COMPROMISE FOR THE COMMUