing some criticism of Ibn Ziyâd; this could be an attempt to extricate himself from the appalling results of Karbalâ', putting the immediate blame on his governor. There is an apparent regret for what has happened, or at the least, a growing realization of how serious it is.
7. The intervention of a Syrian, and Zaynab's response; her first words before Yazîd.
9. The Zaynab-Yazîd encounter and his dismissal of the Syrian.
10. The preparations for departure.
11. Yazîd's fixation with 'Alî.
12. Fâṭima bt. 'Alî suggests to her sister Zaynab that their Syrian guard be rewarded.

Zaynab and the other survivors from among al-Ḥusayn's followers, a remnant comprised almost entirely of women and children, were marched to Damascus, Yazîd's capital, where they were arrayed before him. Tradition says that Zaynab, already in anguish due to the death of her brother al-Ḥusayn and other family members, was once again forced to march unveiled, an extraordinary affront to the granddaughter of Muḥammad.

Yazîd, a man of about thirty-four at his encounter with Zaynab, is only a few years older than his governor Ibn Ziyâd and will die within three years of Karbalâ'. He shows himself a capricious dictator whose moods swing rapidly from enraged violence to an almost repentant kindness. As Zaynab's personality is trans-

forming from grief to courage, Yazîd is moving from defiance to discomfiture.

Most of the transmitters agree that Ibn Ziyâd ordered the move to Damascus and made the necessary arrangements.¹⁴⁶ Al-Ṭabarî sets the scene by jumping ahead in his narrative to Yazîd's palace prior to the arrival of the prisoners. A messenger (Zahr b. Qays, according to al-Ṭabarî and al-Balâḍurî, but Shimr according to al-Dînawarî) gives the caliph a graphic description of the battle¹⁴⁷ and Yazîd is reduced to tears, lamenting the death of al-Ḥusayn:

I would have been satisfied with your obedience without killing al-Ḥusayn. May God curse Ibn Sumayya. By God, if it had been I who had accompanied him, I would have let him off. May God have mercy on al-Ḥusayn.¹⁴⁸

Yazîd displays an intensifying realization of the gravity of what has happened and a concomitant remorse; he subtly shifts blame onto his governor, calling him 'Ibn Sumayya', a public reminder that Ibn Ziyâd's mother was a woman of ill-repute, and expressing his regret by asking that the same God who curses Ibn Ziyâd should be merciful to al-Ḥusayn; the enemy has become the ally and the ally the enemy.

Al-Ṭabarî now returns us to the palace of Ibn Ziyâd; according to his account, the governor ordered the women and children to be prepared for the journey, 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn with a chain around his neck.¹⁴⁹ 'Alî is, seemingly, now perceived as a threat

¹⁴⁶ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 165, Ibn al-Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 436.

¹⁴⁷ In Ibn al-Aṭîr, this description is given by Zahr after the arrival of the survivors. Cf. Ibn al-Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 436.

¹⁴⁸ al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 415, al-Dînawarî., *Kitâb al-ahbâr al-ṭinwâk*: 272 (Ibn Ziyâd is addressed in his text as Ibn Marġâna rather than Ibn Sumayya), HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 169, Ibn al-Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 437.

¹⁴⁹ al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 416, HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 169, Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya*

after his vigorous verbal encounter with Ibn Ziyâd; the texts note that he is silent throughout the journey, as he will be for much of his life. The survivors are despatched after the heads and separately from them, and among the men who accompany them are two of note; the brutal Shimr b. Dî al-Ġawshan, who threatened to burn the women's tents and tried to kill 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn and seems almost certainly to be al-Ḥusayn's murderer, and Muḥaffiz¹⁵⁰ b. Ṭa'labā al-ʿĀ'idî, who is about to earn a stinging rebuke from Yazîd. As they reach the door of Yazîd's palace, Muḥaffiz announces himself in a strident voice, and informs the caliph that he has brought him 'the shameless ignobles' (*al-li'âm al-fağāra*). Yazîd in turn chastises Muḥaffiz: "What the mother of Muḥaffiz gave birth to is evil and ignoble!"¹⁵¹ This defence of the prisoners' status, parallel with his weeping and anguish, suggests a swelling remorse; but his frequently swinging mood hints at a certain instability. A second time, al-Ṭabarî interrupts his own narrative to describe Yazîd's reaction to the heads being placed before him; once more, it is lament and tears over these men "dear to us" but none-

wa-l-nihāya, vol. XI: 561. Ibn al-Aʿtîr says around his hands as well; Ibn al-Aʿtîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 436.

¹⁵⁰ al-Mufid names him 'Muğfir' (al-Mufid., *al-Irshād*, vol. II, bb. *masîr al-sabāyā ilā al-Shām*: 119), al-Ṭabarsî as 'Miḥfir' and Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî and al-Mağlisî as 'Muḥfir' (Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Muṭîr al-abḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 2: 96, 98, al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 124, 130–131.

¹⁵¹ al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 416, HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 169–170, al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqal al-Ḥusayn*: 65, al-Dahabî., *Siyar aʿlâm al-nubalâʾ*, vol. III, bb. 48: 315, Ibn Kaʿfir., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 561. In Ibn al-Aʿtîr's narrative, Muḥaffiz shouts: "We have come with the head of the most foolish of the people and the basest of them!" Yazîd replies: "What the mother of Muḥaffiz gave birth to is more foolish and baser than him, even though he is cut off and tyrannical." Ibn al-Aʿtîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 437.

theless “disobedient and oppressive.” Yazîd again insists that he himself would never have killed al-Ḥusayn.¹⁵²

All of this provides our context for Yazîd’s encounter with Zaynab, ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn and the other survivors. Unlike Ibn Ziyâd, who begins with Zaynab and then notices ‘Alî, Yazîd starts with the young, enchained Imâm, for whom he develops an enigmatic fascination and who, in these moments, is reminiscent of the figure of Jesus in the Christian gospel, moving as a prisoner between the governor Pontius Pilate and the High Priest. There are two strands; in the first (al-Balâḍurî, al-Ṭabarî, Ibn al-Aḡr, Ibn Kaṡîr), Yazîd initiates the conversation. In the second (al-Ḍahabî, al-Hayṡamî), ‘Alî begins it, reacting angrily to Yazîd’s poking at the teeth of al-Ḥusayn by quoting Qur’ânic texts.

Al-Balâḍurî’s narrative is less compact than that of al-Ṭabarî, and he interrupts the Yazîd accounts for a discussion of who killed al-Ḥusayn. He then returns to Yazîd: “When ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn was brought in to Yazîd, he said: ‘My dear, your father broke my kinship and ill-treated me, and you have seen what God has done to him!’” ‘Alî responds by quoting Q. 57: 22: “*Naught of disaster befallerh in the earth or in yourselves but it is in a Book before we bring it into being*”, omitting the last phrase, “*Lo! that is easy for Allah*”. Yazîd then turns to his son Ḥâlid, telling him to answer ‘Alî, but the boy seems not to know what to say and has to be coached by his father: “Say to him: “*Whatever of misfortune striketh you, it is what your right hands have earned. And He forgiveth much*”.”¹⁵³ Zaynab makes no appearance in this part of the al-Balâḍurî narrative.

Al-Ṭabarî and Ibn Kaṡîr tell an almost identical story but add that Yazîd’s quotation from the Qur’ân silences ‘Alî (“for a while”, adds Ibn Kaṡîr tersely).¹⁵⁴ Al-Hayṡamî tells a different tale; the bag-

¹⁵² HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 169, Ibn al-Aḡr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḡ*, vol. II: 436, 438.

¹⁵³ al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 419–420. The Qur’ânic quote is Q. 42: 30, although there are miniscule differences in the transcription of text in al-Balâḍurî compared to the Qur’ânic text.

¹⁵⁴ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 170–171, Ibn Kaṡîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XI: 561–562. Ibn

gage (presumably both material and human) of al-Ḥusayn was brought in to Yazîd, and the head placed in front of him. Yazîd weeps and says: “We have split the skulls of men beloved to us; however, they were most disobedient and oppressive! But by God, had I been your companion, I would never have killed you.” At this, ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn speaks up: “It is not like that! Yazîd replies: “How, then, O son of my mother?”¹⁵⁵ ‘Alî then quotes Q. 57: 22, including the last phrase, “*Lo! that is easy for Allah!*”¹⁵⁶

Ibn al-Aʿrî changes the chronology, placing Yazîd’s encounter with ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn after the women are brought into his presence, and the incident between the Syrian, Yazîd and Zaynab. He notes that Yazîd takes care to shield Fâṭima and Sukayna, daughters of al-Ḥusayn, from the grisly sight of their father’s head. In spite of this, Fâṭima will challenge him about the daughters of the Messenger of God being in chains. When ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn is brought before him, he too complains about the chains:

“Had the Messenger of God seen us chained he would have untied us!” Yazîd replied: “You speak the truth,” and he ordered that his chains be struck from him. Then ‘Alî said: “Had the Messenger of God seen us standing at a distance, he would have wanted to bring us close!” Yazîd ordered that he be brought close to him. Then Yazîd said to him: “‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, your father is the one who broke my kinship, was ignorant of my due and disputed my authority with me, and you have seen what God has done to him.”¹⁵⁷

It is at this moment that ‘Alî quotes Q. 57: 23–22:

Kaṭîr relates this account not in a footnote, but in the main body of his text.

¹⁵⁵ In other words, ‘you are like a brother to me’. I have followed Pickthall (Q. 20: 94) in the translation of the phrase *ya umma*.

¹⁵⁶ al-Hayṭamî, *Mağma‘ al-zawâ'id wa-manba‘ al-fawâ'id*, vol. IX, bb. 95 (*Manâqib al-Ḥusayn*), n. 15176: 233. Cf. also al-Ḍahabî, *Siyar a‘lâm al-nubalâ*, vol. III, bb. 48: 319–320, where it is ‘Alî who quotes Q. 57: 22 and Q. 42: 30.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn al-Aʿrî, *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 439.

“Naught of disaster befalleth in the earth or in yourselves but it is in a Book before we bring it into being – Lo! that is easy for Allah – That ye grieve not for the sake of that which hath escaped you, nor yet exult because of that which hath been given. Allah loveth not all prideful boasters”.

In response, Yazîd quotes Q. 42: 30 (*“Whatever of misfortune striketh you, it is what your right hands have earned”*) but omitting the last phrase: *“And He forgiveth much”*.

Al-Hayṭamî, following Ibn Sa‘d, records a more detailed dialogue, combining in one narrative many of the elements scattered throughout the other transmitters. Curiously, he takes note of the presence of Fâṭima and Sukayna but makes no mention of Zaynab. He writes of how ‘Alî b. Ḥusayn (whom, he observes, had reached boyhood), Fâṭima bt. Ḥusayn and Sukayna bt. Ḥusayn were ‘rushed’ to ‘Ubayd Allâh b. Ziyâd. He in turn despatches them to Yazîd b. Mu‘âwiya, who orders that Sukayna be placed behind his throne – lest she see the head of her father and those of her kin – while ‘Alî b. Ḥusayn remains shackled. The head of al-Ḥusayn is set down and Yazîd strikes at the teeth, saying: “We have split the skulls of men beloved to us; however, they were most disobedient and oppressive.” At this, ‘Alî b. Ḥusayn speaks up, quoting Q. 57: 22. Al-Hayṭamî notes that ‘it weighed heavily’ on Yazîd that he had quoted a verse of poetry and ‘Alî b. Ḥusayn had responded with a verse from the Qur’ân, so Yazîd himself quotes from the second half of Q. 42: 30: *“It is for what your hands have earned, but He pardons much”*. ‘Alî then makes his protest about what the Messenger of God would do were he to see them in chains and kept at a distance.¹⁵⁸

It is now that Zaynab’s story commences; it will begin with the intervention of a man from Syria who is looking for a slave-girl and will end with Zaynab turning Yazîd against one of his own nobles. Al-Ṭabarî narrates the story from Abû Miḥnaf, although, as we shall see, there are some textual problems with his narrative.

¹⁵⁸ al-Hayṭamî., *Mağma‘ al-ḡawâ‘id wa-manba‘ al-fawâ‘id*, vol. IX, bb. 95 (*Manâqib al-Husayn*), n. 15148: 227.

Abû Miḥnaf is reporting from al-Ḥârīt b. Ka‘b al-Wâlibî, who says that according to a narration of Fâṭima, daughter of ‘Alî:

When we were made to sit in front of Yazîd b. Mu‘âwiya, he showed pity to us, ordered things for us and was kind to us. Then a Syrian man with a ruddy complexion stood up before Yazîd and said: “Commander of the Faithful, give me this one.” He meant me, for I was a radiant girl. I trembled and was dismayed, for I thought that this might be permissible for them. I caught hold of the skirt of my sister Zaynab, since my sister Zaynab was older and cleverer than I, and she knew that this could not happen. She said: “You lie, by God, and are sor-did! Such a thing is not for you, nor for him!” Yazîd grew angry and said: “It is *you* who have lied, and by God, it *is* for me – and had I wanted to do it, I would have done it!” She answered: “Never, by God! God would never concede this to you unless you departed our faith and professed belief in another religion.” Yazîd grew increasingly angry and agitated, and said: “You dare confront me with this? Your father and your brother departed from the religion!” Zaynab replied: “You, your father and your grandfather have been guided by the religion of God, the religion of my father and the religion of my brother and my grandfather.” He responded: “You lie, enemy of God!” She replied: “You, a commander who has authority, vilify unjustly and oppress with your authority.” (The narrator said): By God! It was as if he were ashamed, and he grew silent. The Syrian repeated: “Commander of the Faithful, give me that girl.” Yazîd said to him, “Stay a bachelor! May God grant you a dreadful death!”¹⁵⁹

The narrator of the text, who is herself the girl desired by the red-faced Syrian, cannot be Fâṭima, daughter of ‘Alî, as stated by a number of transmitters,¹⁶⁰ but must in fact be Fâṭima, daughter of

¹⁵⁹ al-Ṭabarî., *Kitâb aḥbâr al-rusul wa-l-mulûk*, vol. V. 461–462. Al-‘Âmilî omits a number of the details but relates the most important elements of the encounter; cf. al-‘Âmilî., *A‘yân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 139.

¹⁶⁰ Besides Abû Miḥnaf (LIMBA M., (trans.), *The Event of Taff, the Earliest Historical Account of the Tragedy of Karbala*, 2012) and al-Ṭabarî, also

al-Ḥusayn. Howard notes this in his translation of al-Ṭabari's *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, referring the reader to the opinion of al-Mufid in his *al-Irshād*. Al-Ḥawārizmī agrees,¹⁶¹ and the editor of Abū Miḥnaf adds that al-Ġawzī thinks so too, even though the text reads 'daughter of 'Alī'. Most of the Shī'ī transmitters follow al-Mufid's opinion that the girl in question is al-Ḥusayn's daughter;¹⁶² curiously, al-Ṣadūq¹⁶³ does not. The girl addresses Zaynab as 'sister', but, as with her being nominated 'sister of 'Alī', this seems unlikely; it is more probably the skirt of her aunt, and not of her sister, that this young girl seizes. Al-Ḥawārizmī adds the confusing and clearly erroneous narrative that in her fear, the girl "grabbed hold of the robe of my sister and my aunt Zaynab." Her 'aunt' then addresses Yazīd with words always attributed to Zaynab, sister of al-Ḥusayn.¹⁶⁴ The very fact that she describes herself as a 'radiant girl' means she could not have been Zaynab's sister, who by that stage would have been in her fifties. Ibn Kaṭīr, in the second of his two transmissions of the incident, does not name her at all, and nor does al-ʿAsqalānī in his; one of the Syrians present before Yazīd to

Ibn ʿAsākīr, *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrā bt. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim b. ʿAbd al-Manāf*): 177, Ibn al-Aṭīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 438, who calls her 'sister' of Zaynab, Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 562 (transmitting from Abū Miḥnaf). In a second, truncated narrative, he leaves the girl unnamed (Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 567).

¹⁶¹ al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 69.

¹⁶² al-Ṭabarsī, *Iʿlām al-warā bi-aʿlām al-hudā*: 254, *Kitāb al-iḥṡāḡ ʿalā abl al-liḡāḡ*, vol. II: 31, Ibn Ṭāʿūs, *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatā al-tuḡūf*: 108, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 3: 100, al-Maḡlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 136, al-ʿĀmilī, *Aʿyān al-Shīʿa*, vol. VII: 139.

¹⁶³ al-Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*, maḡlis 31: 167. Al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī, who in his *Rawḍat* is transmitting from al-Ṣadūq, changes this detail from 'daughter of 'Alī to 'daughter of al-Ḥusayn', and while al-Ṣadūq says the Syrian man's name is Aḥmar, al-Fattāl offers a few more possibilities: cf. al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī, *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn wa-tabṣīrat al-muttaʿiẓīn*, vol. I: 192.

¹⁶⁴ al-Ḥawārizmī, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 69.

congratulate him on his victory, a man with ruddy complexion and blue eyes, looking at what he seems to think is a maid or serving girl (*waṣṣfa*) among the women, asks that she be given to him. Zaynab speaks up at once and says: “No, by God, there is no such honour for you or for him, other than he leave the religion of God!” The Syrian repeats his request and is told by Yazīd: “Stay a bachelor! And God grant you a dreadful death!”¹⁶⁵

Sibṭ al-Ġawzī, who correctly identifies the girl as Fāṭima, daughter of al-Husayn, records Zaynab’s bruising response to Yazīd’s suggestion that he can do as he pleases: “Pray towards a *qibla* other than ours, and submit to a religious community other than ours, and you can do what you like!” Yazīd then lapses into a churlish silence.¹⁶⁶

In a number of the texts, the Syrian is described as being ‘ruddy of complexion’ (*aḥmar*).¹⁶⁷ Al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī suggests that he is not ruddy of complexion, but that his name is in fact Ḥamr or

¹⁶⁵ Op. cit.: 70 (where he adds the words: ‘God curse you’), Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 562, 567, al-‘Asqalānī., *Tabḏīb al-tabḏīb*, vol II, (*Husayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*): 353. The Arabic imperative (*uṣṭub*) could be read as ‘remain unmarried’ or, as in the case of al-Ḥawārizmī, ‘distance yourself from me’ (*uṣṭub ‘annī*). Al-Ḥawārizmī adds a further sentence from Yazīd to the Syrian: “Woe to you! Do not say such a thing! This is the daughter of ‘Alī and Fāṭima! They are the people of the house!” In Ibn Namā’s *Muṭīr*, a ‘decisive’ or ‘unequivocal’ (*qāṭi‘*) death is wished. In other texts, notes the editor of his text, the same, but with the sense of ‘lethal’ (*qāḍi‘*): cf. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 3: 101.

¹⁶⁶ Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Taḍkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaṣā’iṣ al-a’imma*: 222.

¹⁶⁷ al-Ṭabarī., *Kitāb aḥbār al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, vol. V: 461–462, al-Ṣadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīṯ wa-l-aḥbār*, maḡlis 31: 167, al-Mufid., *al-Irshād fī ma’rifat ḥuṣṣ Allāh ‘alā al-‘ibād*, vol. II, bb. *masīr al-sabāyā ilā al-Shām*: 121, al-Ṭabarsī., *Kitāb al-iḥṭiṣāḡ ‘alā ahl al-ligāḡ*, vol. II: 31, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Husayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Husayn*: 69, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 3: 100, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 562, 567, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 136, n. 3: 156.

Aḥmar or Aḥmad.¹⁶⁸ Still others add that he is also ‘blue eyed’ (*az-raq*),¹⁶⁹ a feature, notes one author, “considered unfortunate by the ancient Arabs” and which “finds an echo in Q 20: 102, according to which the wicked will rise on the day of resurrection with shiny (or blue) eyes.”¹⁷⁰

Aside from the issue of wrongly identifying Fāṭima and some cosmetic details, this narrative reads very much the same in all the Shī‘ī and Sunnī transmitters, making it a useful text in attempting to construct biographical details for Zaynab.¹⁷¹ Her speech, notes Ibn al-Aṭīr (despite his misidentification of the Fāṭima in the text) is widely known and celebrated, demonstrating her wisdom and strength of heart.¹⁷²

Ibn Ṭā’ūs offers a reading that does have some substantial differences. He begins by narrating that the head of al-Ḥusayn is placed in front of Yazīd, who makes the women (not just the

¹⁶⁸ al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī, *Rawḍat al-wā‘iẓīn wa-tabṣīrat al-mutta‘iẓīn*, vol. I: 192. In other editions of the *Rawḍat*, his name is also suggested as Aḥmar or Aḥmad.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muṭīr al-abḥān wa munīr subul al-ashḡān*, Part 3: 100, Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 567, al-‘Asqalānī, *Tabḍīb al-tabḍīb*, vol II, (*Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*): 353.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. BAR-ASHER M.M., “Shī‘ism and the Qur’ān” in J D McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, vol. 4, Brill, Leiden 2004: 599.

¹⁷¹ If the protagonist is indeed Fāṭima daughter of ‘Alī rather than Fāṭima daughter of al-Ḥusayn, her words “she was older than me” seem more pertinent to a sister than to an aunt. On the other hand, it seems anomalous that the Syrian would want possession of a woman approaching sixty, when there were younger girls in the group of survivors. Abū Miḥnaf is reporting from al-Ḥārīt b. Ka‘b al-Wālibī who, Miḥnaf’s editors claim, was narrating from ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. Al-Ṭabarī takes the account from Abū Miḥnaf, repeating what is ostensibly an error; his editor refers the reader to *Shayḥ al-Mufīd*’s and Ibn al-Ġawzī’s correction, but also notes that al-Ḥārīt b. Ka‘b al-Wālibī is an unknown (HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990, nt. 228: 66).

¹⁷² Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Uṣd al-ġāba fī ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥāba*, vol. VI, bb. 6961 (*Zaynab bt. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*): 137.

daughters of al-Ḥusayn) sit behind him so that they do not look upon it; but when Zaynab, in spite of Yazīd's best efforts, catches sight of her brother's head, she pulls at her robe, and with grief-stricken heart cries out in a sad voice: "Ḥusayn! Beloved of the Messenger of God! Son of Mecca and Minâ! Son of Fâtima al-Zahrâ', Mistress of the women! Son of the daughter of al-Muṣṭafâ!"¹⁷³ The narrator notes that everyone in the gathering wept while Yazīd remained in stony silence. Ibn Namâ is a little more effusive:

Then she cried out in a sad voice that wounded the heart and weakened the strong: "My Ḥusayn! Beloved of his grandfather the Messenger! Fruit of the heart of the Radiant, the Virgin!¹⁷⁴ Son of the daughter of the Chosen! Son of Mecca and Minâ! Son of 'Alī the Approved!"¹⁷⁵

Ibn Ṭâ'ûs, having recounted Zaynab's second major protest, only then records the intervention of the Syrian man. When the Syrian, whose features he does not describe, makes his demand, Fâtima turns to her aunt Zaynab and says: "I have been orphaned, and now I am to be enslaved?"¹⁷⁶ Zaynab speaks up: "No, there is no such distinction for this profligate!" The Syrian asks: "Who is this young girl?" Yazīd replies: "This is Fâtima, daughter of al-Ḥusayn, and that is Zaynab, daughter of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭâlib." The Syrian clarifies: "Al-Ḥusayn son of Fâtima and 'Alī b. Abī Ṭâlib?" When Yazīd answers in the affirmative, the Syrian calls down God's curses on the caliph for killing the family of the Prophet and imprisoning his

¹⁷³ al-Ṭabarsî, *Kitâb al-iḥtiğâğ 'alâ ahl al-liğğâğ*, vol. II: 307, Ibn Ṭâ'ûs., *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 104, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî, *Muṭîr al-abḡân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 3: 90, al-Mağlisî, *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 132.

¹⁷⁴ In numerous *ahâdîth* and theological writings, Fâtima, daughter of Muḥammad, is described as *al-'adhrâ'*, meaning 'virgin', a designation expressed more frequently by the use of the term *al-batûl*. For some of the theology behind these titles, cf. CLOHESSY C., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 103–133.

¹⁷⁵ Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî, *Muṭîr al-abḡân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 3: 100.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

offspring: “By God,” he says, “I was under the delusion that they were Byzantine captives!” In other accounts, Yazîd wishes the Syrian perpetual bachelorhood and a miserable death for his persistence in asking, especially since his request has brought a fresh, humiliating attack from Zaynab. In Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, he is ordered killed for cursing Yazîd.¹⁷⁷

This event is also recorded in al-Işfahânî’s *Maqâtil*, but in a somewhat condensed form. He takes note of two men who intervene: the first, a Syrian, asks permission to kill ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn for his impertinence, and Zaynab recites to him the same verse that that ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn had just recited to Yazîd (Q. 57: 22–23). A second man, not identified as a Syrian, then stands and asks to be given an unnamed girl – al-Işfahânî refers us to Ibn al-Aṭîr (where she is named as Fâṭima, but later qualified as ‘sister’ of Zaynab) and to al-Ṭabarî.¹⁷⁸ Zaynab says to him: “No, no such distinction, not for you!” Then, presumably addressing Yazîd: “Not unless he leaves the religion of God!” In most other narrations, the concept of ‘leaving’ religion is directed at Yazîd, Zaynab’s suggestion being that he would only be able to give Fâṭima to the man were he himself to abandon his religion and find another. Yazîd tells the man to sit down. Then Zaynab approaches Yazîd and says to him: “Yazîd! Our blood is sufficient for you!” In fact, as noted previously, al-Işfahânî has mixed up his narratives; Zaynab’s declaration about the blood is almost certainly to Ibn Ziyâd, and not to Yazîd.

Among the Sunnî historians, Ibn ‘Asâkir offers two very different narrative; the first, from Fâṭima bt. ‘Alî, recounts all the details we now know, with Fâṭima’s terror, the fierce exchange of words between Zaynab and Yazîd, and Yazîd’s peremptory dismissal of the Syrian. In the second narrative, a Syrian man stands before Yazîd and says: “Their women are permissible (*ḥalâl*) for us!”¹⁷⁹ ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn responds: “You lie! That is not (possible) for you unless you leave our community!” In this substantially long chapter, Ibn ‘Asâkir gives numerous details about the *abl al-bayt*

¹⁷⁷ Ibn Ṭâ’ûs., *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 108–109.

¹⁷⁸ al-Işfahânî., *Maqâtil al-ṭâlibîyyîn*: 120.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. also Sibṭ al-Ġawzî., *Taḍkirat ḥawâşş al-umma bi-dîker ḥaşâ’iṣ al-a’imma*: 221.

(such as the *ḥadīṭ* of the cloak and the ‘verse of purification’), the predictions of al-Ḥusayn’s death (such as the dreams of Umm Salama) and the cosmic consequences of his death (such as the signs in the heavens and the weeping of the *ǧinn*). To the battle itself, he gives little attention, at least in the range of well-attested incidents in the life of Zaynab. Here, before Yazīd, there is no mention of Zaynab; perhaps unwittingly, Ibn ‘Asākir seems to be presenting a Zaynab already stepping back so that the young Imām can take his rightful place.¹⁸⁰

Some of the texts record a certain ambivalence in Yazīd’s behaviour towards the survivors. Transmitting from a number of authorities, al-Ṭabarī takes careful note of Yazīd’s words and gestures; using lament and poetry, the caliph expresses a certain distress in seeing the head of al-Ḥusayn, leading us to ask whether this would moderate his treatment of the survivors. He weeps at the news of al-Ḥusayn’s death, stating that he would have preferred his not being killed and more than once insisting that he himself would never have killed the Prophet’s grandson.¹⁸¹ He curses Ibn Ziyād – Ibn Sumayya – and asks that the same God who should curse his governor should have mercy on al-Ḥusayn; this could be an attempt to extricate himself from the appalling results of Karbalā’, by putting the blame on Ibn Ziyād. He turns savagely on Muḥaffiz b. Ṭa‘laba al-‘Ā‘idī, who arrogantly announces his presence by insulting the survivors, and refers to the martyrs of Karbalā’ as “those dear to us.” He is horrified by the appearance of the women and children, again cursing Ibn Ziyād, whom this time he refers to as ‘Ibn Margāna’, for his lack of empathy and concern.¹⁸² All of this leads

¹⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Asākir., *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrā bt. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālīb b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalīb b. Hāshim b. ‘Abd al-Manāf*): 178, vol. XLI, bb. 4875 (*‘Alī b. al-Husayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālīb b. Hāshim b. ‘Abd al-Manāf*): 367.

¹⁸¹ Cf. for e.g. al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 63, Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaṣā’iṣ al-a’imma*: 220.

¹⁸² al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Husayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Husayn*: 63, 69, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 562.

Zaynab's sister Fâtima to remark on Yazîd's kindness¹⁸³ and Sukayna, al-Ḥusayn's daughter, to observe that she had never come across an unbeliever who was a better person than Yazîd. Yazîd displays a particular concern for the women; he orders the careful preparations for their journey back to Medina and their lodging while in Damascus, and when challenged by al-Ḥusayn's daughter Fâtima, attempts to persuade her of his regret, addressing her as 'cousin' and promising some sort of restitution. Al-Haytamî is not the only one to note that Yazîd orders that the young Sukayna be seated behind his throne, lest her catching sight of the head of her father cause her kinship with Yazîd to be weakened.¹⁸⁴ Yazîd has a particular fixation with 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, consistently inviting him to meals,¹⁸⁵ cursing Ibn Ziyâd, and assuring the young Imâm that had he been with al-Ḥusayn, he would have protected him from death even "through the destruction of some of my own children" and would have granted him any favour he asked. He urges 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn to remain in contact and to "report everything that you need."¹⁸⁶

Whether there was in Yazîd a genuine regret for what has happened, or merely a growing realization of how serious Karbalâ' was, Sukayna, daughter of al-Ḥusayn swiftly put paid to any such thought of a change of heart in the caliph. Noting that the women were housed by Yazîd, Ibn al-A'îr records the words of Sukayna, daughter of al-Ḥusayn, about the caliph: "I never saw a disbeliever (*kaâfir*) in God more charitable (*ḥayr*) than Yazîd b. Mu'âwiya."

¹⁸³ Ibn 'Asâkir., *Târîḥ madînat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrâ bt. 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hâshim b. 'Abd al-Manâf*): 178.

¹⁸⁴ Ibn Namâ al-Hillî., *Muṭîr al-abḥân wa munîr subul al-ashḡân*, Part 3: 99, al-Dahabî., *Siyar a'lâm al-nubalâ'*, vol. III, bb. 48: 319–320, al-Haytamî., *Maḡma' al-zanâ'id wa-manba' al-fawâ'id*, vol. IX, bb. 95 (*Manâqib al-Husayn*), n. 15148: 227.

¹⁸⁵ al-Dinawari., *Kitâb al-aḥbâr al-tiwâk*: 272, Ibn 'Asâkir., *Târîḥ madînat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrâ bt. 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hâshim b. 'Abd al-Manâf*): 177.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarî*, vol. XIX, 1990: 169–176.

Since the phrase is not unlike being damned with faint praise – he may have been charitable, but he was still being accused of *kufr* – it is hard to know why Ibn al-Aʿīr includes it. He is certainly sympathetic towards the survivors of the massacre and does not fail to record moments of regret on the part of the perpetrators. However, to record words of one who labels the Commander of the Faithful an ‘ingrate’ or ‘disbeliever’, in spite of the sympathy he may feel, is at the very least unusual. Nonetheless, this narrative is dramatically different in *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn*; here, Sukayna says of Yazīd: “I have never seen a heart harsher than Yazīd’s, nor have I ever seen a disbeliever (*kaḥfīr*) or polytheist (*musḥrik*) more evil than him or anyone more brutish!”¹⁸⁷ His guilt is tempered neither by his distance from the battlefield, nor by his reported kind treatment of the survivors of the *abl al-bayt*.

Writing in his *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, Ibn ʿAsākir notes a tradition from Abū Bakr b. al-Anbārī, that on the day al-Ḥusayn was killed, his sister Zaynab stuck her head out of her tent and declaimed in a loud voice the verses which begin: “What will you say if the Prophet asks you...”¹⁸⁸ Ibn Kaḥfīr notes the same verse, adding, in terms of its origin, that ‘only God knows’, unsurprisingly so, because although some like al-Shablanġī attribute these words to Zaynab, sister of al-Ḥusayn, and others to ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn before Yazīd,¹⁸⁹ most sources attribute them to another Zaynab, daughter of ʿAqīl,¹⁹⁰ who recited them as the survivors finally arrived in Medina. Ibn ʿAsākir, noting the discrepancies, himself transmits a second strand which correctly attributes this verse to Zaynab bt. ʿAqīl.

¹⁸⁷ al-Ṣadūq, *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-ahādīth wa-l-ahbār*, maġlis 31, n. 3: 167, Ibn al-Aʿīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 439, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wāʿiẓīn wa-tabṣīrat al-muttaʿiẓīn*, bb. *maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, vol. I: 191.

¹⁸⁸ Ibn ʿAsākir., *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrā bt. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalīb b. Hāshim b. ʿAbd al-Manāḥf*): 178.

¹⁸⁹ al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 71.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. for e.g. al-Balāḍurī., *Kitāb ansāb al-asrāf*, vol. III: 4120, Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Taḍkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣāʾiṣ al-aʿimma*: 225, al-Haytamī., *Maġmaʿ al-zanāʾid wa-manbaʿ al-fawāʾid*, vol. IX, bb. 95 (*Manāqib al-Ḥusayn*), n. 15183: 234–235.

Al-‘Asqalânî writes that the survivors are moved to Medina, and it is upon their arrival there that a bareheaded woman from the women of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, unnamed by al-‘Asqalânî, meets them with the verses:

“What will you say if the Prophet asks you; what have you, the last of the communities, done with my offspring and my family after my departure? Among them are prisoners and among them, those stained with blood. After I have given you good advice, what reward is this for me, that you should repay me with evil to my blood relations?”¹⁹¹

A substantial number of Shī‘î transmitters carry this verse; some attribute it to Zaynab, sister of al-Ḥusayn, attaching it to the Kūfa sermon,¹⁹² others to Umm Luqmân, daughter of ‘Aqîl, who, upon hearing the announcement of al-Ḥusayn’s death, emerges bareheaded with her sisters Umm Hânî’, Asmâ’, Ramla and Zaynab and sings the dirge,¹⁹³ some to Zaynab bt. ‘Aqîl,¹⁹⁴ some to ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn before Yazîd¹⁹⁵ and some to the *ġinn*, whose voices are

¹⁹¹ al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 84 (attributed to Zaynab bt. ‘Aqîl), Ibn ‘Asâkir., *Târîḫ madînat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrâ bt. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hâshim b. ‘Abd al-Manâf*): 178, Ibn Kaṭîr., *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. XI: 567, al-‘Asqalânî., *Tabḏîb al-tabḏîb*, vol II, (*Husayn b. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 353, al-Shablânġî., *Nûr al-abṣâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥṭâr*: 202.

¹⁹² al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-iḥtîġâġ ‘alâ abl al-lġġâġ*, vol. II: 305, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî maqṭali-hi*: 115, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 163.

¹⁹³ al-Mufid., *al-Irsbâd*, vol. II, bb. *fî wuṣûl ḥabar istisbâd al-Imâm al-Ḥusayn*: 124, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḏat al-wâ‘izġîn wa-tabṣîrat al-muṭṭa‘izġîn*, vol. I: 193, al-Irbîlî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî ma‘rifat al-a‘imma*, vol. II: 68, Ibn Ṭâ‘ûs., *Kitâb al-luhûf fî qatlâ al-ṭufûf*: 99, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 123.

¹⁹⁴ Ibn Namâ al-Hillî., *Muṭîr al-abḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*, Part 2: 95.

¹⁹⁵ al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 136.

heard lamenting al-Ḥusayn.¹⁹⁶ There are some variations in the wording between the different transmitters.

Finally, the texts record, Yazīd directs that the women be lodged in a secluded house, and with them in the house their brother ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (although he was not brother to all the women). He further commands that preparations be made for the survivors to return to Medina. He orders that one al-Nu‘mān b. Bashīr make the arrangements and provide them with all that would be practical or useful. This would include finding a trustworthy Syrian man to travel with them and the supplying of horses.¹⁹⁷ While neither al-Ṭabarī nor Ibn ‘Asākir nor Ibn al-A‘īr identify the trustworthy Syrian as al-Nu‘mān b. Bashīr, Abū Miḥnaf and Ibn Kaṭīr do. In Abū Miḥnaf, Yazīd orders him to send a righteous and trustworthy person, and Nu‘mān ends up going himself.¹⁹⁸ Al-Dīnawarī notes that, besides lodging the women and calling ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn to meals with him, Yazīd releases the fourth Imām with the surviving women, ordering that he be the one to see them safely back to their own home country, and dispatches with him thirty horsemen to journey with them and guard them until they reach Medina.¹⁹⁹ It had been ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn who had insisted that Ibn Ziyād send a ‘pure’ or ‘righteous’ man to accompany the woman; consciously or not, both Ibn Ziyād (as noted by al-Balāḍurī) and Yazīd (as noted by al-Dīnawarī) seem to think that ‘Alī is that man.

¹⁹⁶ Ibn Qūlūya al-Qummī., *Kāmil al-z̤iyārāt*: 95, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 43: 237.

¹⁹⁷ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 172, Ibn ‘Asākir., *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrā bt. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim b. ‘Abd al-Manāf*): 178.

¹⁹⁸ LIMBA M., (trans.), *The Event of Taff, the Earliest Historical Account of the Tragedy of Karbala*, 2012: n.n., HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 172, Ibn ‘Asākir., *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrā bt. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim b. ‘Abd al-Manāf*): 177–178, Ibn al-A‘īr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*, vol. II: 440–441, Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. XI: 562.

¹⁹⁹ al-Dīnawarī., *Kitāb al-ahbār al-ṭiwāk*: 272.

As they are leaving, reports al-Ṭabarī, Yazīd engages in one final, almost pleading conversation with ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn:

“God curse Ibn Marjanah, if I had been with your father, he would never have asked a favor from me without my granting it to him; I would have protected him from death with all my power, even through the destruction of some of my own children. But God has decreed what you have seen. Write to me from Medina and report everything that you need.” He presented clothes to them, and entrusted them to the messenger.²⁰⁰

In the end, then, there almost certainly is a Syrian, even if not clearly identifiable. Al-Ṭabarī notes that the messenger went with them, never letting the group out of his sight, guarding, protecting and shielding them at every instant, constantly asking about their needs and treating them with great gentleness. At the end of the journey, in an incident omitted by Abū Miḥnaf but reported by al-Ṭabarī, Fāṭima bt. ‘Alī remarks to her sister Zaynab that this unnamed Syrian has been good to them and should be rewarded (“have you something with which we can bless him?”). Zaynab replies: “By God, we have nothing with which to bless him except for our jewellery!” Perhaps she means trinkets, considering the insistence that the women’s possessions had been looted as far as stripping a gold anklet off Fāṭima. Alternatively, this might represent jewelry given them by Yazīd, who had both promised and given restitution.²⁰¹ The Syrian responds to the gifts and the accompanying apology for their meagreness by insisting that he would have been pleased with reward had he done this for worldly reasons, but that he had done it for God and by reason of their relationship to Muḥammad.²⁰²

Here ends the account of Zaynab in al-Ṭabarī. Knowingly or not, he has presented a daughter of ‘Alī who plays a vital role at a

²⁰⁰ HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 175.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Op. cit.* 173, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḫ*, vol. II: 440–441. Cf. also al-‘Āmilī., *Aḡyān al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 140.

crucial juncture in Shīʿī history, and then steps back into the shadows of history as the fourth Imâm takes his place. But her story is not quite finished.

4. THE SECOND PROTEST

According to al-Ṭabarsî,²⁰³ Zaynab's second major address – he calls it a 'protest' (*iḥtiğāğ*) – which is transmitted by a substantially smaller group of Shīʿī scholars and barely any of their Sunnî counterparts,²⁰⁴ was provoked by a poem recited by Yazîd, as he took jabs at the head al-Ḥusayn with his staff. "The protest of Zaynab, daughter of ʿAlî b. Abî Ṭâlib, upon seeing Yazîd, may God curse him, poking the teeth of al-Ḥusayn with a staff," begins al-Ṭabarsî's account, and he then goes on to relay the verses of the caliph:

"Hâshim played with the dominion, and no news came, no revelation descended. Would that my elders at Badr had witnessed the apprehension of the Ḥazrağ at the tumbling of the spears!²⁰⁵ They would have invoked God's name, beaming joyfully, and would have said: O Yazîd, may you not be paralyzed! We have been requited by it in similar manner as Badr. I would not be of the Ḥandaf if I did not take revenge on the offspring of Aḥmad for what was done."

The poem that Yazîd recites – "would that my elders at Badr had witnessed the apprehension of the Ḥazrağ" – is not his own; he quotes it, as noted by a number of transmitters, from Ibn Zibaʿrî (in some texts Ibn Zabaʿrî or Ibn Zubaʿrî), spoken on the day of

²⁰³ al-Ṭabarsî., *Kitâb al-iḥtiğâğ ʿalâ abl al-liğâğ*, vol. II: 308–309. Cf. also al-ʿÂmilî., *Aʿyân al-Shiʿa*, vol. VII: 139.

²⁰⁴ Besides al-Ṭabarsî, cf. also Ibn Abî Ṭâhir Ṭayfûr., *Balâğât al-nisâʾ*: 35–36, Ibn Ṭâʿûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 105–108, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî., *Munîr al-aḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashğân*, Part 3: 101–102, al-Mağlisi., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 133–135 (from Ibn Ṭâʿûs), vol. XLV, bb. 39: 157–160 (from al-Ṭabarsî). Among the Sunnî, cf. al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqtal al-Ḥusayn*: 71–4.

²⁰⁵ Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. I, 1968: 59.

the battle of Uḥud.²⁰⁶ The Shī'ī transmitters offer a diversity both in length and in wording, and place the recital of the poem in a variety of circumstances; for some, it is the catalyst for 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn's quoting Qur'ānic verses at Yazīd, for others, the incentive for Zaynab's cutting protest, in which she refers back to some of the sentiments expressed by the poem. In both these instances, Yazīd recites it while poking at the teeth of al-Ḥusayn.²⁰⁷ Al-Ṣadūq, followed by al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī, prefaces the recital with a comment by Sukayna on Yazīd which we have already seen.²⁰⁸ Al-Rāwandī records it just after al-Ḥusayn's killer has told Yazīd to 'fill my saddlebags with silver and gold' as a reward for his deed, a sentiment which Yazīd strongly rejects.²⁰⁹ Al-Ṭabarsī's version is

²⁰⁶ al-Ṭabarī., *Kitāb al-mustarshid fī imāmat 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*: 510, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqtal al-Ḥusayn*: 64, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, (*faṣl fī maqtali-hi*): 114, Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 105, Ibn al-Ḥadīd., *Sharḥ naḥḥ al-balāga*, vol. XIV: 279, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-ashgān*, Part 2: 101, al-Irbilī., *Kashf al-ghumma fī ma'rifat al-a'imma*, vol. II: 21, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 133, 156. The 624 Battle of Badr ended in victory for the Muslim army, fighting a substantially larger Meccan force. Nine months later, a second clash at Uḥud, saw the defeat of the Muslims by the Meccans, in an engagement aimed at avenging Badr and the securing of the vital trade route.

²⁰⁷ Cf. for e.g. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr., *Balāghāt al-nisā'*: 73, al-Ṭabarsī., *Kitāb al-iḥtiḡāḡ 'alā abl al-ligāḡ*, vol. II: 307, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *fī maqtali-hi*: 114 where it prefaces Zaynab's first protest, not her second), Ibn Ṭā'ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 105, al-Baḥrānī., *al-Burbān fī tafsīr al-qur'ān*, vol. III, n. 7413: 905, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 157, 167 (from the *Tafsīr* of al-Qummī).

²⁰⁸ al-Ṣadūq., *Kitāb al-amālī fī-l-aḥādīth wa-l-aḥbār*, *maḡlis* 31: 167, al-Fattāl al-Nisābūrī., *Rawḍat al-wā'iḡīn wa-taḥṣirat al-mutta'izīn*, vol. I: 191 (he quotes the whole poem), al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 155–156.

²⁰⁹ al-Rāwandī., *al-Ḥarā'ig wa-l-ḡarā'ih fī al-mu'ḡḡāṭ*, vol. II: 580, al-Maḡlisī., *Bihār al-annwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 186.

slightly different from most other texts; for example, this is the narration of Ibn Kaṭīr:²¹⁰

“Would that my elders at Badr had witnessed the apprehension of the Ḥazraġ at the tumbling of the spears! They would invoke God’s name, beaming joyfully, and would then say: O Yazīd, may you not be paralyzed! We have killed the chief of their overlords and made it equivalent and even with Badr. I would not be of the Ḥandaf if I did not take revenge on the offspring of Aḥmad for what was done.”

I have examined the text of Zaynab’s response in five authors: Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, who died in 280/893, in his *Balāġāt al-nisā’*, al-Ṭabarsī, two-and-a-half centuries later in his *Kitāb al-iḥtiġāġ ‘alā abl al-liġāġ*, his contemporary, the Sunnī Ḥanafī scholar al-Ḥawārizmī in his *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, Ibn Ṭā’ūs, writing a century later in his *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*, and Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, almost contemporaneous with Ibn Ṭā’ūs, in his *Muṭīr al-aḥzān*. Both al-Ṭabarsī and Ibn Ṭā’ūs are transmitted by al-Maġlisī.²¹¹ Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr is the least developed of the five, at times offering nothing but a skeleton of the protest; al-Ṭabarsī is substantially longer and more developed than the other four.

Al-Ṭabarsī takes up the account of Zaynab’s reaction to Yazīd’s poem and mistreatment of al-Ḥusayn’s head:

When Zaynab saw that, she grasped the collar of her robe and tore it, and then cried out with a sad voice that censured hearts: “O my Ḥusayn! O beloved of the Messenger of God! O son of Mecca and Minā! O son of Fāṭima al-Zahrā’, mistress of

²¹⁰ Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, vol. VIII: 192.

²¹¹ Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr., *Balāġāt al-nisā’*: 35–36, al-Ṭabarsī., *Kitāb al-iḥtiġāġ ‘alā abl al-liġāġ*, vol. II: 308–309 (with its transmission in al-Maġlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 157–160), al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fī maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 71–4, Ibn Ṭā’ūs., *Kitāb al-lubūf fī qatlā al-ṭufūf*: 105–108 (with its transmission in al-Maġlisī., *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 133–135) and Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī., *Muṭīr al-aḥzān wa munīr subul al-asbġān*, Part 3: 101–102.

the women! O son of Muḥammad a-Muṣṭafâ!”²¹² By God, all who were present wept, while Yazîd remained silent. Then she got to her feet, and looking down at the gathering, commenced the sermon, an exposition of the perfections of Muḥammad, God bless him and his family, and a declaration that, with neither fear nor dismay, we be patient for the satisfaction of God. Then Zaynab, daughter of ‘Alî, and whose mother was Fâtîma daughter of the Messenger of God, went before Yazîd and said:

“Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds,²¹³ and blessings upon my grandfather, leader of those sent. God, far above is He (*subḥâna-hu*), spoke the truth when He said: “*Then evil was the consequence to those who dealt in evil, because they denied the revelations of Allah and made a mock of them*”.²¹⁴ Did you suppose, Yazîd, having cut us off from the regions of the earth and besieged us to the horizons of the sky, so that we have ended up in chains for you, herded before you, goaded in a train, that you have power over us, and that for us there is ignominy from God, while for you there is nobility and favour from Him? Or that this is on account of the greatness of your importance and the loftiness of your power? You were arrogant and conceited,²¹⁵ behaving insolently,²¹⁶ rejoicing, threatening vainly,²¹⁷ exuberant, when

²¹² Cf. Ibn Ṭâ’ûs., *Kitâb al-lubûf fî qatlâ al-tufûf*: 104.

²¹³ Q. 1: 2.

²¹⁴ Q. 30: 10.

²¹⁵ Lit. ‘you looked at your sides’ (cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. V, 1968: 2080).

²¹⁶ Lit. ‘you came beating [with your hands] your two sides’ (cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. IV, 1968: 1662). The sense is that of being empty-handed, not have accomplished the object of one’s desire, or of extreme arrogance or insolence.

²¹⁷ Lit. ‘you came shaking the two extremities’ or ‘the two uppermost parts of the buttocks’ (cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. III, 1968: 965). The phrase is applied to someone who is behaving threateningly or arrogantly or vainly, or to those who have not accomplished what they sought to do.

you saw the earth become possible²¹⁸ for you and matters well-ordered for you, and when our rule became untroubling for you and our authority belonged to you. But slowly! Slowly! Do not strike impetuously! Have you forgotten the words of God, mighty and lofty: “*And let not those who disbelieve imagine that the rein We give them bodeeth good unto their souls. We only give them rein that they may grow in sinfulness. And theirs will be a shameful doom?*”²¹⁹ Is it just, son of the freedmen,²²⁰ your keeping your noble women and slaves in seclusion and your herding the daughters of the Messenger of God as captives? You ripped apart their veils and displayed their faces! The enemies moved them from place to place, the (people of the)²²¹ braziers raising their eyes to them and conspicuous to the people of the watering places;²²² those near and far, the concealed and the one

²¹⁸ Al-Ḥawârizmî and al-Ṭabarsî read ‘to become possible’ (*mustawsiq*), while Ibn Ṭâ’ûs narrates ‘to be made certain, made sure, secured’ (*mustawtiq*). Although he is following Ibn Ṭâ’ûs, al-Mağlisî deviates from him, preserving ‘to become possible’. While some who transmit the text follow al-Mufid, al-Ṭabarsî and al-Mağlisî (cf. for example KAḤĀLA ‘U., *A‘lâm al-nisâ’ fi ‘âlamî al-‘arab wa-l-islâm*, Mu’assat al-Risâla, Beirut 1984: 97 and al-ḤASANÎ N., *Sabâya âl Muḥammad, al-‘Atba al-Ḥusayniyya al-Muqaddasa*, Karbalâ’ 2012: 221), Ibn Ṭâ’ûs’ rendering seems more likely (cf. for e.g. ‘ABD AL-RAḤMÂN ‘Ā., *Tarâğim sayyidât bayt a-nubûwa*, Dar al-Diyan lil-Turath, Beirut 1988: 774. This authoress – known as Bint al-Shâṭi’ – transmitted the same word in her book *Sayyida Zaynab*). It should be noted that the transmission of Zaynab’s words in *A‘lâm al-nisâ’ fi ‘âlamî al-‘arab wa-l-islâm* contains substantial differences and omissions. Ibn Namâ’s text offers both possibilities.

²¹⁹ Q. 3: 178.

²²⁰ Wehr defines *al-ṭulaqâ’* as the name for those Meccans who remained heathen until the surrender of Mecca. The editor of al-Mağlisî notes the words of Muḥammad to Yazîd’s grandfather Abû Sufyân: “You are free”. Cf. WEHR H., *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 1980: 663.

²²¹ These words, present in other texts, are missing in transcript of al-Ṭabarsî.

²²² The phrases ‘people of the braziers’ and ‘people of the watering places’ refer to the nomadic tent dwellers or country people.

who bears testimony, the eminent and the humble, the lowly and the lofty, scrutinizing their faces? None of their men is with them as guardian and none of their patrons as protection. Insolence from you towards God, disavowal of the Messenger of God, driving off what comes with him from God; this is hardly surprising, coming from you, and there is no wondering at your deed! How could you²²³ hope for control from one whose mouth spat out the livers of the martyrs²²⁴ and who nourished his flesh with the blood of the auspicious²²⁵ and declared war on the chief of the prophets, gathered the troops, declared the wars, and brandished the swords in the face of the Messenger of God! The most vehement of the Arabs in disavowal, the most reprehensible of them to him as prophet, the most manifest of them to him as enemy, the most insolent of them towards the Lord in disbelief and tyranny; is this not due to the characteristics of disbelief and the pouring forth that roars in the breast for those killed on the day of Badr? He is not found slow in detesting us, the people of the house, one whose view of us was loathing and hatred and grudges, his disbelief in the Messenger of God manifest and spoken clearly with his tongue, for he spoke joyfully in the killing of his children and the taking captive of his offspring. Without refraining from sin or from arrogance, his elders acclaim him: 'they would invoke God's name, beaming joyfully, and would then say: O Yazîd, may you not be paralyzed!'

Leaning on the teeth of Abû 'Abd Allâh, where the Messenger of God, God bless him and his family, used to kiss, striking them with his staff, his face shining with pleasure! By my life, you have reopened the wound and exterminated the root, in your shedding the blood of the leader of the youths of the

²²³ The text reads *tartağî* (second person singular, 'you hope'); in others transmissions, *yartağî* (third person singular, 'he/one hopes').

²²⁴ Here, *al-shuhadâ'*, as opposed to al-Mağlisî's 'the blameless' and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs' 'the intelligent'.

²²⁵ Here, *al-su'adâ'*, as opposed to al-Mağlisî's and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs' 'the martyrs'.

people of paradise, the son of the chief of the religion of the Arabs and the sun of the family of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. You applauded your elders and by his blood sought to gain favour with the obstinate infidels among your forebears. Thereupon, you called out your appeal, and by my life, you summoned them as if they could see you! Well, imminently you will see them, but they will not bear witness to you. Then how you will wish that your right hand, as you alleged, was paralyzed for you from its elbow, and cut off; you would prefer that your mother had not carried you and had never given birth to you, when you come to the anger of God Most High and your adversary is the Messenger of God, God bless him and his family.

O God, obtain what is our right and take revenge on our oppressor! Discharge Your anger against the one who shed our blood and broke with our honour and killed our patrons and tore apart our veils.

You have done your deed, and you have split nothing but your own skin, cut off nothing but your own flesh, and you will come to the Messenger of God, God bless him and his family, with all that you bear of the blood of his offspring, and have desecrated of his sanctity, and have shed of the blood of his family and his flesh – when God reunites them, puts their affairs in order, takes revenge on their oppressors and obtains for them what is their right from their enemies. Do not let their killing incite you to happiness. *“Think not of those, who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision. Jubilant (are they) because of that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty”*.²²⁶

God is sufficient for you as guardian and judge, and the Messenger of God, God bless him and his family, as adversary, and Ġibra’īl as (his) supporter.²²⁷ He will know who associated

²²⁶ Q. 3: 169 and the first phrase of 170.

²²⁷ Ibn Ṭā’ūs reads ‘Ġibra’īl’, al-Ṭabarsī, ‘Ġibrā’īl’ and al-Maġlisī ‘Ġibrīl’ – throughout the Shī‘ī and Sunnī Islamic corpora of *aḥādīth*, the name that we are accustomed to translate as ‘Gabriel’ is written in a varie-

with you²²⁸ and gave you power over the necks of the Muslims: “*calamitous is the exchange for evil-doers*”²²⁹ and you are “*worse in position*”²³⁰ and “*further from the road*”.²³¹

Neither my deeming as paltry your power nor my thinking your chiding significant makes delusional the resorting to a public address to you, after you left the eyes of the Muslims tearful and their breasts burning upon remembrance of him. Those merciless hearts and tyrannical souls and bodies are filled with the anger of God and the curse of the Messenger. Satan has nested and hatched in them, and one like you he does not outgrow.

The surprise of all surprises, the killing of the devout and the grandsons of the prophets, the descendant of the trustees, at the hands of the freedmen, the filth (*habîta*) and the progeny of the immoral fornicatress. Their hands drip with our blood and their mouths run with our flesh. The wolves beset those pure bodies on the surrounding earth, and mothers of the wild beasts cover them with dust. Even if you took us as booty, you would find us an imminent loss, when you do not find anything but what you have perpetrated. And God “*is not at all a tyrant to His slaves*”.²³² Before God is the complaint and the reliance, and before him the refuge and the hope. So, plot your ruse and attempt your endeavour, but by God, who honoured us with Revelation and the Book and the Prophethood and the

ty of ways: sometimes ‘Ġibrîl’, at other times ‘Ġibra’îl’ and occasional ‘Ġibrâ’îl’.

²²⁸ Al-Mağlisî reads, almost certainly incorrectly, ‘to equalize, level, straighten’ (*sammâ*) while Ibn Ṭâ’ûs transmits as ‘to talk someone into’, ‘to entice or seduce’ (*sammala*). I have followed the latter.

²²⁹ Q. 18: 50.

²³⁰ Cf. Q. 19: 75.

²³¹ Cf. Q. 17: 72.

²³² A slightly misquoted Q. 3: 182 or Q. 8: 51, in the sense that it is not written exactly as it occurs in the Qur’ân (where the negation is *laysa*, not *mâ*). Cf. also Q. 22: 10, Q. 41: 46 and Q. 50: 29 for an almost identical rendering.

Selection, you will neither overtake our span of time, nor exhaust our purpose, nor efface our memory, nor wash from yourself its blemish. Is your opinion anything but error in judgment, your days anything but numbered, your community anything but dispersed, on the day when the caller will cry; now God curses the oppressor and the enemy? Praise be to God, who has awarded His holy ones with happiness, and sealed His sincere friends with martyrdom and attainment of the will, and brought them to mercy, compassion, delight and pardon. None is split from them other than you and none is afflicted because of them apart from you. We ask Him to complete for them the recompense and to give them openly the reward and the laid-up treasure and we ask of Him the excellence of succession and the beauty of delegation. Truly, he is “*merciful, Loving*.”²³³

Noting in his *Bihâr al-anwâr* that he transmits the narrative more than once because of many differences, al-Mağlisi reads:

Zaynab, daughter of ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib, stood up and said: Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds. God bless His prophet and all of his family. God²³⁴ spoke the truth when He spoke thus: “*Then evil was the consequence to those who dealt in evil, because they denied the revelations of Allah and made a mock of them*”.²³⁵ Did you imagine, Yazîd, having cut us off from the regions of the earth and the horizons of the sky, so that we have become herded, as captives are herded, that with us there is ignominy from God, while with you there is nobility? And that this is on account of the greatness of your significance with Him? You were arrogant, and looked on in your disdain, exuberant and delighted, since you saw the earth secured for you and matters in good order, and since our rule and our authority have become untroubling for you. Slowly! Slowly! Have you forgotten the words of God the Most High: “*And let not those who disbelieve imagine that the rein We give them bodeeth good unto their souls. We only*

²³³ Q. 11: 90.

²³⁴ Ibn Ṭâ’ûs adds ‘Glorified is He’.

²³⁵ Q. 30: 10.

give them rein that they may grow in sinfulness. And theirs will be a shameful doom'.²³⁶

Is it just, son of the freedmen, your keeping your noble women and slaves in seclusion and your herding the daughters of the Messenger of God as captives, having ripped apart their veils and displayed their faces, the enemies moving them from place to place, the people of the watering places and the people of the braziers raising their glances to them, and those near and far, the lowly and the eminent, scrutinizing their faces? None of their men is with them as guardian and none of their patrons as protection. But how could one hope for control from one whose mouth spat out the livers of the blameless²³⁷ and who nourished his flesh with the blood of the martyrs? How could he be slow in detesting us, the people of the house,²³⁸ the one who looks at us with loathing and hatred, with deep rooted odium and malice? Furthermore, without restraint or regard, you say:

Cheering and raising their voices joyfully, they would then say: Yazîd! May you never be paralyzed!

How would you not say that, leaning on the teeth of Abû 'Abd Allâh, leader of the youths of the people of Paradise, striking them with your staff? You have already reopened the wound and extirpated the root, in your shedding the blood of the offspring of Muḥammad and the stars of the earth from the family of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. You call upon your elders, alleging that you invoke them; but certainly, you will arrive imminently at their place of destination and certainly, you will wish that you had been paralyzed and had held your tongue – that you had not said what you have said or done what you have done!

²³⁶ Q. 3: 178.

²³⁷ Al-Mağlisî reads 'the blameless' (*al-azkijâ'*) and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs 'the intelligent' (*al-ankijâ'*). I have followed al-Mağlisî in this instance.

²³⁸ In a small discrepancy, al-Mağlisî reads 'the detestation of us, the people of the house' and Ibn Ṭâ'ûs, 'the detestation of the people of the house'.

O God, obtain what is our right and take revenge on our oppressor!²³⁹ Discharge Your anger against the one who shed our blood and killed our patrons.

For by God, you have split nothing but your own skin, cut²⁴⁰ off nothing but your own flesh, and certainly, you will come to the Messenger of God with all that you bear in the shedding of the blood of his offspring and your desecrating his sanctity in his family and his kinship, when God reunites them, puts their affairs in order and obtains what is their right. “*Think not of those, who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision*”.²⁴¹ God is sufficient for you as judge, and Muḥammad as adversary, and Ġibra’īl as (his) supporter. He will know who seduced²⁴² you into evil and gave you power over the necks of the Muslims – “*calamitous is the exchange for evil-doers*”²⁴³ – and which of you “*is worse in position*” and “*weaker as an army*”.²⁴⁴

Even if your public speech has brought down calamity upon me, I make light of your power, I find your scolding astonishing,²⁴⁵ and I deem your censure excessive.²⁴⁶ But eyes are tear-

²³⁹ Al-Maḡlisī reads ‘our oppressor’ (*ẓālim*) and Ibn Ṭā’ūs ‘our oppression’ (*ẓulm*). In the context, the former seems more likely, although the latter is transmitted by a number of authors.

²⁴⁰ Al-Maḡlisī, in what may be nothing more than an error by the editors, reads ‘to clip off’ (*ḡazḡa*) and Ibn Ṭā’ūs ‘to cut’ (*ḥazḡa*). I have followed the latter.

²⁴¹ Q. 3: 169.

²⁴² Al-Maḡlisī reads, almost certainly incorrectly, ‘to equalize, level, straighten’ (*sanwiya*) (*سوى*) while Ibn Ṭā’ūs transmits as ‘to talk someone into’, ‘to entice or seduce’ (*sanwala*). I have followed the latter.

²⁴³ Q. 18: 50.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Q. 19: 75.

²⁴⁵ Cf. STEINGASS F., *Learner’s Arabic English Dictionary*, 1993: 706.

²⁴⁶ Al-Maḡlisī reads ‘to deem great or important’ (*istakbara*) and Ibn Ṭā’ūs ‘to deem too much, excessive’ (*istakfara*). I have followed the latter. However, cf. LANE E W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. VII, 1968: 2585,

ful and chests are burning; is not the killing of the noble party of God by the party of Satan, the freedmen, the surprise of all surprises? These hands drip with our blood and mouths run with our flesh. The wolves²⁴⁷ beset those most righteous and blameless corpses, and the mothers of the wild beasts²⁴⁸ efface²⁴⁹ them. Even if you took us as booty, you would find us an imminent loss, when you do not find anything but what you have perpetrated.²⁵⁰ “*And thy Lord is not at all a tyrant to His slaves?*”.²⁵¹ To God the complaint, and the reliance is on Him. So, plot your ruse and attempt your endeavour and make an open show of your attempt, but by God you will not efface our memory, nor put to death our revelation, nor reach our span of time, nor wash from yourself its blemish. Is your opinion anything but error in judgment, your days anything but numbered, your community anything but dispersed, on the day when the caller will cry: “*Now the curse of Allah is upon wrongdoers?*”?²⁵²

Praise be to God,²⁵³ who sealed the first of us with happiness²⁵⁴ and the last of us with martyrdom and mercy! We ask God to complete for them the reward and grant them the superabundance (the utmost, maximum), and to ameliorate for

where he suggests that the word as rendered by al-Mağlisî could carry the sense of ‘to disdain’.

²⁴⁷ Wolves or jackals (*al-‘awâsil*). Cf. LANE E W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. V, 1968: 2046.

²⁴⁸ The word *al-farâ‘il* refers to young hyenas. IBN MANZÛR., *Lisân al-‘Arab*, vol. X: 241.

²⁴⁹ Ibn Ṭâ’ûs reads ‘to begrime, to cover with dust’ (*‘afara*) and al-Mağlisî ‘to efface, obliterate’ (*‘afâ*).

²⁵⁰ Ibn Ṭâ’ûs reads ‘what your hands have perpetrated’.

²⁵¹ Q. 41: 46.

²⁵² Q. 11: 18.

²⁵³ Ibn Ṭâ’ûs adds ‘Lord of the worlds’ (*rabb al-‘âlamîn*).

²⁵⁴ Ibn Ṭâ’ûs adds ‘forgiveness’ (*al-mağfira*) after ‘happiness’ (*al-sa‘âda*).

us the succession. He is “*Merciful, Loving*.”²⁵⁵ *Allah is Sufficient for us! Most Excellent is He in Whom we trust*’.²⁵⁶

Yazîd’s laconic response, (“O cry, extolled among cries, how easy death is among professional mourners”)²⁵⁷ belies the fact that Zaynab’s address is a crushing indictment of his morality, his politics, his religious faith and his leadership. Sentence after sentence demolishes his integrity, his political dexterity, his ethical principles and his administrative abilities. He is, in Zaynab’s view, entirely irreligious, a man devoid of humanity and decency, whose distance from the field of Karbalâ’ in no way diminishes his guilt.

It is at this moment that public role of indomitable Zaynab comes to an end; she has, in a few short days, been her brother’s chief apologist and defender, his theologian and spokeswoman, preserving by her words and dauntless gestures not only the integrity of Shi’î teaching, but also its line of Imâm’s and what is surely the paramount juncture of its history. In spite of all she has suffered, and even in the face of the murder of most of her family, she completes her task on a note of utter trust in the excellence and the sufficiency of God. She will live out the rest of her life in the shadows of history, dying around seventeen months after Karbalâ’, in 62/682.

²⁵⁵ Q. 11: 90.

²⁵⁶ Q. 3: 173.

²⁵⁷ Put by Sibṭ al-Ğawzî in a different context, when al-Ḥusayn’s women and Ziyâd’s women lament together. Cf. Sibṭ al-Ğawzî., *Taḍkirat ḥawâşş al-umma bi-dîker ḥaşâ’iş al-a’imma*: 222. However, cf. also al-‘Âmilî., *Aġyân al-Shî‘a*, vol. VII: 140.

THREE ADDENDA

1. THE CHILDREN OF ZAYNAB

While historians such as al-Balâdurî and al-‘Asqalânî note merely that Zaynab ‘bore children’ for her husband, but provide neither names nor number,¹ according to tradition Zaynab was the mother of four sons and a daughter: ‘Alî, known as ‘Alî al-Zaynabî,² ‘Awn al-Akbar, ostensibly killed at Karbalâ’, ‘Abbâs, about whom there is little information, Muḥammad, also supposedly a martyr at Karbalâ’, and Umm Kulṭûm.³ However, the names and number of sons that she (as opposed to another wife) bore for ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far remain a matter of debate. While the majority of texts which report four sons and one daughter⁴ name the girl as Umm Kulṭûm, the boys are variously and unaccountably named as ‘Alî, ‘Awn (al-Akbar), ‘Abbâs, Ğa‘far or Muḥammad.⁵ Consequently, the texts

¹ al-Balâdurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol. III: 393, al-‘Asqalânî., *al-Iṣâba fî tamyîẓ al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. IV, n. 510: 314–315.

² Cf. for e.g. al-‘Âmilî., *A‘yân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 137.

³ QUTBUDDIN B.T., “Zaynab bint Ali” in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edn., 2005: 9937. Cf. Ibn al-Aṭîr., *Usd al-ġâba fî ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. VI, bb. 6961 (*Zaynab bt. ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*): 136–137, al-‘Âmilî., *A‘yân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 137, quoting from Sibṭ al-Ĝawzî.

⁴ Cf. for e.g. Ibn al-Aṭîr., *Usd al-ġâba fî ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥâba*, vol. VI, bb. 6961 (*Zaynab bt. ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*): 136–137 (mentioning her marriage to ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far and that she gave birth to ‘Alî, ‘Awn al-Akbar, ‘Abbâs, Muḥammad and Umm Kulṭûm) and Ibn Sa‘d., *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr*, vol. XII, n. 5464 (*Zaynab*): 431.

⁵ Cf. for e.g. al-Suyûtî., *al-‘Aġâba al-ẓarnabiyya fî-l-sulâlat al-ẓaynabiyya*: 2, AL-TÛNĠÎ M., *Mu‘ġam a‘lâm al-nisâ’*, Mu‘assasat al-Rayyân, Beirut 2000. Al-Mûsawî notes that Zaynab bore three sons for ‘Abd Allâh b.

about Zaynab's marriage and specifically about the number of children she bore are contradictory and unclear.

Among the classical Sunnî scholars, al-Ṭabarî narrates two traditions: one holds that she bore two children, named 'Alî and 'Awn, while a second strand names her children as 'Alî, Ğa'far, 'Abbâs, 'Awn and Umm Kulţûm, all from her husband 'Abd Allâh b. Ğa'far.⁶ Ibn Sa'd notes that 'Abd Allâh b. Ğa'far also married one Layla bt. Mas'ûd, and that both she and Zaynab lived as his wives, but mentions no children from Layla.⁷ Writing some years later, al-Balâduří transmits that Zaynab bore children for her husband, with no mention of names or number;⁸ three hundred years after him, Ibn al-Ġawzî names just two sons, 'Abd Allâh and 'Awn.⁹ His near contemporary Ibn al-Aġır transmits that she brought forth children for 'Abd Allâh b. Ğa'far b. Abî Ṭâlib, without naming them; in a second strand, having confirmed that she was indeed the daughter of Fâţima and 'Alî and that she had married 'Abd Allâh b. Ğa'far b. Abî Ṭâlib, staying with him for life, Ibn al-Aġır names two children: 'Alî b. 'Abd Allâh and 'Awn. In a third strand, that number devolves into five, with the addition of 'Abbâs, Muĥammad and Umm Kulţûm.¹⁰ A little over half-a-century before, his fellow historian Ibn 'Asâkir had named two sons, 'Alî b. 'Abd Allâh and 'Awn in one report, and four, 'Alî, 'Awn al-Akbar, 'Abbâs, Muĥammad in another. Ibn 'Asâkir also noted the name of Layla bt. Mas'ûd, a second wife.¹¹ Three centuries later, al-Suyûtî will name five children for Zaynab and her hus-

Ğa'far, naming them 'Alî, Ğa'far and 'Awn al-Akbar. Cf. AL-MÛSAWÎ M., *al-Kawtar fî aĥwâl Fâţima bt. al-nabî al-aĥbar*, vol. VII, ch. 17, n. 7/3864: 100.

⁶ al-Ṭabarî., *Daĥâ'ir al-'uġbâ*: 285–6. He notes in his text that al-Dâraquţnî names the children as 'Alî, 'Awn and Ruġayya.

⁷ Ibn Sa'd., *Kitâb al-ġabaġât al-kabîr*, vol. XII, n. 5464 (*Zaynab*): 431–432.

⁸ al-Balâduří., *Kitâb ansâb al-asĥrâf*, vol. II: 411.

⁹ Ibn al-Ġawzî., *Şifât al-şafwa*, vol. II, bb. *Fâţima bt. Rasûl Allâb*: 2.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Aġır., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîĥ*, vol. II: 443.

¹¹ Ibn 'Asâkir., *Târîĥ madînat Dimasġ*, vol. LXIX, bb. 9353 (*Zaynab al-Kubrâ bt. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 175–176.

band, as did Ibn al-Aṭīr before him: ‘Alī, ‘Awn al-Akbar, Abbās, Muḥammad and Umm Kulṭûm.¹²

Whatever the number of sons and their names, two of those frequently specified, ‘Awn and Muḥammad, are of particular interest, because ostensibly, they accompanied Zaynab to Karbalâ’, and both died on the field.¹³ A substantial number of texts name them among the dead, although they are almost always referred to as the two sons of ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far, without any mention of Zaynab as their mother.

Al-Balâduṛī, for example, records the death of ‘Awn and Muḥammad, sons of ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far, as does Ibn Kaṭīr in two places, where he records specifically the names of six deceased sons of ‘Alī’, two of al-Ḥusayn and three of al-Ḥasan, besides the two deceased sons of ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far. The Shī‘ī transmitter al-Mufid records their names as ‘Awn and Muḥammad, sons of ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far, both killed at Karbalâ’ while another Shī‘ī scholar, Ibn Namâ, records the death of ‘Awn ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far b. Abī Ṭâlib, but curiously, makes no mention that he is the son of Zaynab, who otherwise features prominently in his work.¹⁴

Three *maqâtil* works are worth noting: al-Iṣbahânî in his *Maqâtil* and ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Muqarram (d. 1370/1951) in his *Maqtal*, when recording the death of ‘Awn, name Zaynab as his mother, while his brother Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far, killed after him, is named as the son of al-Ḥawsâ.¹⁵ In the course of

¹² al-Suyûṭī, *al-‘Ağāğa al-ḡarnabiyya fî-l-sulâlat al-ḡaynabiyya*: 2.

¹³ HUSAIN A.A.T., (trans.), *House of Sorrows*, Islamic Publishing House, Ontario 2010: 182, al-‘Âmilî, *A‘yân al-Shi‘a*, vol. VII: 137, who notes that they were killed ‘before her eyes’, although this is not a detail emphasized in the classical texts.

¹⁴ al-Balâduṛī, *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol III: 422, Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*: vol. II: 545, 551, al-Mufid, *al-Irshâd fî ma‘rifat huḡağ Allâb ‘alâ al-‘ibâd*, vol. II: 107, 125, Ibn Namâ al-Ḥillî, *Muṭīr al-abḡân wa munîr subul al-ashḡân*, Part 2: 67.

¹⁵ Cf. al-Iṣbahânî, *Maqâtil al-ṭâlibiyyîn*: 91, AL-JIBOURI Y.T., (trans.), *Maqtal al-Ḥusain*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014: 213. This is a translation of ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Muqarram’s *maqtaḡ*; one of its chief weaknesses is that he is one of a group of scholars who

his narrative, al-Işfahânî also draws our attention to the fact that there are two men named ‘Awn ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far: al-Akbar, who was killed at Karbalâ’, and al-Aşğar, son of Ğumâna bt. Musayb.¹⁶ Al-Ĥawârizmî, in his *Maqatal*, narrates that the first member of the *abl al-bayt* to emerge and be killed was ‘Abd Allâh b. Muslim b. ‘Aqîl, followed by Ğa‘far b. ‘Aqîl b. Abî Ṭâlib, followed by his brother ‘Abd al-Rahmân b. ‘Aqîl. Immediately after these deaths, al-Ĥawârizmî records the death of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far b. Abî Ṭâlib followed by ‘Awn b. ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far b. Abî Ṭâlib. He does not mention that these are the two sons of Zaynab, although in other cases (such as that of Abû Bakr b. ‘Alî, ‘Utmân b. ‘Alî and the other brothers of al-Ĥusayn) he does mention the name of the deceased’s mother.¹⁷

Writing in his *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, Ibn al-Aṭîr, in his Karbalâ’ martyrology, regularly mentions the names of the mothers of the deceased (even if it is just *umm walad*, that is, ‘a slave girl’), but fails to name Zaynab as the mother of ‘Awn and Muḥammad. So, for example, among those killed with al-Ĥusayn he records ‘Abd Allâh b. al-Ĥusayn b. ‘Alî, son of al-Ĥusayn by his wife Rubâb and ‘Alî b. al-Ĥusayn b. ‘Alî son of al-Ĥusayn by his wife Laylâ bt. Abî Murra b. ‘Arwa al-Ṭaqâfî. He then lists as killed ‘Awn b. Abî Ğa‘far b. Abî Ṭâlib, recording his mother not as Zaynab, but as one Ğumâna bt. al-Musayb b. Naġiyya al-Fazârî as well as Muḥammad ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far, recording his mother not as Zaynab, but as one al-Ĥawşâ’ bt. Ḥaşfa b. Taym Allâh b. Ṭa‘laba. It is not entirely certain that these are indeed the two sons of ‘Abd Allâh b. Ğa‘far, but it seems remarkably coincidental.¹⁸ There is no other ‘Awn in Ibn al-

believe that Zaynab and Umm Kulţûm were the same person, i.e. that there was no other daughter of ‘Alî and Fâṭima named Umm Kulţûm. This argument has been clearly refuted by Jaffer Ladak (LADAK J., *The Hidden Treasure. Lady Umm Kulţûm, Daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima*, 2011), especially since it contradicts most of the classical sources.

¹⁶ al-Işfahânî, *Maqâtil al-ṭâlibiyyîn*: 124.

¹⁷ al-Ĥawârizmî, *Maqatal al-Ĥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. fî *maqatal al-Ĥusayn*: 30–32.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Aṭîr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 443.

Aṭīr's martyrology,¹⁹ and the other Muḥammad is clearly someone different. It seems inexplicable that Ibn al-Aṭīr should have omitted the sons of 'Alī's daughter.²⁰

Ibn al-Aṭīr's contemporary Sibṭ al-Ġawzī is equally unclear, in spite of his Shī'ī sympathies (as alleged by Ibn Sa'īd and al-Dahabī); he names among the dead of Karbalā' 'Awn b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ġa'far b. Abī Ṭālib, whose mother he names as Ġumāna bt. al-Musayb, and Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Ġa'far b. Abī Ṭālib, whose mother he records as al-Ḥawṭ bt. Ḥafṣa Tamīmī. He then notes that Ġa'far had a second son called 'Awn, whose mother was As-mā' bt. 'Umayy. There is no mention of Zaynab.²¹

Ibn Kaṭīr too records the names of some of those killed, specifically six of 'Alī's sons, two sons of al-Ḥusayn and three sons of al-Ḥasan. He also names two the deceased sons of 'Abd Allāh b. Ġa'far, 'Awn and Muḥammad, but without mentioning Zaynab as their mother.²² Al-Dahabī notes the death of Muḥammad and

¹⁹ There are, however, two in al-Balāḍurī's list, one of them being a son of 'Aqīl (cf. al-Balāḍurī., *Kitāb ansāb al-ashraf*, vol III: 422).

²⁰ Ibn al-Aṭīr., *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīḥ*: vol. II: 429, 443.

²¹ Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaṣā'is al-a'imma*: 229. The editor of Abū Miḥnaf quotes al-Ṭabarī, naming 'Awn's mother as Ġumāna bt. Musayb b. Naḡāba al-Ġazari, but notes that al-Iṣfahānī in his *Maqātil* names 'Awn's mother as Zaynab. Abū Miḥnaf's editor names Muḥammad's mother as Ḥawṣā' bt. Ḥaṣafa b. Taqīf and notes that al-Iṣfahānī agrees (cf. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 180, al-Iṣfahānī., *Maqātil al-ṭālibīyyīn*: 91), but that Sibṭ al-Ġawzī in *Tadkīrat* names her as al-Ḥawṭ bt. Ḥafṣa Tamīmī (Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaṣā'is al-a'imma*: 229). Cf. LIMBA M., (trans.), *The Event of Taff, the Earliest Historical Account of the Tragedy of Karbala*, 2012: n.n. It is of note that Sibṭ al-Ġawzī, besides noting that 'Abd Allāh b. Ġa'far had two sons called 'Awn and one called Muḥammad, and naming women other than Zaynab as their mothers, also devotes a paragraph to the children of 'Abd Allāh b. Ġa'far in which he names Zaynab as the mother of four of his children; 'Awn al-Akbar, Muḥammad, 'Abbās and Umm Kulṭūm (Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Tadkīrat ḥawāṣṣ al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaṣā'is al-a'imma*: 175).

²² Ibn Kaṭīr., *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*: vol. II: 551.

‘Awn, sons of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far b. Abī Ṭālib, but makes no mention of Zaynab; in fact, she features rarely in his brief Karbalā’ accounts.²³ Curiously too, an early writer, al-Dīnawarī, in his *Kitāb al-aḥbār al-ṭiwāl*, names, in his Karbalā’ martyrology, one ‘Adwa b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far b. al-Ṭayyār; since the name of the father is correct, one must presume that he has made a mistake and means ‘Awn. There is no other ‘Awn (or Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far) in his list.²⁴ To add to the mix, Ibn Shaḥrāshūb names three sons of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far killed on the field of Karbala’: Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far, ‘Awn al-Akbar b. ‘Abd Allāh and ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh (Ibn Shaḥrāshūb names ‘Awn and Muḥammad, sons of ‘Aqīl as well as Muḥammad and ‘Awn al-Akbar, sons of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far).²⁵ In fact, al-Maḡlisī in *Bihār al-annwār* notes the discrepancies in the number of members of the *abl al-bayt* killed, and gives lists from Ibn Shaḥrāshūb, Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭālib Ḥā’irī, al-Iṣfahānī and Ibn Nāma’.

Who, then, are more regularly understood as Zaynab’s sons?

Karbāssī says she bore seven children for ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far, five sons and two daughters: Ğa‘far al-Akbar, born in 21/642, ‘Alī al-Aṣḡar, born around 23/644, ‘Awn al-Akbar, born in 25/646 and died in 61/681, al-‘Abbas, born around 26/647, Umm Kulṭūm, born around 40/660 and died in 61/681, Ibrāhīm, dates unknown and Umm ‘Abd Allāh, dates unknown. He tells us that ‘Awn al-Akbar was ascribed that title in respect of his brother, ‘Awn al-Aṣḡar, from his father but by a different mother (despite the thin evidence for the existence of such a brother); the same applies to Ğa‘far al-Akbar. However, Karbāssī does not take these names and dates directly from primary sources, but from secondary texts. Intriguingly, he only names one son as killed at Karbalā’. This, he posits, is as much as can be stated about the children sired by Zaynab. There is one Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṭayyār, martyred at Karbalā’ and attributed to Zaynab (as, he notes, in *Usd al-*

²³ al-Dahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, vol. III, bb. 48: 320–321.

²⁴ al-Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-aḥbār al-ṭiwāl*: 268.

²⁵ Ibn Shaḥrāshūb., *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, vol. IV, bb. *fī maqtali-hi*.

gâba), but verification leads us to see that his mother was al-Ḥawṣâ'.²⁶

Equally problematic is that there are no texts describing any reaction on Zaynab's part when 'Awn and Muḥammad are killed on the battlefield. In at least two other well-transmitted instances, the deaths of her nephews al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alî, upon whose lifeless corpse she throws herself, and 'Abd Allâh b. al-Ḥasan, whom she tries to dissuade from the field, Zaynab emerges, grief-stricken, from her tent. It is more than puzzling, then, to find no recorded reaction of Zaynab to the deaths of her own two sons. Popular piety might well believe that this suggests her enormous reverence for the sons of her brothers, to whom she gives preference, but this is hardly a satisfactory explanation. Zaynab's biographer Shahin writes that when her son 'Awn was killed, she received his body and offered it to God, but the author neither provides references for this, nor does he mention the death of her other son, Muḥammad.²⁷

If her sons 'Awn and Muḥammad were killed at Karbalâ', one must ask what happened to her other sons, supposedly 'Alî and al-'Abbâs? According to one of her biographers, her husband 'Abd Allâh b. Ğa'far had been too ill to travel to Kûfa (and thus Karbalâ') and had sent two of the sons with her, the other two remaining at home with their father.²⁸ Shahin records a story, not well-attested in the classical sources, that Zaynab's husband mourned more deeply for al-Ḥusayn than for his own sons, insisting that the Imâm was more favoured to him than his own boys; he gives thanks to God that even though he could not support al-Ḥusayn, his two sons could. The story seems to form part of the hagiographical writings around al-Ḥusayn, as do the stories that Zaynab put the children of her brother before her own, but remains of little help in explaining her behaviour on the field.²⁹

²⁶ KARBÂSSÎ M.S. *Muġam anşâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ'*, 2009: 353.

²⁷ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 79.

²⁸ BILGRAMI M.H., *The Victory of Truth: The Life of Zaynab bint 'Alî*, 1986: 7. Cf. al-Maġlisi., *Biḥâr al-anvâr*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 366.

²⁹ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 73.

A possible solution to the dilemma is to conclude that ‘Awn and Muḥammad, sons of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far and killed at Karbalā’, were the stepsons rather than the sons of Zaynab. Her own children by ‘Abd Allāh b. Ğa‘far would have been younger, and these stayed at home with their ailing father. This is underscored by the fact that there is no recorded reaction from Zaynab at the death of these two boys, even though she does emerge from her battle-field tent at other deaths, especially those of her nephews; and further, that in the causality lists not only is she not named as their mother, even though other mothers are named, but also that at least one transmitter names other women as the mother of ‘Awn and Muḥammad.

Henri Lammens, in his polemical *Fāṭima et les filles de Mahomet*, is as disparaging of Zaynab as he is of her mother Fāṭima. She ‘was said’, he notes, to be exceptionally intelligent, referring the reader to Ibn al-Aṭīr’s *Usd al-ġāba*, but questions her presence at Karbalā’ where, he remarks, she showed a certain decisiveness and served as a cushion for her brother’s lamentable collapse. The only reason she could be there, concludes Lammens, referring the reader to al-Balāḍurī’s *Kitāb ansāb al-asbrāf*, is because she was divorced (*bānat min-hu*) from her husband Ibn Ğa‘far, who was extremely hostile to the ‘pitiful adventure’ of Karbalā’. Almost certainly, Lammens has misread al-Balāḍurī; as Wehr, Lane and Kazimirsky note, the verb *bāna-yabīnu* could indeed denote divorce, when qualified by the crucial *bi-l-ṭalāq* or the preposition ‘*an*. But as it stands in *Kitāb ansāb al-asbrāf*, with its preposition ‘*min*’, and no other qualification, its most basic meaning is to ‘separate from’, ‘to part from’ (as in Wehr, who does not mention divorce). Lane notes that it can refer to the separation of a girl from her parental home when she marries, or to be separated by a journey, by moving to a far-off distance. Lane also notes that it can mean to ‘become distinct’, as though separate from the others, an easily understandable description of Zaynab’s view of Karbalā’ compared to that of her husband. Kazimirsky too notes the concept of being separated from someone by a distance. While the verb may indeed carry the sense of divorce, its usage by al-Balāḍurī with the preposition ‘*min*’, as well as the absence of reports of Zaynab’s divorce in other texts, suggests that Lammens has been over-zealous in his reading of al-Balāḍurī. Zaynab did indeed part from her husband and go a distance from him; she to

the field of Karbalâ', accompanied by the two sons he had sent, while he remained at home.³⁰

Ultimately, there is no really satisfactory answer to this puzzle. It remains persistently enigmatic that Zaynab should emerge from her tent to mourn the deaths of some (although not all) of her nephews but not of her own sons. The pious opinion that she had greater devotion to the children of her brother's than to her own, or that she did not wish to further distress al-Ḥusayn, fails to satisfy. If some of her children are in fact her step-children, we must ask why the step-children are sent with her to Karbalâ' and her own children remain behind with their ailing father, a man who had, ostensibly, attempted to dissuade his wife from going.³¹ If, as Karbâssî claims, he was only a teenager when he married Zaynab, one has to ask if she was, in fact, his first wife, or if he was already married.³² If, on the other hand, his sons came from a later marriage, the children she bore him would have been older; why then would the younger sons be sent to Karbalâ' and the older sons remain at home? There is the possibility that all the children were in fact Zaynab's, leading us to question the discrepancies in the

³⁰ "Cette attitude de prudente réserve fut adoptée envers la descendance des filles de Fāṭima, les sœurs des «deux Ḥasan». En bonne règle, elles pouvaient invoquer au même titre le privilège de perpétuer la famille de Mahomet. L'aînée Zainab fut, dit-on, remarquablement intelligente. Cette réputation, elle la doit à son attitude pendant l'équipée de Karbalā, où seule elle aurait montré de la décision. On s'expliquerait mal comment s'y trouva mêlée cette épouse d'Ibn Ğa'far, si nous ne la savions divorcée d'avec son mari, très hostile à cette pitoyable aventure. Nos auteurs ont tenu à l'y faire figurer pour atténuer le lamentable effondrement de son frère Hosain." Cf. LAMMENS H., *Fāṭima et les filles de Mahomet*, Sumptibus Pontificii Istituti Bibliici, Rome 1912: 128–129, WEHR H., *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 1980: 105–106, LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. I, 1968: 285–286, KAZIMIRSKI A., *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, vol. I, 1860: 186.

³¹ Cf. for e.g. HOWARD I.K.A., (trans.), *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XIX, 1990: 73.

³² KARBÂSSÎ M.S., *Muġam anṣâr al-Ḥusayn – al-nisâ*?, 2009: 340–341.

sources, and ask why she is not mentioned as their mother in the very sources which mention the mothers of other Karbalá' martyrs.

2. THE CHILDREN OF AL-ḤUSAYN

A number of factors raise uncertainties about 'Alí b. al-Ḥusayn, whose life would be saved by Zaynab's intervention after Karbalá'. In the first place, it is difficult to establish his age with any precision; doubt is cast by the use of terms like *ḡulám* to describe him,³³ as well as by texts that put the oldest son at eighteen or nineteen and finally by Ibn Ziyád's curious order that 'Alí b. al-Ḥusayn's manhood be physically verified.³⁴ Zaynab's extremely protective

³³ While Wehr renders the meaning of *ḡulám* somewhat indefinably as 'boy', 'youth' or 'lad', Lane suggests 'young man', 'youth' or 'boy, 'one whose mustache is growing forth'. He notes that some determine this as the period from birth until age seventeen, or from the time of birth until the time one reaches what is termed *shabáb*. This concept *shabáb* is in itself hard to define, delineated by some as ages sixteen to thirty-two, or thirty to forty, or even seventeen until fifty-one. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. V, 1968: 2287–2288, vol. IV: 1493–1494. The texts insist that his inability to fight was due to illness, and not to his age.

³⁴ I tend to believe that this invasive investigation of the young Imâm, which was both verbal and physical, whatever form the latter took, was primarily a form of mockery and scorn by the unstable Ibn Ziyád, rather than a genuine perplexity about the young man's chronological age. It comes at a moment when the governor has already had a bruising verbal clash with Zaynab, and has had to back off and be calmed by one of his attendants. The key issue, therefore, seems not to be an actual doubt about the boy's age as much as a heaping of scorn upon the 'boy' Imâm and son of al-Ḥusayn. There are texts in which Imâm Abû Ğa'far Muḥammad b. 'Alí al-Bâqir (born around 56/676), son of 'Alí b. al-Ḥusayn, claims to have been present as a very young child (al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî, *Rawḍat al-wâ'izîn wa-tabṣirat al-mutta'izîn*, vol. I: 190); and although it seems infeasible that Ibn Ziyád should not know the name of al-Ḥusayn's son, there is little evidence to show that he would also have known who al-Bâqir was. The presence of his own young son in itself suggests that the fourth Imâm was quite patently no longer a child.

instincts also cause us to ponder his age, as do one or two textual statements found in other authors.

Secondly, it is not always easy to determine which of al-Ḥusayn's sons the young Imâm is. Hussein notes that al-Ḥusayn named all three of his sons 'Alî,³⁵ ostensibly as a response to Mu'âwiya's constant denigration of the husband of Fâtîma; but Hussein seems to be presuming that al-Ḥusayn only had three sons. He goes on to note the lack of concord between Shî'î scholars as to which of al-Ḥusayn's sons survived the battle and succeeded his father as the fourth Imâm. It would be as well to make a brief attempt at establishing the number of al-Ḥusayn's sons in an effort to determine the names and the ages of those killed and of the surviving fourth Imâm.

Al-Ṭabarsî³⁶ lists six children:

1. 'Alî al-Akbar Zayn al-Ābidîn
2. 'Alî al-Aşğar, killed with his father at Karbalâ'
3. Ğa'far, who died in his father's lifetime
4. 'Abd Allâh, killed with his father at Karbalâ'
5. Sukayna
6. Fâtîma

According to Ibn Shaḥrâshûb in his *Manâqib*,³⁷ al-Ḥusayn's children were nine:

³⁵ HUSSEIN A.J., *A Developmental Analysis of Depictions of the Events of Karbalâ' in Early Islamic History*, PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2001, n. 52: 102.

³⁶ al-Ṭabarsî, *I'lâm al-warâ bi-a'lâm al-budâ*: 255.

³⁷ Ibn Shaḥrâshûb, *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî tawârîḥi-hi wa-l-qâbi-hi*: 77. Noting that six among the children of al-Ḥusayn were killed, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb also mentions that opinions differ concerning them. He provides a list: 'Alî al-Akbar, Ibrâhîm, 'Abd Allâh, Muḥammad, Ḥamza, 'Alî, Ğa'far, 'Umar, Zayd, and 'Abd Allâh (killed 'in his confinement'). He then refers to al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan, captured, and who had his hand cut off (but this is almost certainly not a son of al-Ḥusayn – Sibṭ al-Ğawzî tells us that this boy, together with 'Umar b. al-Ḥasan, were both deemed

1. 'Alī al-Akbar, killed with his father at Karbalā'
2. 'Alī al-Awsaṭ, the fourth Imām, sick in bed on the day of Karbalā', and forbidden by his father to fight because of his illness³⁸
3. 'Alī al-Aṣḡar
4. Muḥammad, about whom he provides no details
5. 'Abd Allāh, killed with his father at Karbalā'
6. Ğa'far (he refers us to al-Mufid's *al-Irshād*)
7. Sukayna
8. Fâṭima
9. Zaynab

Ibn Shaḥrāshûb refers to the infant son as 'Alī al-Aṣḡar; Ibn Ṭâ'ûs in his *Kitâb al-iqbâl bi-l-a'mâl al-ḥasana* does the same (in al-Ḥusayn's *zījâra* on the day of 'Āshûrâ). However, those who name the infant as 'Abd Allāh, whose mother was al-Rubâb, include al-Mufid in his *al-Iḥtişâş* and al-Işfahânî in his *Maqâtil*.³⁹

Writing more than three hundred years before Ibn Shaḥrāshûb, al-Ṭabarî in his *Dalâ'il al-imâma* confirms that there were three sons named 'Alī, and lists al-Ḥusayn's children as nine in number:⁴⁰

1. 'Alī al-Akbar, killed with his father at Karbalā'

too small to be killed and thus survived the battle; cf. Sibṭ al-Ġawzî, *Tadkîrat ḥawâşş al-umma bi-ḍîkr ḥaşâ'îş al-a'imma*: 229), before returning to Zayn al-'Ābidîn, not killed because he was sick in bed and failed to obtain his father's permission to fight. Ibn Shaḥrāshûb remarks that some say Muḥammad b. al-Aṣḡar b. 'Alī b. Abî Ṭâlib (again, clearly not a son of al-Ḥusayn) was another not killed because of his illness, and that others say that he was indeed killed by a man from the Banû Dârim. Cf. Ibn Shaḥrāshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî maqṭalî-hî*: 113.

³⁸ Ibn Shaḥrāshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Ṭâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî maqṭalî-hî*: 113.

³⁹ al-Işfahânî., *Maqâtil al-ṭâlibiyyîn*: 89–90, al-Mufid., *al-Iḥtişâş*: 83.

⁴⁰ al-Ṭabarî., *Dalâ'il al-imâma*, n. 26/95: 181.

2. 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn, who would be the fourth Imām
3. 'Alī al-Aṣḡar
4. Muḥammad
5. 'Abd Allāh (al-Shahīd, killed with his father at Karbalā')
6. Ğa'far
7. Zaynab
8. Sakīna
9. Fâtīma

For his part, al-Balâḍurī names only four children: 'Alī al-Akbar, killed with his father at Karbalā', 'Alī al-Aṣḡar, who succeeded his father, Fâtīma and Sukayna.⁴¹ Less than one hundred years after al-Balâḍurī, al-Ḥaṣībī proposes a different enumeration of al-Ḥusayn's children in his *al-Hidāya*: 'Alī Sayyid al-Ābidīn al-Akbar (the fourth Imām), 'Alī al-Aṣḡar, martyred with his father, the baby 'Abd Allāh who was also martyred, pierced by arrows, Muḥammad, Ğa'far, Zaynab, Sukayna and Fâtīma.⁴²

In his *al-Irshād*, al-Mufid names six children for al-Ḥusayn, but almost certainly gets the order wrong:⁴³

⁴¹ al-Balâḍurī., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol III: 1332/406, 1287–1288/361–362. His list is somewhat expanded by Sibṭ al-Ġawzī, writing four centuries later; 'Alī al-Akbar, killed with his father at Karbalā', 'Alī al-Aṣḡar, who succeeded his father, Ğa'far, 'Abd Allāh, killed with his father at Karbalā', Fâtīma, Sukayna and Muḥammad, killed with his father at Karbalā'. Cf. Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Taḍkīrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣâ'iṣ al-a'imma*: 249. Disconcertingly, Sibṭ al-Ġawzī has a second, a slightly different list of names of al-Ḥusayn's sons killed with him: 'Alī al-Akbar, 'Abd Allāh and Abû Bakr. He informs us that 'Alī b. al-Husayn was not killed 'because he was deemed too small' but fails to mention his illness. Later, he underscores al-Ḥusayn's martyred sons as two named 'Alī and one named 'Abd Allāh. Cf. Sibṭ al-Ġawzī., *Taḍkīrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-dīker ḥaṣâ'iṣ al-a'imma*: 229.

⁴² al-Ḥaṣībī., *al-Hidāya (al-Kubrâ)*, bb. 5: 202.

⁴³ al-Mufid., *Kitâb al-Irshād*, vol. II, bb. *dīker wuld al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī*: 137.

1. ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn al-Akbar, the future Imâm, who is aged twenty-three
2. ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn al-Aşğar, killed at Karbalâ’ at the age of nineteen⁴⁴
3. Ğa‘far b. al-Ḥusayn, who died in his father’s lifetime
4. ‘Abd Allâh b. al-Ḥusayn, killed as an infant at Karbalâ’
5. Sukayna
6. Fâtîma

In his *Kashf al-ğumma*, al-Irbilî enumerates four lists of children for al-Ḥusayn. The first, which al-Irbilî claims is taken from al-Şadûq’s *Ikmâl (kamâl) al-dîn*,⁴⁵ names six boys and three girls:

1. ‘Alî al-Akbar, who was martyred with his father
2. ‘Alî al-Awsaţ, who as the next Imâm would be known as Zayn al-‘Âbidîn
3. ‘Alî al-Aşğar, who was martyred with his father
4. Muḥammad
5. ‘Abd Allâh
6. Ğa‘far
7. Zaynab
8. Sakîna
9. Fâtîma

A second list, transmitted from Ibn al-Ḥashshâb, repeats the first one. A third, diverse list is transmitted from al-Ḥâfiz ‘Abd al-‘Azîz

⁴⁴ Op. cit., vol. II, bb. *wâqi‘ Karbalâ’ wa baṭûla Imâm al-Ḥusayn wa aşḥâbi-hi*: 106.

⁴⁵ al-Şadûq’s text claims nine children for al-Ḥusayn, but without providing a definitive list of names. Cf. al-Şadûq, *Ikmâl (kamâl) al-dîn wa-itmâm (tamâm) al-ni‘ma fî itbât al-ğayba wa-kashf al-ḥayra*, vol. II, bb. 47, n. 1: 527.

al-Aḥḍar al-Ġanâbidî, which enumerates ʿAlî al-Akbar, who was martyred with his father, ʿAlî al-Aṣḡar, Ġaʿfar, ʿAbd Allâh, Sakîna and Fâtîma. His fourth list is from al-Mufid.⁴⁶

According to some contemporary scholars like Ahmed,⁴⁷ there were far fewer children: Sukayna, Fâtîma, Ġaʿfar, and ʿAlî al-Akbar. The names and numbers of his daughters are no less difficult to determine, although a number delineate Fâtîma as the eldest and many maintain three daughters (at least two of whom were Karbalâʾ): Sukayna, Fâtîma, Zaynab,⁴⁸ or Zaynab, Sakîna, Fâtîma,⁴⁹ or Fâtîma and Sukayna⁵⁰ or Sakîna and Fâtîma.⁵¹ Numerous works make references to his daughters individually: Fâtîma,⁵² Sakîna,⁵³

⁴⁶ al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. II: 38–39. Cf. al-Mufid., *Kitâb al-Irshâd*, vol. II, bb. *ḍiker wuld al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî*: 137, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-annâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 48, n. 1: 329.

⁴⁷ AHMED A.Q., *The Religious Elite of the Early Islamic Hijaz*, Unit for Prospographical Research, Oxford 2011: 168.

⁴⁸ Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Tâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî tawârîḥi-hi wa-l-qâbi-hi*: 77, Ibn ʿAsâkir., *Târîḥ madînat Dimashq*, vol. XIV, bb. 1566 (*al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî b. Abî Tâlib*): 111, 122, vol. LXIX, bb. 9349 (*Zaynab bt. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî b. Abî Tâlib*): 168, al-Ḥaṣîbî., *al-Hidâya (al-Kubrâ)*, b. 5: 202.

⁴⁹ al-Ṭabari., *Dalâʾil al-imâma*, n. 26/95: 181, al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. II: 38–39. Sukayna and Sakîna seem to be interchangeable.

⁵⁰ al-Balâḍurî., *Kitâb ansâb al-asbrâf*, vol III: 1332/406, 1287–1288/361–362, al-Ṭabarsi., *Iʿlâm al-warâ bi-aʿlâm al-hudâ*: 255, Sibṭ al-Ġawzî., *Taḍkîrat ḥawâṣṣ al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaṣâʾiṣ al-aʿimma*: 233, al-Mufid., *Kitâb al-Irshâd*, vol. II, bb. *ḍiker wuld al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî*: 137.

⁵¹ al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. II: 38–39.

⁵² al-Kûfî., *Tafsîr Furât b. Ibrâhîm*: 392, 544, al-Kulaynî., *al-Kâfî fî ʿilm al-dîn*, vol. I, n. 6: 291, n. 1: 303, vol. II, bb. 64, n. 5/763: 18, bb. 68, n. 1/785: 53, al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî maʿrifat ḥuḡaġ Allâh ʿalâ al-ʿibâd*, vol. II: 26, 121, 135, 140, 174, 209, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâʿiẓîn wa-tabṣîrat al-muttaʿiẓîn*, vol. I: 191, vol. II: 494, al-Ṭabarsi., *Iʿlâm al-warâ bi-aʿlâm al-hudâ*: 254, 246, 291, al-Ṭabarsi., *Kitâb al-iḥtîḡâġ ʿalâ abl al-liġâġ*, vol. II, 230, Ibn Namâ al-Hillî., *Muṣṭr al-aḥzân wa munîr subul al-ashġân*: 99, 100, 111, Ibn Ṭâʾûs., *Kitâb al-lubâf fî qutlâ al-tuḡûf*: 187, al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. I: 580, vol. II: 39, 84, 120, 161, 180, al-Ḥurr al-ʿÂmilî., *Iḥbât al-hudât bi-l-nuṣûṣ wa-l-muʿġiẓât*, vol. II: 14, vol. IV: 58 (Fâtîma described as

Sukayna,⁵⁴ and occasionally Umm Kultûm (possibly the *kunya* for Ruqayya said to have died in childhood).⁵⁵ In his *Târîḫ madînat Dimashq*, Ibn ʿAsâkir records that two daughters, Fâtima and Sukayna, all transmitted about their father al-Ḥusayn;⁵⁶ he also notes that Sukayna was otherwise known as Amîma, or Amîna, or Âmma.⁵⁷

The fourth Imâm, says al-Ṭabarî, was born in the year 38/658 (and thus making him around twenty-three years on the day of Karbalâ'). Ibn Saʿd also gives Zayn al-ʿÂbidîn's age as twenty-three on that day, as does Sibṭ al-Ġawzî.⁵⁸ In general agreement with al-Ṭabarî, al-Mufid (although he seems to be mistaken in identifying which son is the Imâm)⁵⁹ and others, Ibn ʿAsâkir notes that some say Zayn al-ʿÂbidîn was twenty-three, and others twenty-five.⁶⁰ Ibn

the eldest), al-Baḥrânî., *al-Burhân fî tafsîr al-qurʿân*, vol. II: 335 (Fâtima described as the eldest), al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XXIII, bb. 13: 242.

⁵³ al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. II: 38. This might be Sukayna.

⁵⁴ al-Şadûq., *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-aḥâdîṯ wa-l-aḥbâr*, maġlis 31, n. 3: 166, 167, al-Ṭabarsî., *Iʿlâm al-nawâ bi-aʿlâm al-hudâ*: 214, al-Mufid., *al-Irshâd fî maʿrifat ḥuġaġ Allâh ʿalâ al-ʿibâd*, vol. II: 135, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâʿiẓîn wa-tabṣîrat al-muttaʿiẓîn*, vol. I: 191, al-Irbilî., *Kashf al-ġumma fî maʿrifat al-aʿimma*, vol. II: 39, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39: 128.

⁵⁵ al-Şadûq., *Kitâb al-amâlî fî-l-aḥâdîṯ wa-l-aḥbâr*, maġlis 30: 163–164, al-Fattâl al-Nisâbûrî., *Rawḍat al-wâʿiẓîn wa-tabṣîrat al-muttaʿiẓîn*, vol. I: 188–190, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLIV, bb. 37: 322.

⁵⁶ Ibn ʿAsâkir., *Târîḫ madînat Dimashq*, vol. XIV, bb. 1566 (*al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 111, 122.

⁵⁷ Op. cit., vol. LXIX, nn. 9349, (*Zaynab bt. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 168, bb. 9361 (*Sakîna*): 204.

⁵⁸ Ibn Saʿd., *Kitâb al-ṭabaqât al-kabîr*, vol. V: 156, Sibṭ al-Ġawzî., *Tadkîrat ḥawâşş al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaşâʿiṣ al-aʿimma*: 273–274. It is of note that in the same text, Sibṭ al-Ġawzî tells us that the boy survived the battle because the enemy 'deemed him too small' (*istaşġar*) to kill him. Cf. Sibṭ al-Ġawzî., *Tadkîrat ḥawâşş al-umma bi-ḍiker ḥaşâʿiṣ al-aʿimma*: 215.

⁵⁹ al-Mufid., *Kitâb al-Irshâd*, vol. II, bb. *ḍiker wuld al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî*: 137.

⁶⁰ Ibn ʿAsâkir., *Târîḫ madînat Dimashq*, vol. XLI, bb. 4875 (*ʿAlî b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlî b. Abî Ṭâlib b. Hâşim b. ʿAbd al-Manâf*): 366–367.

al-Ġawzî gives his age on that day as twenty-three, insisting, contrary to al-Mufid for example, that this is ‘Alî al-Aşġar, as opposed to his brother ‘Alî al-Akbar, who was killed with al-Ḥusayn, and adding that he was sick in bed on the day, and it was this that prevented him fighting.⁶¹ Al-Dînarî in his *Kitâb al-ahbâr al-ṭiwâl*,⁶² raises a divergent note, that after the battle, none of al-Ḥusayn’s companions or sons (or the sons of his brother) remained except for ‘Alî al-Aşġar; he was ‘near puberty’ or ‘a teenager’ (*râbiq*),⁶³ without long life, but had already attained four years.⁶⁴

In his *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyâ’* (written in 709/1310) al-Rabġûzî, like al-Dînarî, raises a discordant note, maintaining the age of the surviving boy as seven, while his brother, ‘Alî al-Akbar, who fought and died, as ten.⁶⁵ Al-Ḍahabî names only ‘Alî al-Akbar, killed at Karbalâ’, and ‘Alî Zayn al-‘Âbidîn,⁶⁶ while al-‘Asqalânî merely refers to the latter as a boy (*ġulâm*) who was sick.⁶⁷

In his *Bihâr al-anwâr*, al-Maġlisî describes the emergence onto the field of Karbalâ’ of ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, immediately after the deaths of most of al-Ḥusayn’s brothers (except for al-‘Abbâs, who would die later). Al-Maġlisî notes that while some transmitters, such as al-Işfahânî in his *Maqâtil*, put the boy at eighteen, others like Ibn Shaḥrâshûb in his *Manâqib* put him at either eighteen or

⁶¹ Ibn al-Ġawzî., *Şifat al-şafwa*, vol. II, bb. ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib: 52. Ibn al-Ġawzî recalls many of the boy’s virtues but gives no details of the battle.

⁶² al-Dînarî., *Kitâb al-ahbâr al-ṭiwâl*: 270.

⁶³ According to Lane, this means ten or eleven years old; near to attaining puberty. Cf. LANE E W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1968, vol. III: 1170–1.

⁶⁴ (و قد كان راهق و الا عمر و قد كان بلغ اربع سنين)

⁶⁵ Cf. BOESCHOTEN H.E. & O’KANE J., (eds.), *Al-Rabġûzî. The Stories of the Prophets*, vol. II, Brill, Leiden 2015: 630. Al-Ḥawârizmî puts ‘Alî al-Akbar at eighteen years (cf. al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqatal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqatal al-Ḥusayn*: 34).

⁶⁶ al-Ḍahabî., *Siyar a’lâm al-nubalâ’*, vol. III, bb. 48: 320–321.

⁶⁷ al-‘Asqalânî., *Tabdîb al-tabdîb*, vol II, (*Ḥusayn b. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib*): 323.

twenty-five.⁶⁸ A few passages later, al-Mağlisî, transmitting from *Maqâtil*, notes that this ‘Alî is the first martyr from the children of Abû Tâlib, and that he is ‘Alî al-Akbar.⁶⁹ Narrating again from al-Işfahânî in his *Maqâtil*, al-Mağlisî notes the problem; that while some, imagining ‘Alî al-Aşğar to be the future Imâm Zayn al-‘Âbidîn, note that he was not killed because of his illness, others imagine al-Aşğar to have been shot and killed, i.e. the infant ‘Alî.⁷⁰ Al-Mağlisî transmits a claim by Ibn Shaḥrâshûb in his *Manâqib* that ‘Alî Akbar b. al-Ḥusayn was about thirty at Karbalâ’ and survived as the next Imâm, while ‘Alî al-Aşğar, the smaller of the two, was aged about twelve and was killed.⁷¹ However, as we have noted, Ibn Shaḥrâshûb transmits another strand, claiming that al-Ḥusayn had nine children, including ‘Alî al-Akbar, who was killed with his father, ‘Alî al-Awsat, the surviving son who would be known as Zayn al-‘Âbidîn and the next Imâm, and ‘Alî al-Aşğar.

It seems most likely that al-Ḥusayn had six sons, three of whom were named ‘Alî:

1. The first is ‘Alî al-Akbar, the eldest, killed at Karbalâ’ with his father; many put him at around eighteen at Karbalâ’, but he must have been in his late twenties, born around 33/654.
2. The second is ‘Alî al-Awsat, the fourth Imâm (Zayn al-‘Âbidîn), born around 38/658, thus putting him around twenty-three years at Karbalâ’ (while the dates suggested in the texts for his birth range between the years 31/651 and 38/658, it seems certain that he was in his early twenties on the day his father was killed).
3. The third is Ğa‘far, who died before the Karbalâ’ events.
4. The fourth is the infant, ‘Abd Allâh, known as ‘Alî al-Aşğar, born around 60/680 and killed in his father’s arms at Karbalâ’.
5. The fifth is Muḥammad, martyred at Karbalâ’, but about whom we have little information.

⁶⁸ Ibn Shaḥrâshûb., *Manâqib âl Abî Tâlib*, vol. IV, bb. *fî maqâli-hî*: 109.

⁶⁹ al-Mağlisî., *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 37, n. 2: 43, 45.

⁷⁰ al-Mağlisî., *Biḥâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 37, n. 2: 62–63.

⁷¹ Op. cit., vol. XLV, bb. 48, n. 2: 329.

6. The sixth is al-Muḥsin, whose unnamed mother was among the captives after Karbalâ' and who miscarried.

In theory then, 'Alî al-Akbar, killed at Karbalâ' with his father, was destined to be the next Imâm. Like the son of Ġa'far al-Şâdiq, he dies in his father's lifetime, so that the Imamate passes to his younger brother, 'Alî al-Awsaṭ. Furthermore, the narrative of al-Ḥawârizmî, in which the younger brother comes out to fight and is resolutely sent back to his sick bed by his father, may well serve as the moment of delegation.⁷² If 'Alî al-Akbar, killed with his father, is indeed the eldest son, it seems unlikely that he should be only eighteen, when his father was near sixty. If the texts cannot agree even on the age of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalâ', easily calculable by the date of his birth and the date of the battle, it seems unlikely that they will find concordance on the names and number of his offspring.

3. THE CONSOLATION OF ZAYNAB

A third and final addendum concerns an instant when 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn is remembering back to the Karbalâ' event and is overcome with remorse at the deportation of the survivors to Kûfa while the bodies of his family and comrades lay about unburied. Although we have already noted that by the time the survivors left Karbalâ' the bodies had already been buried, Zaynab's long discourse is nonetheless worth narrating. It is an attempt by this daughter of 'Alî and Fâṭima to console and hearten her traumatised nephew, of whose grief she has taken account, a grief which will eventually become one of the chief hallmarks of his life. Although found in fragments in various other texts, (as for example, the *ḥadîṯ* recounted by Umm Ayman and which Zaynab asks her father to retell on his deathbed), as it stands the narration is transmitted only by al-Qummî and al-Maġlisî from him.⁷³ Addressing her nephew as

⁷² al-Ḥawârizmî., *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, bk. 2, bb. *fî maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*: 36. Al-Ḥawârizmî seems not to get the ages right.

⁷³ al-Qummî., *Kâmil al-şijârât*: 260–266, al-Maġlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XXVII, bb. 6, n. 23: 57–61, vol. XLV, bb. 30, n. 30: 179–183. In fact,

‘all that remains of my grandfather, and my father and my brothers’, Zaynab says to him: “Why do I see you giving up your spirit?” ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, who is the narrator of the incident, replies:

“How could I not be sad and in despair when I have seen my master, my brothers, my uncles, my cousins and my people smeared with their blood, soiled, in the open air, plundered, neither shrouded nor buried! Not a single one inclines towards them, and not a person approaches them, as though they were people of the house of al-Daylam⁷⁴ and al-Ḥazar!”⁷⁵ Zaynab replied: “What you see must not make you sad, because by God, it is due to an injunction from the Messenger of God to your grandfather and your father and your uncle. For God has made a covenant with a people of this nation – not known by the pharaohs⁷⁶ of this earth but known among the people of the heavens – that they will gather these scattered limbs and bury them, and these stained bodies too, and erect in this al-

the narration is not part of al-Qummi’s *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, but was added later by one of his students, Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. Muğira. The chain of transmission (*isnād*) is ‘Ubayd Allāh b. al-Faḍl b. Muḥammad b. Hilāl, on the authority of Sa‘īd b. Muḥammad, on the authority of Muḥammad b. Sallām al-Kūfī, on the authority of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī, on the authority of ‘Īsā b. Abī Shayba al-Qāḍī, on the authority of Nūḥ b. Darrāğ, on the authority of Qudāma b. Zā’ida, on the authority of his father, transmitting from ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.

⁷⁴ The tribe inhabiting the highlands of Gilān (Iran), uncertain in origin, who opposed the Arab invasions, but whose defeat is recorded by al-Ṭabarī, al-Balāḍurī and others. They practiced a form of paganism, and perhaps some Zoroastrianism and Christianity. Cf. MINORSKY V., “Daylam” in C E Bosworth et al., (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. II, Brill, Leiden 1991: 189–194.

⁷⁵ In the final analysis, the reference to al-Daylam and al-Ḥazar (a nomadic tribe which flourished in the early Islamic period) is a reference to those groups held in least esteem by the Arabs. Cf. BARTHOLD W. and GOLDEN P. B., “K̲hazar” in C E Bosworth et al., (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. IV, 1991: 1172–1181.

⁷⁶ Representing any tyrant who uses power or authority to commit injustice.

Taff a standard for the tomb of your father, leader of the martyrs, the vestige of which will never be blotted out and whose inscription will never be effaced with the succession of nights and days. Should the leaders of misbelief⁷⁷ and the adherents⁷⁸ of error try hard to obliterate and destroy it, its vestige will do nothing but increase in splendour and in height.”

‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn then asks for clarification about the injunction and for more information about it, and Zaynab replies:

“Umm Ayman reported to me that one day the Messenger of God visited the house of Fāṭima, and she made *ḥarīra* (a traditional soup) for him, while ‘Alī brought him a plate of dates. Then Umm Ayman said: I brought them a large vessel containing milk and cream. The Messenger of God, ‘Alī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn ate some of this *ḥarīra* and the Messenger of God drank and they all drank the milk. Then he ate and they all ate some of the dates with the cream. The Messenger of God washed his hands and ‘Alī poured the water for him, and when he had finished washing his hands, he wiped his face. Then he looked intently at ‘Alī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and we noted the joy on his face. He looked with his eyes towards heaven for a while and then turned his face towards the *qibla* and spread out his hands in prayer. He then fell into a prostration, sobbing with a prolonged weeping; his lamentation ascended and his tears streamed. Then he lifted his head and bowed deeply to the ground, and his tears flowed as though they were torrential rain. Fāṭima, ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn grieved, and I (Umm Ayman) grieved with them when we saw the Messenger of God, but it frightened us to ask him

⁷⁷ The concept of *kufr* and its derivatives has a wide range of meaning, running from the idea of veiling, hiding or concealing something, through ingratitude, the refusal to be thankful for a favour, to falling short of one’s duty with respect to the law. Bearing in mind the difference between disbelief and misbelief, I have chosen to render it as the latter, with its adherents as ‘misbelievers’. Cf. LANE E.W., *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1997, vol. VII: 2620.

⁷⁸ In the text, the word is *ashbyāʿ*, the plural of *shāʿa*.

while this was so prolonged. Then ‘Alī and Fâṭima said to him: What is making you cry, O Messenger of God? May God not cause your eyes to weep! Our hearts have been wounded, seeing the state you are in! He replied: O my brother, I was happy for you all!

Muzâḥim b. ‘Abd al-Wârīṭ said in his *ḥadīṭ* concerning us that Muḥammad said: O my dear ones, I was so very happy for you all – I have never been so happy – and looking at you I praised God for His favour towards me in you, when Ġabra’īl came down to me and said: O Muḥammad, God the Blessed, the Most High is acquainted with what is in your spirit and knows the happiness you feel for your brother and your daughter and your grandsons, and he completes the favour for you and delights you with a gift, in that He places them and their offspring and those who love them and their Shi‘a with you in the Garden. There is no difference between you and them; they live as you live and receive as you receive until you are satisfied and above satisfaction, in spite of the many afflictions they received in the world and the adversities incurred by them at the hands of a people professing your creed and pretending that they are of your nation, devoid of God and of you, struck and killed, their killing in different places, their tombs remote, chosen by God for them and for you. Praise God, Majestic and Glorious, for His choice and be satisfied with His provision! So I praised God and was satisfied with His provision concerning what He had chosen for you all. Then Ġabra’īl said: O Muḥammad, your brother will be persecuted after you, vanquished by your nation, worn out by your enemies and then killed after you, killed by the evillest of mankind and of creation, the most wretched of creation, like the slaughtering of the camel⁷⁹ in the land to which which he will migrate, the place of

⁷⁹ God sent the prophet Ṣâliḥ to the materialistic and unspiritual people of Tamûd, and from whom they demanded a sign or miracle; the sign given by God was a special camel, which the people (led by nine particularly wicked men) promptly hamstrung and killed, suffering severe

planting for his Shi'a and the Shi'a of his children and in which, in every situation, their afflictions will increase and their sufferings become greater. This grandson of yours (he indicated al-Ḥusayn with his hand) will be killed in a group of your offspring the people of your house and the best of your nation, on the bank of the Euphrates in the land called Karbalā', because of which, sufferings and afflictions will increase on account of your enemies and the enemies of your offspring on that day, the suffering of which will never come to an end and the grief of which will never cease. That land is the purest of the areas of the earth and the greatest in terms of sanctity, and truly it is part of the plain (*al-baṭḥā'*)⁸⁰ of the Garden. When that day comes, on which your grandson and his people will be killed, surrounded by battalions of misbelievers and the cursed, the earth will shake violently from its horizons, the mountains will tremble, so great their agitation, the waves of the oceans will be in tumult, the inhabitants of the heavens will heave, angry for you, O Muḥammad, and for your offspring, and regarding as significant all that has been violated of your sanctity and for the evil that is equal to it in your offspring and your family.

Nothing will remain but to ask permission of God, Majestic and Glorious in support of your oppressed and tyrannized people, who are the proof of God (*buḡḡat Allāh*) for His creation after you. For God reveals to the heavens and the earth, to the mountains and the seas and all that they contain; in truth, I am God, the King, the All Powerful, whom no fugitive can elude and whom no resister can cause to fail. I am more

consequences for their action. Cf. Q. 7: 73–78, Q. 27: 45–51, Q. 11: 64–65.

⁸⁰ “Mecca,” notes The Encyclopaedia of Islam, “lies in a kind of corridor between two ranges of bare steep hills, with an area in the centre rather lower than the rest. The whole corridor is the *wādī* or the *baṭn Makka*, ‘the hollow of Mecca’, and the lower part is al-Baṭḥā’, which was doubtless the original settlement and where the Ka‘ba stands.” Cf. WATT W.M., “Makka” in C E Bosworth et al., (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. VI, 1991: 144.

powerful in victory and retribution. By my Majesty and Glory, I will most certainly castigate those who harmed My Messenger, My Choice One, and violated his sanctity, and killed his family and spurned his injunction and tyrannized his people, “with a punishment wherewith I have not punished any of (My) creatures”.⁸¹ With that, everything in the heavens and the lands⁸² will raise a shout, cursing whoever tyrannized your family and usurped your sanctity. When that group comes out to their resting places, God, Majestic and Glorious will take charge of seizing their souls with His hand. Angels will come down to earth from the seventh heaven bearing vessels of ruby and emerald, filled with the water of life, and garments and perfumes of the garments and perfumes of the Garden. They will wash their corpses with that water, clothe them with the garments and embalm them with those perfumes. Then row by row the angels will make *ṣalāt* over them. God will then call forth a people from your nation, whom the misbelievers do not know, and who did not participate in that blood-shedding by word or deed or intention. They will bury their bodies and raise a distinguishing mark for the tomb of the leader of the martyrs in that *al-baḥāʿ*,² which will be a sign for the people of the truth and a rope for the believers for success. One hundred thousand angels from every heaven will surround it day and night; they will ask blessings upon him and will glorify God near him and ask of God forgiveness for his pilgrims and write the names of those from your nation who come to him as a pilgrim, drawing near to God, and thus to you, and the names of their fathers and their clans and their countries, and will brand their faces with a mark of light from the throne of God: ‘This is a pilgrim to the tomb of the best of the martyrs and the son of the best of the prophets’. On the Day of Resurrection, a light will shine on their faces from the vestige of that mark; perceptions will be veiled by it, indicating them and by which they will be known. It is as if I am with you, O Muḥammad,

⁸¹ Q. 5: 115.

⁸² The word in the text occurs in the genitive plural (*al-ʿarāḍīn*). I have chosen to translate it here as ‘lands’ rather the clumsier ‘earths’.

(with you) between me and Mikâ'il,⁸³ and 'Alî in front of us, and with us, angels of God, their number impossible to count. We will gather those who have the mark on their faces from among all the creatures, so that God will rescue them from the terror of that day and its adversities. For that is the judgment of God, and His gift to the one who visits your tomb, O Muḥammad, or the tomb of your brother, or the tomb of your grandsons, desiring by it nothing but God, Majestic and Glorious. A people, who deserve the curse and the anger of God, will try hard to obliterate the standard of that tomb and efface its vestige, but God the Blessed, the Most High will make it impossible for them to do so'.

Then the Messenger of God said: 'It is this that made me weep and grieve.'" Zaynab said: "When Ibn Muḡam, may God curse him, struck my father, and I saw the traces of death in him, I said to him: 'My father! Umm Ayman recounted to me this and this, but I would have loved to hear it from you!' He replied: 'My daughter, the *ḥadiṯ* was as Umm Ayman recounted it to you. It was as though I was with you and the daughters of your people, captives in that country, ignominious, reduced to submission, "*in fear lest men should extirpate you*",⁸⁴ but be patient, be patient, for by the One who split the grain⁸⁵ and created the breath of life, on that Day God will not have on the earth a *walî* better than you (pl), better than those who love you (pl) and better than your Shî'a. For when he was informing us of these things, the Messenger of God said to us: On that day, Iblîs⁸⁶ will fly gleefully and will roam the whole of the earth

⁸³ The angel named in Q. 2: 98. By tradition, he has never laughed since the creation of Hell, and weeps for pity over sinners, imploring God's mercy for them. Cf. WENSINCK A.J., "Mikâl" in *SEI*, H.A.R. Gibb et al. (eds.), E.J. Brill, Leiden 1995: 378–379.

⁸⁴ Q. 8: 26.

⁸⁵ Q. 6: 95.

⁸⁶ One of the Islamic titles denoting Satan. Before the fall of Âdam, Iblîs appears to be his personal name, of disputed etymology. Some scholars suggest that it might be from the Greek 'diabolos': others that it de-

among his satans and his demons, saying: O company of satans, among the offspring of Adam we have reached the desire and arrived, in their annihilation, at the objective, and have bequeathed them to the Fire, except for those who adhere to this group. Make it your concern to cause the people to doubt concerning them, prompt them to hostility to them, and the enticement of them and their friends, until the error and misbelief of mankind becomes strong and not a survivor among them will be rescued. Iblīs has spoken the truth about them, although he is a liar, that a good work will not avail hand in hand with hostility to you, nor a sin, except the major ones, do harm hand in hand with love for you and your patrons.”⁸⁷

rives from the Arabic root *b-l-s*, in the sense that Satan has nothing to expect – *ublīsa* – from God (*‘balas’* is a person of desperate character). The fourth form of the verb (*ablāsā*) means ‘to be overcome with grief’, ‘to be desperate’, ‘to be struck with despair’. Then again, it finds a possible derivation from the Hebrew for ‘adversary’. Cf. PENRICE J., *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Kor-an*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi 1995: 19. Satan has a number of designations in the Qur’ān, but none of these can be considered as proper names. ‘Shayṭān’ appears in the singular form in the period of Medina (622–632), replacing Iblīs.

⁸⁷ The distinction between ‘grave’ (*ḵabā’ir*) and ‘lesser’ (*ṣagā’ir*) sins found in the Qur’ān (cf. for e.g. Q. 42: 37, Q. 53: 32), which God may pardon immediately or may punish for a specific period, according to His will, (cf. Q. 2: 284 and Q. 3: 129, “*He will forgive whom He will and he will punish whom He will*”) and the corpus of *ahādīṭ*, while developed at great length by various theologians and legal schools (*madāhib*), remains inconsistent in its definition. The generally accepted idea of moral lapse or sin was one of disobedience to the *sharī‘a*, so that ‘disobedience’ often became a synonym for ‘sin’. It was thought that the seriousness of the sin lay in the hardening of the heart and persistence in evildoing, as expressed by Ibn ‘Abbās: “Everything forbidden by God, once persisted in, becomes a grave sin.” In this sense, persistence in lesser sins makes them grave. Cf. LAGARDE M., “Sin, Repentance and Forgiveness in the Qur’an and Tradition” in *Encounter*, n. 107 (July-August 1984): 1–10, WENSINCK A.J., “*Ḵhatī‘a*” in H A R Gibb et al (eds.), *SEI*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1995: 251.

AFTERWORD

By the time the Twelfth Imâm, Abû al-Qâsim Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Mahdî, went into concealment in the ‘greater Occultation’ (*al-ġayba al-kubrâ*) in 327/940,¹ the theology of the Shî‘a had moved far beyond the aspirations and tendencies, some of them extremist, of its beginnings. Unarguably, an acute component of the ethos of those various groupings that would come to be called the Shî‘a was the abiding realization that they would never attain to the power they maintained was their due but that had been usurped by others, and concomitantly, their turning increasingly to a supernatural, other-worldly power. This would intensely colour and shape their conception of what would come to be regarded as the principal foundational moments in the Shî‘î story – the Karbalâ’ event in particular would be a growing trauma – and of the members of the *abl al-bayt*, the ‘holy family’, who perpetuated the bloodline of Muḥammad. From about the 4th/10th century, with the rise of a number of Shî‘î or pro-Shî‘î dynasties (the Fâṭimid of Egypt² and the Bûyid of Persia³), the image of Zaynab’s mother Fâṭima would

¹ Preceded by the ‘lesser Occultation’ (*al-ġayba al-ṣuġrâ*) from 257/872 until 327/940 when the Imâm was present but not seen and dealt with people through deputies and agents (*nunmâb*). With the greater Occultation, he is entirely concealed, and there is no longer access to him, nor does he work any longer through agents. This event would give significant impetus to the development of theology and the codification of *aḥâdîṯ* among the early Shî‘î scholars.

² 297/909 – 567/1171. Cf. BOSWORTH C.E., *Islamic Surveys 5. The Islamic Dynasties*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1967: 46.

³ 320/932 – 454/1062. Cf. BOSWORTH C.E., *Islamic Surveys 5. The Islamic Dynasties*, 1967: 94.

change substantially. The Fâṭimids would claim descent from her, and by the mid-4th/10th century, the Bûyids would initiate public commemorations of Karbalâ'. By the time of the Şafavid dynasty in the 10th/16th century, Fâṭīma had become increasingly more flawless and ever less a woman with ordinary human traits, an image that would remain moderately unchanged until the writings of scholars like 'Ali Shariati (d. 1977).

The development of Zaynab's character would follow similar lines, although it would be less clearly articulated in the texts; it would be the contemporary hagiographers, both those of a pietistic strain who emphasized the more numinous aspects of her upbringing (embodied in her knowledge, her piety and her modesty), as well as those who attempted to shape Zaynab into a contemporary model for the ideal Islamic women, who would build a theology around 'Ali's eldest daughter.

When 'Zaynab the liar' mounted her donkey and declared herself to be a trickster, she was at that very instant the antithesis of Zaynab, daughter of 'Ali and Fâṭīma, who is called *al-Şiddīqa*, and who, at the level of popular theology, won the day not just because she was tenacious, but primarily because she told the truth. For her devotees, Zaynab did not cause Ibn Ziyâd to back down, or reduce Yazîd to chastened silence because she was strong, but chiefly because, in spite of the burden of weakness and sorrow she carried, she had truth and right on her side.

Whether recognized or not, for a few days crucial days, all of that impulse that would later develop into Shî'î Islam in its major branches, was articulated, defended, and perhaps even guaranteed by a woman, the granddaughter of Muḥammad, sister of al-Ḥusayn. Some might indeed be tempted to nominate her the 'saviour' of Shî'î Islam, since by her protecting the life of 'Ali b. al-Ḥusayn, she saved the line of Imâms, without whom, some Shî'î theology holds, neither Islam, as understood by those who would later be called the Shî'a, nor even the world could go on. The theology of the Imamate, understood as a consequence of God's kindness (*luṭf*) as well as of rational divine justice, and believed, at least by the Isma'îlî and the *itnâ 'asharî* Shî'a to be indispensable for a proper interpretation of the revelation, went through a vigorous development long after Karbalâ' and Zaynab, and resulted in major disagreements between the main Shî'î branches, the Zaydî, the Isma'îlî and the *itnâ 'asharî*. These disagreements included issues of designation, recognition

and the Imâm's political authority. At the very least, the Isma'îli and the *imâ ashari* hold at a theological level that an Imâm is necessary at all times for a correct interpretation of the revelation.

This being said, it seems unlikely that Zaynab, in saving the life of her nephew, would have clearly grasped the theological consequences of her action. Nonetheless, there is a strand, found in the Sunnî al-Ḥawârizmî, and examined earlier in this work, in which, in the midst of the battle, Zayn al-Âbidîn emerges from his tent, undeterred by his father's strict prohibition. He would be the one, says al-Ḥawârizmî, who would continue the family of Muḥammad, but at this stage he was not strong enough even to carry his sword. From behind him, his aunt, not Zaynab but her sister Umm Kulṭûm, attempts to order him back, to which he replies: "Let me fight in front of the son of the Messenger of God!" Al-Ḥusayn intervenes, telling Umm Kulṭûm to seize the boy and return him to his tent, since the earth could not continue devoid of the progeny of the family of Muḥammad, that is, without the members of the *abl al-bayt*. In his hagiography, Shahin notes that in bidding his final farewell to the women, al-Ḥusayn had ordered Zaynab to prevent 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn from fighting, and that she does this quite forcefully, but gives no references to any classical text and does not repeat the story told by al-Ḥawârizmî.⁴

It could be proposed that Zaynab took on in those Karbalâ' days some of the tasks and qualities that later Shî'î scholars would define as pertaining to the Imâm even if, technically, she herself could never be called by that title, making herself worthy of imitation even if, technically, she herself could never be called a *marja'*.⁵

⁴ SHAHIN B., *Lady Zaynab*, 2002: 184.

⁵ This was a concept that arose within the Uṣûlî School, those who adhere to certain principles (*uṣûl*) of jurisprudence, between the 12th/18th and 14th/20th centuries although, as Haider notes, some scholars attempted to read the concept back into Shî'î history in order to fit much earlier personalities (HAIDER N., *Shî'î Islam: An Introduction*, 2014: 162). The *marja'* would be the most learned jurist of each age, who as such would be the chief representative in the world of the Imâm, now in Occultation. His position would be determined by a number of factors, including learn-

Ibn Ziyâd picks her out instantly from the crowd and addresses Zaynab as though he accedes to her authority; both she and her nephew are immediately recognized by both Ibn Ziyâd and Yazîd as the leaders of the group.

Even if it cannot be said that Zaynab was, albeit for a few days, the 'leader' of the Shî'a, it might be justifiably construed that she was the prototype and forerunner of those four agents or deputies (*nunwâb*) who would arise to represent the Twelfth and final Imâm, who, after succeeding his father, was present but not seen in the 'lesser Occultation' from 257/872 until 327/940. Admittedly, the situation of 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn was somewhat different; nonetheless, in those critical post-Karbalâ' days he was, because of illness, present but not seen, so that Zaynab could be said to be his spokesperson and agent. This is underscored by a number of texts which we have examined, and in which she steps into the background soon after her challenge to Yazîd, ceding the place to her nephew. Al-Mağlisî records more than one moment in which either 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn invites her to remain silent so that he can speak, or, unbidden, she cedes the place to him. I believe that such texts comprise the symbolic moment of the new Imâm taking his rightful place as Zaynab, her specific task heroically completed, steps back from the center. This is noteworthy, for example in Ibn al-A'îr, who records the instant when Yazîd tells Zaynab to speak and she defers to 'Alî b. al-Ḥusayn, saying: "He is the speaker."⁶

Numerous corollaries, for those with an eye to comparative theology, can be drawn, for example, between al-Ḥusayn and the New Testament figure of Jesus; aside from the claims their respective adherents make about them, both are charismatic figures who take a stand for integrity and truth, and suffer severe consequences, submitting to a martyrdom that has healing and redemptive qualities. Likewise, there are strong parallels between Fâṭima, mother of al-Ḥusayn and Mary, mother of Jesus, in the theology constructed around their lives by Shî'î Islam in the case of Fâṭima and Catholic

ing and seniority, and in times of disagreement, there may be more than one *marjâ'*.

⁶ Cf. for example Ibn al-A'îr., *al-Kâmil fî al-târîḥ*, vol. II: 439, al-Mağlisî., *Bihâr al-anwâr*, vol. XLV, bb. 39, n. 22: 175.

Christianity in the case of Mary. Both are virgin⁷ mothers and women of untold sorrow and grief; both have martyr sons whose deaths have a cosmic impact. Both are given extraordinarily powerful intercessory prerogatives by God. Although there is always the temptation to overstretch an analogy, such juxtapositions may be regarded as authentic without necessarily being absolute or incontrovertible.

In the case of Zaynab, two feasible parallels come immediately to mind. The first concerns the 2nd century BC Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose story is narrated in the Second Book of Maccabees⁸ and who, Yazîd-like, imposed a rigorous and, in their eyes, entirely ungodly regime upon the Jewish people, forbidding worship in the temple, outlawing the Sabbath and holy day observance and disallowing obedience to the precepts of the Torah, including the crucial and foundational rite of circumcision. The capital punishment that he imposed for those who would not submit to this Hellenization resulted in a legion of martyrs, among whom one particular individual is pertinent to the Zaynab model. It is the story of a widow and her seven sons, narrated in the texts in II Maccabees 7: 1–42. Arrested and ill-treated in an attempt to force them to submit to the de-Judaizing initiatives of the king, the first six sons refuse and are killed in the presence of their mother, who persistently encourages her sons to die nobly rather than fail the precepts of divine law. The texts do not fail to remark upon her example:

The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory. Although she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage (II Maccabees 7: 20–21)

⁷ As noted in the first chapter, there is a substantial difference between what Catholic Christians understand by the virginity of Mary and what Shî'î Muslims understand by that same phenomenon in the life of Fâtîma.

⁸ II Maccabees 6: 7 – 7: 42.

Even when the king urges her to persuade her last remaining son with reason, the mother, using a language that the king cannot understand, urges the boy not to give way, and is eventually martyred with him. While some of the differences are palpable – Zaynab, for example, directly addresses Ibn Ziyâd and Yazîd, while the Maccabees widow talks only to her sons, and always in a language the king cannot understand – both incidents are clear examples of human emotion being subdued by a determined and judicious adherence to the Law, or at the very least to justice. Both women, who might in ordinary circumstances be deemed powerless, especially since they are left in a situation without a male to protect them, show themselves able to draw upon superhuman courage and strength in a situation of crisis. They reveal that real strength is found in faithfulness to the commandments of God, rather than in the paradigm put forward by intolerant rulers. However, while the Maccabees widow is praised for being like a man, the Zaynab paradigm is understood differently; she is a woman who clearly illustrates that traits once regarded as being proper to the domain of males, belong equally to women. Both Zaynab and the Maccabees mother are archetypal women, whose tenacity and daring, emboldened by a profound conviction and fidelity to the faith that they profess.

A second correspondence is equally compelling; in the New Testament accounts of the Resurrection, for a brief but undetermined period, the whole content of New Testament Christianity rests entirely upon the shoulders of a woman named Mary Magdalene. According to the Christian scriptures, she is the first witness to the Resurrection and the first to relay news of the event to the other members of the nascent Church. In this, for a brief period of time she carries the whole of that message which is called *kerigma* – the proclamation of the Resurrection upon which the New Testament Church and its theology is built. The early Church's first evangelist and eyewitness to the person of Jesus is a woman, as six centuries later Zaynab would, for a brief period, be al-Ḥusayn's chief defender, apologist and advocate.

This monograph aimed at a number of things; it was an attempt to construct the beginnings of a biography for 'Alî's daughter that would be based primarily on the classical texts of Sunnî and Shi'î Islam. At the very least, those texts offer fragments of a life, some of which would later be used by the pietists and hagiog-

raphers who, in works with little academic value but which tapped into the vein of popular religion, recounted the numinous events in Zaynab's childhood and upbringing, proposing these as model events for faithful Islamic women.

Centuries later, a new generation of hagiographers sought to present an alternate version of Zaynab, one that would capture popular imagination; this would be the Zaynab shaped by a specific politico-social discourse. If the Zaynab of earlier pieties was known for her reserve and her modesty, this was a Zaynab who expressed her *taqwâ* (piety)⁹ by plunging herself more deeply into society and its needs, the fighter for justice and defender of the Islamic way, an altruistic and courageous woman upon whom every contemporary Muslim woman could model herself.

One of the objectives of this work was, therefore, an attempt to hear again the Zaynabian voice as she articulates her grief, her *apologia*, her theological defense of al-Ḥusayn's struggle at the level of the classical texts. Even if her picture there is fragmentary, she speaks nonetheless in a voice that could help to shape a genuine Zaynabian theology and praxis, and which is the antithesis of the inhabitants of Kûfa, who remained silent or looked the other way in the face of oppression and injustice. A solid Zaynabian praxis renders her archetypal, placing her beyond the boundaries of nation and religion, situating her within the grasp of all people as one who can be emulated; as wife and mother, as defender of her brother and the continuation of his voice, as a woman wrapped in sorrow, Zaynab's struggle is no less pertinent even to people whose struggles may be nothing more than a little private sorrow, but who nonetheless need the same courage with which to negotiate daily life as she needed to confront and Ibn Ziyâd-Yazîd tyranny.

It would be germane to conclude this search for the voice of Zaynab by listening to the voices of her devotees, using examples of the prayers of blessing and salutation offered her by all who

⁹ The word *taqwâ* in its various forms occurs over two hundred times in the Qur'ân, and is often translated as 'piety', although this may be a weak rendering; I use it here of Zaynab because as a concept, it aptly articulates that moral grounding or conscience that renders human beings aware of their responsibilities to God and society.

make the pilgrimage visit (*ziyāra*) to her tomb. Like the ‘theological titles’ listed by Karbāssî, these ‘litanies of approach’ (*ziyārāt*) are not found in the classical sources, but are drawn from works of popular spirituality. Their lines epitomize Zaynab in her lineage, in her titles of honor and in her manifold sufferings, and look to her intercessory powers to win forgiveness, fulfilment and relief in this life; even after death, Zaynab continues to speak a word for all who cry out in need. There are a number of ‘litanies of approach’ for the tomb of Zaynab, those reproduced below being only two examples. The first example is concise and concentrates on Zaynab’s titles and virtues:

زيارة السيدة زينب الكبرى (سلام الله عليها) (بنت الامام علي) عليه السلام
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

*The visit to the tomb of the mistress Zaynab al-Kubrā, daughter of Imām ‘Alī.
In the name of God, the perfect mercy, the enduring mercy:*

السلام عليك يا بنت سلطان الانبياء، السلام عليك يا بنت صاحب الحوض واللواء،
السلام عليك يا بنت فاطمة الزهراء، السلام عليك يا بنت خديجة الكبرى، السلام عليك
يا بنت سيد الاوصياء وركن الاولياء أمير المؤمنين، السلام عليك يا بنت ولي الله،
السلام عليك يا ام المصائب يا زينب بنت علي ورحمة الله وبركاته

Peace be upon you, daughter of the ruler of the prophets.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one entrusted with the Pond¹⁰ and the Standard.

Peace be upon you, daughter of Fāṭima al-Zabrā’.

Peace be upon you, daughter of Ḥadīġa al-Kubrā.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the master of the trustees and support of the holy ones of God, the Commander of the Faithful.

¹⁰ In Shī‘ī eschatology, the ‘Pond’ or ‘Basin’ (*al-ḥawḍ*) is the pool of *al-Kawṭar*, the great symbol of the authority of Muḥammad and his descendants over all creation. On the Day of Resurrection, the ‘day of great thirst’, ‘Alī will be given authority over this Pond, to give its life-giving waters to his adherents and supporters, and to send his enemies away thirsty. Cf. AYOUB M., *Redemptive Suffering in Islam. A Study of the Devotional Aspects of ‘Ashura in Twelver Shi‘ism*, 1978: 198, 200–201.

*Peace be upon you, daughter of God's holy one.
Peace be upon you, mother of afflictions, Zaynab daughter of 'Alī, and the
mercy of God and His blessings.*

السلام عليك أيتها الفاضلة الرشيدة، السلام عليك أيتها العاملة الكاملة، السلام عليك
أيتها الجليلة الجميلة، السلام عليك أيتها التقية النقية، السلام عليك أيتها المظلومة
المقهوره، السلام عليك أيتها الرضية المرضية، السلام عليك يا تالية المعصوم

*Peace be upon you, the Virtuous, the Rightly Guided.
Peace be upon you, the Active, the Perfect.
Peace be upon you, the Lofty, the Beautiful.
Peace be upon you, the Pious, the Immaculate.
Peace be upon you, the Tyrannized, the Humiliated.
Peace be upon you, the Satisfied, the One who Satisfies God.
Peace be upon you, Follower of the Immaculate Ones.*

السلام عليك يا ممتحنة في تحمل المصائب بالحسين المظلوم، السلام عليك أيتها
البعيدة عن الآفاق، السلام عليك أيتها الاسيرة في البلدان، السلام على من شهد بفضلها
التقلان، السلام عليك أيتها المتحيرة في وقوفك في القتلى وناديت جدك رسول الله بهذا
النداء: صلى عليك ملكك السماء هذا حسين بالعراء مسلوب العمامة والرداء مقطوع
الاعضاء وبناتك سبايا

*Peace be upon you, tested in the bearing of afflictions with the tyrannized al-
Husayn.
Peace be upon you, distant from the regions.¹¹
Peace be upon you, prisoner in the countries.
Peace be upon the one to whose excellence humans and ġinn bore testimony.
Peace be upon you, dismayed at the killing, and who cried out to your grandfa-
ther with the appeal: May the Sovereign of heaven bless you! This is Husayn in
the open, stripped of turban and gown, limbs dismembered, your daughters,
captives.*

السلام على روحك الطيبة وجسدك الطاهر، السلام عليك يا مولاتي وابنة مولاي
وسيدتي وابنة سيدتي ورحمة الله وبركاته

¹¹ Possibly a reference words used by Zaynab in her protest against Yazid: "Did you suppose, Yazid, having cut us off from the regions of the earth..."

أشهد أنك قد أقمّت الصلاة وآتيت الزكاة وأمرت بالمعروف ونهيت عن المنكر
وأطعت الله ورسوله وصيرت على الأذي في جنب الله حتى أتاك اليقين

Peace be upon your kind spirit and your pure body.

Peace be upon you, my protector and daughter of my protector, my mistress and daughter of my mistress, and the mercy of God and His blessings.

I bear witness that you performed the prayer,¹² and have given the legal charity,¹³ and have enjoined what is good and forbidden what is evil,¹⁴ and obeyed God and His Messenger, and exercised patience in injury, on the side of God until He gave you certainty.

فلعن الله من جحدك ولعن الله من ظلمك ولعن الله من لم يعرف حقك ولعن الله أعداء
آل محمد من الجن والانس من الاولين والآخرين وضاعف عليهم العذاب الاليم

The curse of God upon whoever disavowed you.

The curse of God upon whoever ill-treated you.

The curse of God upon whoever did not recognize your due.

The curse of God upon the enemies of the family of Muḥammad, from among the ġinn and humanity, from first to last, and double torment for them in the utmost degree.¹⁵

أتيتك يا مولاتي وابنة مولاي قاصدا وافدا عارفا بحقك فكوني شفيعا إلى الله في
غفران ذنوبي، وقضاء حوائجي، واعطاء سؤلي وكشف ضري، وأن لك ولائيك
وأجدادك الطاهرين جاها عظيما وشفاعة مقبولة، السلام عليك وعلى آبائك الطاهرين
المطهرين وعلى الملائكة المقيمين في حرمك الشريف المبارك

¹² That is, the ritual prayer of Islam (*ṣalāt*).

¹³ The *ṣakāt*.

¹⁴ One of the specific duties incumbent upon a Shī'ī Muslim is the Mu'tazilī principle of enjoining others to do good (*amr bi-l-ma'rūf*) and forbidding others from doing evil (*nahī 'an al-munkar*); the theology expressed is of a God desires the establishment of a just social and political order who thus requires Muslims to intervene in the affairs of community. This principle is patently seen in Zaynab's stand against oppression and tyranny.

¹⁵ Cf. Q. 33: 30.

Protector and daughter of my protector, I come to you directly, an envoy, recognizing your due. Be an intercessor before God for the forgiveness of my sins and the fulfilment of my needs and the granting of my request and the lifting of my injury.

To you and to your father and to your pure grandparents great standing and accepted intercession!

Peace be upon you and upon your pure and immaculate fathers, and upon the angels who reside in your noble and blessed sanctuary.

The second example is longer and more theological; like many of these litany prayers, as is the case in other religious traditions, it is catechetical, mixing a didactic motive with spirituality as, as many prayers are wont to do, it attempts to instruct the devotee in various tenets of faith. More than that, it has a certain mystical bent, with its use of terminology such as *fanâ*' ('absorption' or 'annihilation') and its designation of a pre-existence (*nûr muḥammadî*) to Muḥammad.¹⁶

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ سَيِّدِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ صَاحِبِ الْخَوْضِ وَاللَّوَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَنْ عَرَجَ بِهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَوَصَلَ إِلَى مَقَامِ قَابِ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ نَبِيِّ الْهُدَى وَسَيِّدِ الْوَرَى وَمُنْقِذِ الْعِبَادِ مِنَ الرَّدَى
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ صَاحِبِ الْخُلُقِ الْعَظِيمِ وَالشَّرَفِ الْعَمِيمِ وَالْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ صَاحِبِ الْمَقَامِ الْمَحْمُودِ وَالْخَوْضِ الْمَمْرُودِ وَاللَّوَاءِ الْمَشْهُودِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَنْهَجِ دِينِ الْإِسْلَامِ وَصَاحِبِ الْقِبْلَةِ وَالْقُرْآنِ وَعَلَمِ الصِّدْقِ وَالْحَقِّ
وَالْإِحْسَانِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ صَفْوَةِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَعَلَمِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَمَشْهُورِ الذِّكْرِ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ
وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

*Peace be upon you, daughter of the master of the prophets.*¹⁷

¹⁶ For a brief outline of the *nûr muḥammadî*, cf. CLOHESSY C., *Fati-ma, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 74–76.

¹⁷ The word 'daughter' (*bin*) is used here and later in the litany in terms of lineage, since it is Muḥammad, and not 'Ali, who is master of the prophets and, as will be noted later, none of Muḥammad's daughters was present at Karbalâ'. That being said, it does seem at times that this litany confuses (perhaps deliberately so) two Zaynabs; one, the daughter of

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one entrusted with the Pond and the Banner.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one who was made to ascend¹⁸ to heaven and arrived at a station “two bows’ length or nearer”.¹⁹

Peace be upon you, daughter of the prophet of guidance, the master of humankind, the deliverer of humanity from ruin.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one entrusted with “a tremendous nature”,²⁰ great distinction and “a revelation and a wise reminder”.²¹

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one entrusted with the praised estate,²² the Pond of Destiny and the Notable Banner.

Muḥammad, married to Abû al-‘Âṣ b. Rabi‘ and who died around the age of twenty-nine in Medina, and the other his granddaughter. Nonetheless, the litany is reproduced as it stands.

¹⁸ For a brief outline of Muḥammad’s ‘night journey’ (*isrâ’*) and ‘ascension’ (*mi‘râġ*) and how these are understood in Sunnî and Shi‘î Islam, cf. CLOHESSY C., *Fatima, Daughter of Muhammad*, 2009: 16–20.

¹⁹ Q. 53: 9.

²⁰ Q. 68: 4.

²¹ Q. 3: 58.

²² The specific reference to Muḥammad’s station in the afterlife is found in Q. 17: 70 (“*It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to a praised estate*”). A number of the texts of Sunnî *aḥādīth*, such as al-Buḥârî and Muslim, link this ‘praised estate’ with Muḥammad’s intercessory prerogatives. Cf. for e.g. al-Buḥârî., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. II, bk. 24 (*Kitâb al-ṣakât*), bb. 51, n. 553: 321–322, Muslim., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. I, Book 1 (*Kitâb al-îmân*), bb. 84, n. 320: 179–180. Transmissions in al-Buḥârî, al-Nasâ‘î, Ibn Mâġa and al-Tirmidî for example, seem to underscore that according to Muḥammad himself, it is indeed intercession that is meant by his ‘praised estate’ (Q. 17: 79). Cf. al-Buḥârî., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitâb al-ṣakât*, ch. 52, n. 1475: 323, *Kitâb al-tafsîr*, ch. 11, n. 4718: 193, *Kitâb al-tawhîd*, ch. 19, n. 7440: 325–8, al-Nasâ‘î., *Sunan*, *Kitâb al-adhân*, ch. 38, n. 681: 400–1, Ibn Mâġa., *Sunan*, *Abwâb al-adhân*, ch. 4, n. 722: 477. This remains a highly debated question in Islam; the Sunnî scholars are divided over the issue, although the weight of Islamic teaching seems to fall on the side of intercession rather than against it (cf. FITZGERALD M.L., “Mediation in Islam” in *Studia Missionalia*, vol. XXI, 1972: 196). The Shi‘a generally, within their theological tradition and piety, have no reservations about intercession, and uphold not merely the possibility but also the reality of the intercession of the prophets and the Imâms on behalf of

Peace be upon you, daughter of the manifest way of the religion of Islam, the one entrusted with the qibla and the Qurʾān and the distinguishing mark of sincerity, truth and beneficence.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the best of the prophets, the distinguishing mark of the God-fearing, the celebrated of reputation in heaven, and the mercy of God and His blessing.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ خَيْرِ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ وَسَيِّدِ خَلْقِهِ وَأَوَّلِ الْعَدَدِ قَبْلَ إِجْبَادِ أَرْضِهِ وَسَمَاوَاتِهِ
وَأَخْرِ الْأَيْدِ بَعْدَ فَنَاءِ الدُّنْيَا وَأَهْلِهِ الَّذِي رُوْحُهُ نُسْخَةُ اللَّاهُوتِ وَصُورَتُهُ نُسْخَةُ الْمُلْكِ
وَالْمَلَكُوتِ وَقَلْبُهُ خَزَانَةُ الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ.
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ الْمُظَلَّلِ بِالْعَمَامِ سَيِّدِ الْكُونِيْنَ وَمَوْلَى الثَّقَلَيْنِ وَشَفِيعِ الْأُمَّةِ يَوْمَ
الْمَحْشَرِ وَرَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتِهِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ سَيِّدِ الْأَوْصِيَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ إِمَامِ الْأَتْقِيَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ رُكْنِ الْأَوْلِيَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ عِمَادِ الْأَصْفِيَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ يَعْسُوبِ الدِّينِ

Peace be upon you, daughter of the best of God's creation and the master of His creation, the first of the numbered before the foundation of His earth and His heavens and the last enduring after the annihilation²³ of his world and its

their communities. Cf. CLOHESSY C., "A Heart Attuned to Mercy: the Intercession of Mary and of Fatima" in *Encounter*, vol. 41/1 (2016), Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, Rome: 5–39.

²³ The word *fanāʾ* has a certain resonance: traditionally (although disputed by some scholars), the emergence within Islamic mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) of this concept, which is read to mean 'annihilation' or 'absorption', (the substitution of human attributes with divine ones), is accredited to Bāyazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 261/874), a man whose ecstatic utterances caused great discomfiture and disturbance in 'orthodox' circles in the middle of the 3rd/9th century. Others endorse Abū Saʿīd al-Harrāz (d. 286/899), contemporary al-Tustarī, as the first to speak of *fanāʾ* in Baghdad. The general idea is that humankind is essentially dependent upon God, and inexorably perishable (*fanāʾ*). Only God is permanent (*baqāʾ*), as noted in Q. 55: 26–27: "Everyone that is thereon will pass away; there remaineth but the Countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory". Al-Biṣṭāmī's mystical ascent (*miʿrāḡ*) denotes an ascent into God through the process of *fanāʾ* and

people,²⁴ whose spirit is a copy of His divinity and whose image is a copy of the sovereignty and the kingdom, and whose heart is a container of the Life²⁵ which does not die, and the mercy of God and His blessing.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one shaded by cloud,²⁶ master of the two existences,²⁷ lord of the two weighty things,²⁸ intercessor for the community on the Day of the Place of Congregation, and the mercy of God and His blessing.

baqâ? Cf. for e.g. BALDICK J., *Mystical Islam. In Introduction to Sufism*, Tauris Parke, London 2000: 40–42.

²⁴ This is a mistake in the text and should read *abli-hâ*.

²⁵ *al-Hayy*, one of the ninety-nine names of God.

²⁶ Traditionally, it is Mûsâ and his people who are shaded by clouds (cf. Q. 2: 57, Q. 7: 16), but for a tradition concerning the same favour for Muḥammad, cf. al-Tirmidî, *Sunan*, vol. VI, bk. 46 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 3, n. 3620: 318–319. It is in the context of the meeting of the young Muḥammad with a monk called Bahîrâ.

²⁷ That is, those existences termed *al-dunyâ* (the world) and *al-âhîra* (the hereafter).

²⁸ The *ḥadîṯ al-ṭaqalayn* (the ‘two weighty things’) is crucial to the Shi‘a, not least of all because it has been transmitted in *ṣaḥîḥ* narrations by a substantial number of Sunnî transmitters. The setting is usually at ‘Arafât during Muḥammad’s ‘Farewell Pilgrimage’, or at a watering place between Mecca and Medina (Ġadîr Ḥumm) on the way back from that Pilgrimage. Sometimes, the setting changes to the mosque at Medina or Muḥammad’s bedroom during his last illness (Shi‘î scholars recognize four occasions, all pertaining to Muḥammad’s last days, on which he publicly proclaimed the *ḥadîṯ al-ṭaqalayn*): “I have left among you two things, one of them greater than the other; the Book of God, may He be exalted, and my family. Watch how you follow me concerning them! They will not be separated until they return to me at the Pond.” Cf. Muslim., *Ṣaḥîḥ*, vol. IV, bk. 44 (*Kitâb faḍâ’il al-ṣaḥâba*), bb. 4 (*Faḍâ’il ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib*), n. 36: 1873 (with a careful qualification that includes all Muḥammad’s wives), Ibn Ḥanbal., *Musnad*, vol. IV, *Musnad Abî Sa‘îd al-Ḥudarî*, n. 11104: 30, n. 11131: 26–27, n. 11212: 54, vol. V, *Ḥadîṯ Zayd b. Arqam*, n. 19285: 75, al-Tirmidî., *Sunan*, vol. IX, bk. 46 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), *Manâqib abl bayt al-nabî*, bb. 77, n. 3788: 340–341, n. 7390: 342, al-Nasâ’î., *al-Sunan al-kuubrâ*, bk. 76 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 4 (*Faḍâ’il ‘Alî*), n. 8148, al-Ḥâkim al-Nisâbûrî., *Kitâb (Talḥîs) al-mustadrak ‘alâ al-ṣaḥîḥayn*, vol. III, Part 3, bk. 31 (*Kitâb ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥâba*), *Manâqib abl bayt rasûl Allâh*, n. 4774: 173–174, vol. III, Part 3, bk.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the master of those mandated.
Peace be upon you, daughter of the Imam of the God-fearing.
Peace be upon you, daughter of the support of the friends of God.
Peace be upon you, daughter of the buttress of the sincere friends.
Peace be upon you, daughter of the chief of the religion.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ سَيِّدِ الْوَصِيِّينَ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ قَائِدِ الْبِرَّةِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ قَامِعِ الْكُفْرَةِ وَالْفَجْرَةِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ وَاارِثِ النَّبِيِّينَ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ خَلِيفَةَ سَيِّدِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ ضِيَاءِ الدِّينِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ النَّبِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ عَلَى الْيَقِينِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَنْ حَسَابُ النَّاسِ عَلَيْهِ وَالْكَوْتَرُ فِي يَدَيْهِ وَالذُّصُيُومُ الْعَدِيرُ عَلَيْهِ
وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the Commander of the Faithful.
Peace be upon you, daughter of those enjoined.
Peace be upon you, daughter of the leader of the reverent.
Peace be upon you, daughter of the surpressor of the disbelievers and the immoral.
Peace be upon you, daughter of the heir of the prophets.
Peace be upon you, daughter of the successor of the master of those sent.

31 (*Kitâb ma'rifat al-ṣaḥâba*), *Manâqib amîr al-mu'minin 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*, n. 4641: 126–127, al-Baġdâdî, *Târîḥ Baġdâd*, vol. VIII, n. 4551: 442, Ibn 'Iyâḍ, *Ikmâl al-mu'lim sharḥ ṣaḥîḥ Muslim*, vol. VII, bk. 44 (*Kitâb faḍâ'il al-ṣaḥâba*), bb. 4 (*Min faḍâ'il 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*), nn. 36–37: 416–418, al-Ḥawârizmî, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn*, Part I, ch. 6, *Faḍâ'il al-Ḥasan wa-l-Ḥusayn*, no. 47: 156, Ibn Taymiyya, *Minḥaġ al-sunna al-nabawiyya fî naqḍ kalâm al-shi'a wa-l-qadariyya*, vol. IV: 85; al-Tibrîzî, *Mishkât al-maṣâbiḥ*, vol. III, bk. 30 (*Kitâb al-manâqib*), bb. 10 (*Manâqib 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib*), n. 6131: 1732, al-Mizzî, *Tabḍîb al-kamâl fî asmâ' al-riġâl*, vol. X, n. 2098: 50–51, Ibn Kaṭîr, *al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâya*, vol. V: 209; al-Haytamî, *Maġna' al-zawâ'id wa-manba' al-fawâ'id*, vol. IX, Part 9, bb. *fî faḍl ahl al-bayt*: 162–163, al-'Iṣâmî, *Simṭ al-nuġûm al-'awâlî*, vol. II, bb. 7, Part 3: 503, al-Ṣabbân, *Is'âf al-râġibîn* in the margins of *Nâr al-abṣâr fî manâqib âl bayt al-nabî al-muḥtâr*: 143.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the light of the religion.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the great tidings concerning certitude.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one upon whom is the reckoning of the people, in whose hands is al-Kawṭar, upon whom is the delegation on the day of Ġadīr;²⁹ and the mercy of God and His blessings.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَنْ قَادَ زَمَامَ نَاقَتِهَا جِبْرَائِيلُ وَشَارَكَهَا فِي مُصَابِهَا إِسْرَافِيلُ
وَعَصِبَ بِسَبَبِهَا الرَّبُّ الْجَلِيلُ وَبَكَى لِمُصَابِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْخَلِيلُ وَنُوحٌ وَمُوسَى الْكَلِيمُ فِي
كَرْبَلَاءِ الْحُسَيْنِ الشَّهِيدِ الْغَرِيبِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ الْبُدُورِ السَّوَاطِعِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ الشَّمْسِ الطَّوَالِعِ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

Peace be upon you, daughter, the halter of whose she-camel Ġibrāʾīl³⁰ guided, and whose partner in her afflictions was Isrāʾīl,³¹ and for whose cause the Lord, the Majestic³² grew angry,³³ and over whose afflictions wept Ibrāhīm al-

²⁹ Together with Karbalāʾ, one of the historical narratives shared by all the main branches of Shīʿī Islam. The sermon of Ġadīr Ḥumm, set during Muḥammad’s ‘Farewell Pilgrimage’ (*ḥaġġat al-wadāʾ*) in the last year of his life, was an event during which, the Shīʿa claim, Muḥammad unambiguously and confirmed ‘Alī as his successor.

³⁰ Ġibrāʾīl’s importance in Islam is described in the first chapter of this work.

³¹ The angel who sounds the last trumpet. Cf. WENSINCK A.J., “Isrāʾīl” in H.A.R. Gibb et al. (eds.), *EF*, 1995: 184.

³² *al-Ġalīl*, one of the ninety-nine names of God.

³³ This sounds very familiar to an infrequently transmitted *ḥadīṯ* that reads: “Fāṭima, verily God is angry when you are angry.” Cf. al-Hākim al-Nisābūrī., *Kitāb (Talḥīs) al-mustadrak ‘alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*, vol. III, bk. 31 (*Kitāb maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*), *Manāqib Fāṭima bt. rasūl Allāh*, n. 4793: 181, al-Ḥawārizmī., *Maqāt al-Ḥusayn*, Part 1, bb. *Faḍāʾil Fāṭima al-Zabrāʾ bt. rasūl Allāh*, n. 2: 90, Ibn al-Aṭīr., *Usd al-ġāba fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*, vol. V, bb. *ḥarf al-fāʾ*: 522, al-Dahabī., *Miẓān al-iʿtidāl fī tarāġim al-niġāl*, vol. II, n. 4560: 492, Ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī., *al-Isāba fī tamyiz al-ṣaḥāba*, vol. IV, bb. *ḥarf al-fāʾ*, n. 830: 366–367, *Tabḍīb al-tabḍīb*, vol. XII, *Kitāb al-nisāʾ*, n. 4434: 441, al-Muttaqī al-Hindī., *Muntaḥab kanẓ al-ummāl* in the margins of *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. V: 97.

ḥalīl and Nūḥ and Mūsā al-kaḥlīm,³⁴ regarding the Karbalā' of al-Ḥusayn the martyr, the stranger.³⁵

Peace be upon you, daughter of the luminous full moons.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the rising suns, and the mercy of God and His blessings.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ زَمْرَمٍ وَصَفَا
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَكَّةَ وَمُنَى
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَنْ جُمِلَ عَلَى الْبُرَاقِ فِي الْهَوَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَنْ أُسْرِيَ بِهِ مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَنْ ضَرَبَ بِالسِّفَتَيْنِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ مَنْ صَلَّى الْقِبْلَتَيْنِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ الْمُصْطَفَى
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ عَلِيِّ الْمُرْتَضَى
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ فَاطِمَةَ الزَّهْرَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ خَدِيجَةَ الْكُبْرَى
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى جَدِّكَ مُحَمَّدٍ الْمُخْتَارِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى أَبِيكَ حَنْدِرِ الْكُرَارِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى السَّادَاتِ الْأَطْهَارِ الْأَخْيَارِ وَهُمْ حُجَّجُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْأَقْطَارِ سَادَاتِ
الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ مِنْ أُخِيكَ الْحُسَيْنِ الشَّهِيدِ الْعَطْشَانَ الْظَّمَانَ وَهُوَ أَبُو التَّسْعَةِ الْأَطْهَارِ
وَهُمْ حُجَّجُ اللَّهِ فِي الشَّرْقِ وَالْعَرَبِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ الَّذِينَ خُهِمَ قَرَضٌ عَلَى أَعْنَاقِ
كُلِّ الْخَلَائِقِ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ لِخَالِقِ الْقَادِرِ السُّبْحَانَ

*Peace be upon you, daughter of Zamzam*³⁶ and *Ṣafā*.

Peace be upon you, daughter of Mecca and Minā.

*Peace be upon you, daughter of the one who was carried through the air on al-Burāq.*³⁷

³⁴ While Ibrāhīm is nominated 'friend of God' (*ḥalīl Allāh*; cf. Q. 4: 125), Mūsā's title is 'the one who spoke to God' (*kaḥlīm Allāh*).

³⁵ The evening, starting at sunset, of 'Ashūrā (10th Muḥarram) is referred to in Farsi literature and poetry as 'the evening of strangers', meaning the strangers who are in a foreign land, separated from their supporters and helpers and home.

³⁶ The sacred well in Mecca.

³⁷ A reference to the camel involved in Muḥammad's 'night journey' (*isrā'*) and 'ascension' (*mi'rāğ*).

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one who was made to journey by night from the sacred mosque (al-masğid al-ḥarâm) to the furthest mosque (al-masğid al-aqsâ).

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one who struck with two swords.³⁸

Peace be upon you, daughter of the one who prayed towards the two directions of prayer.³⁹

Peace be upon you, daughter of the Chosen One.

Peace be upon you, daughter of ‘Alî the Approved One.

Peace be upon you, daughter of Fâtîma the Radiant.

Peace be upon you, daughter of the greater Hadîğa.

Peace be upon you, and upon your grandfather, Muḥammad the Chosen One.

Peace be upon you, and upon your father, the courageous lion.⁴⁰

Peace be upon you, and upon the masters, the virtuous, the excellent, who are the proofs of God over the regions of the earth, masters of the earth and of heaven, from your brother al-Ḥusayn the martyr, the thirsty, the parched, who is the father of the nine virtuous ones, who are the proofs of God in the east and the west, the earth and heaven, love for whom is incumbent upon the necks of all created creatures by the Creator, the all-Capable,⁴¹ the One Far Beyond (al-subḥân).

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ الْأَعْظَمِ

³⁸ Since popular tradition holds that Muḥammad had up to nine swords or more, possibly a reference to the famous *dû al-ḥiqâr*, one of Muḥammad’s swords that had two points which he gave to ‘Alî. It could also refer to two swords given to Muḥammad by ‘Alî (or possible vice versa), named in popular tradition as *al-rasûb* and *al-miḥdam*.

³⁹ In Medina stands the ‘mosque of the two qiblas’ (*masğid al-qiblatayn*) marking the place where, in Islamic tradition, Muḥammad received the command to change the direction of prayer (*qibla*) from Jerusalem to Mecca. For a while, it housed two niches indicating the two prayer directions. Cf. Q. 2: 144 for the command to change the direction of prayer.

⁴⁰ The Arabic *karrâr* is an antonym for *farrâr*, which means ‘deserter’ or ‘defector’. By tradition, ‘Alî is thus designated by Muḥammad during the Ḥaybar battle. Equally by tradition, it was ‘Alî’s mother who named him *Ḥaydar* (حيدر).

⁴¹ *al-Qâdir*, one of the ninety-nine names of God.

أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ يَا بِنْتَ وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ الْمَعْظَمِ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ يَا عَمَّةَ وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ الْمَكْرَمِ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ يَا أُمَّ الْمَصَائِبِ يَا زَيْنَبُ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ.
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ أَيُّهَا الصَّدِيقَةُ الْمَرْضِيَّةُ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ أَيُّهَا الْفَاضِلَةُ الرَّشِيدَةُ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيَّةُ النَّعِيَّةُ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ يَا مَنْ ظَهَرَتْ مَحَبَّتُهَا لِلْحُسَيْنِ الْمَظْلُومِ فِي مَوَارِدِ عَدِيدَةٍ وَتَحْمِلِ الْمَصَائِبِ
 الْمُخْرِقَةِ لِلْقُلُوبِ مَعَ تَحْمَلَاتِ شَدِيدَةٍ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ يَا مَنْ حَفَظْتَ الْإِمَامَ فِي يَوْمِ عَاشُورَاءَ فِي قَتْلِهِ وَبَدَلْتَ نَفْسَهَا فِي نَجَاةِ زَيْنِ
 الْعَابِدِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي مَجْلِسِ أَشَقَى الْأَشْقِيَاءِ وَنَطَقْتَ كُنُطِقَ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي
 سَكِّ الْكُوفَةِ وَحَوْلَهَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ الْأَعْدَاءِ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ يَا مَنْ نَطَحَتْ جَبِينُهَا بِمُقَدِّمِ الْمَحْمِلِ إِذْ رَأَتْ رَأْسَ الشَّهْدَاءِ وَيَخْرُجُ الدَّمُ مِنْ
 تَحْتِ قِنَاعِهَا وَمِنْ مَحْمِلِهَا بَحِيثٌ يَرَى مِنْ حَوْلِهَا الْأَعْدَاءِ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ يَا تَالِيَّ الْمَعْصُومِ
 أَلْسَلَامُ عَلَيَّكَ يَا مُمْتَحَنَةً فِي تَحْمَلَاتِ الْمَصَائِبِ كَالْحُسَيْنِ الْمَظْلُومِ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ.

Peace be upon you, daughter of God's greater holy one.

Peace be upon you, daughter of God's revered holy one.

Peace be upon you, aunt of God's venerated holy one.

Peace be upon you, mother of afflictions, Zaynab, and the mercy of God and His blessings.

Peace be upon you, O the truthful, the one who satisfies God.

Peace be upon you, O the virtuous, the rightly-guided.

Peace be upon you, O the pious, the pure.

Peace be upon you, whose love for al-Husayn the tyrannized, was manifested at many watering places and bearing with immense forbearance, afflictions that scorched hearts.

Peace be upon you, who defended the Imâm in his being killed on the day of 'Ashûrâ and offered herself in the deliverance of Zayn al-'Abidin, peace be upon him, in the council of the most wretched of criminals and spoke as with the speech of 'Alî, peace be upon him, in the lanes of Kûfa, surrounded by many enemies.

Peace be upon you, who thrust her brow against the front of the carriage when you saw the chief⁴² of the martyrs, so that the blood ran from under her veil and from her carriage, to the point that it was seen by the enemies surrounding her.

Peace be upon you, following after the infallible ones.

Peace be upon you, the tested in the bearing of afflictions like al-Husayn the tyrannized, and the mercy of God and His blessings.

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا الْمُتَحَيَّرَةُ فِي خَرَابَةِ الشَّامِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا الْمُتَحَيَّرَةُ فِي وُفُوفِكَ عَلَى جَسَدِ سَيِّدِ الشُّهَدَاءِ وَخَاطَبَتِ جَدَّكَ رَسُولَ
اللهِ بِهَذَا النِّدَاءِ صَلَّى عَلَيْكَ مَلِيكَ السَّمَاءِ هَذَا حُسَيْنٌ بِالْعَرَاءِ مَسْلُوبُ الْعِمَامَةِ وَالرِّدَاءِ
مُقَطَّعُ الْأَعْضَاءِ وَبِنَاتِكَ سَبَايَا وَإِلَى اللهُ الْمُشْتَكِي وَقَالَتْ يَا مُحَمَّدُ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ
وَسَلَّمَ هَذَا حُسَيْنٌ تُسْفِي عَلَيْهِ رِيحَ الصَّبَا مَجْدُودُ الرَّأْسِ مِنَ النَّفَى قَتِيلُ أَوْلَادِ الْبَغَايَا وَ
حُرْنَاهُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللهِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنْ تَهَيَّجَ قَلْبُهَا لِلْحُسَيْنِ الْمَظْلُومِ الْعُرْبَانَ الْمَطْرُوحِ عَلَى التَّرَى وَقَالَتْ
بِصَوْتِ حَزِينٍ يَا بِي مَنْ نَفْسِي لَهُ الْفِدَاءُ يَا بِي الْمَهْمُومِ حَتَّى قَضَى يَا بِي الْعَطْشَانَ حَتَّى
مَضَى يَا بِي مَنْ شَبَّيْتُهُ تَقَطَّرَ بِالْدمَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنْ بَكَتْ عَلَى جَسَدِ أَخِيهَا بَيْنَ الْقَتْلَى حَتَّى بَكَى لِبَكَائِهَا كُلَّ عَدُوٍّ وَصَدِيقٍ
وَرَأَى النَّاسَ دُمُوعَ الْخَيْلِ تَنْحَدِرُ عَلَى حَوَافِرِهَا عَلَى التَّحْقِيقِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنْ تَكَلَّفَتْ وَاجْتَمَعَتْ فِي عَصْرِ عَاشُورَاءَ بِنَاتِ رَسُولِ اللهِ وَأَطْفَالِ الْحُسَيْنِ
وَقَامَتْ لَهَا الْقِيَامَةُ فِي شَهَادَةِ الطِّفْلِينِ الْعَرَبِيِّينِ الْمَظْلُومِينَ
السَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنْ لَمْ تَنْمِ عَيْنُهَا لِأَجْلِ حِرَاسَةِ آلِ اللهِ فِي طَفِّ نَبِيِّ وَسَارَتْ أَسِيرًا دَلِيلًا
بَيْنَ الْأَعْدَاءِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنْ رَكِبَتْ بَعِيرًا غَيْرَ وَطَاءَ وَنَادَتْ أَخِيهَا أَبَا الْفَضْلِ بِهَذَا النِّدَاءِ أَخِي أَبَا
الْفَضْلِ أَنْتَ الَّذِي رَكِبْتَنِي إِذَا أَرَدْتُ الْخُرُوجَ مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنْ حَطَبَتْ فِي مِيدَانِ الْكُوفَةِ بِخُطْبَةٍ نَافِعَةٍ حَتَّى سَكَنْتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ مِنْ كُلِّ
نَاحِيَةٍ
السَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنْ اخْتَجَّتْ فِي مَجْلِسِ ابْنِ زِيَادٍ بِاخْتِجَاجَاتٍ وَاضِحَةٍ وَقَالَتْ فِي جَوَابِهِ
بِبَيِّنَاتٍ صَادِقَةٍ إِذْ قَالَ ابْنُ زِيَادٍ لَزَيْنَبِ سَلَامَ اللهُ عَلَيْهَا كَيْفَ رَأَيْتِ صُنْعَ اللهِ بِأَخِيكَ
الْحُسَيْنِ قَالَتْ مَا رَأَيْتُ إِلَّا جَمِيلًا
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَسِيرًا بِيَدِي الْأَعْدَاءِ فِي الْفَلَوَاتِ وَرَأَيْتِ أَهْلَ الشَّامِ فِي حَالَةِ الْعَيْشِ
وَالسُّورِ وَنَشْرِ الرَّايَاتِ

⁴² The word *raʿas* (رأس) could be read to mean ‘head’ or ‘chief’. The theme of the martyrs’ heads is prevalent in texts such as these; nonetheless, because in this sentence ‘head’ is in the singular and ‘martyrs’ in the plural, I have chosen to read it as ‘chief’.

Peace be upon you, banished, isolated in the ignominy of Syria.

Peace be upon you, O dismayed in your halting by the body of the master of the martyrs, and addressing your grandfather the Messenger of God with this cry: "The sovereign of heaven bless you! Here is Husayn in the open, turban and gown plundered, dismembered of limbs, your daughters captives. To God, this complaint!" And she said: "Muḥammad, God bless and save him and his family, this is Husayn in the open air, the wind covering him with sand, head cut off at the nape, killed by the children of prostitutes. And O, our deep grief is upon you, Abû 'Abd Allâh."

Peace be upon the one whose heart was agitated for al-Husayn the tyrannized, stripped naked, cast down on the ground, and who said with a sad voice: "I swear by my father, for whom I would ransom myself! I swear by my father! Distressed until he was spent. I swear by my father! Thirsty until he departed. I swear by my father! His beard dripped with blood."

Peace be upon the one who wept over the body of her brother amidst the dead, until every enemy and friend wept for her weeping and, upon investigation, the people saw the tears of the horses flowing onto their hooves.

Peace be upon the one who took upon herself and gathered together on the afternoon of 'Āshûrâ the daughters of the Messenger of God and the children of al-Husayn and was greatly distressed by the martyrdom of the two tyrannized children, the strangers.

Peace be upon the one whose eyes did not sleep for watching over the family of God in Ṭaff,⁴³ Nineveh, and who traveled as a humiliated captive in the hands of the enemy.

Peace be upon the one who mounted a caravan without any covering and called out to her brother Abû al-Faḍl with this cry: "My brother Abû al-Faḍl, you are the one who placed me on my mount when I wanted to depart from Medina!"

Peace be upon the one who preached a profitable address in the square of Kûfa, to the point that voices were stilled on every side.

Peace be upon the one who remonstrated in the council of Ibn Ziyâd with lucid protests and who replied with truthful statements in answer to him when Ibn Ziyâd said to Zaynab, the peace of God be upon her: "How do you see what God has done to your brother al-Husayn?" and she replied: "I see nothing but beauty!"

⁴³ Karbalâ'.

Peace be upon you, captive in the hands of the enemy in the open country, and who beheld the people of Syria in the state of life and gladness and the unfolding of the banners.

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As Abû ‘Abd Allâh al-Ḥusayn, son of ‘Alî and Fâtîma and grandson of Muḥammad, moved inexorably towards death on the field of Karbalâ’, his sister Zaynab was drawn ever closer to the centre of the family of Muḥammad, the ‘people of the house’ (ahl al-bayt). There she would remain for a few historic days, challenging the wickedness of the Islamic leadership, defending the actions of her brother, initiating the commemorative rituals, protecting and nurturing the new Imâm, al-Ḥusayn’s son ‘Alî b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib, until he could take his rightful place. This is her story.

Christopher Clohessy is a South African-born Catholic priest, who obtained his PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome, and is now lecturer in Shî‘î Islamic studies in the same Institute.

Cover: Image shows a young boy on Ashura, courtesy of Karbala TV.

“I never imagined, O half of my heart

That this was foreordained, written” (Zaynab bt. ‘Alî, Karbalâ’, 61/680)

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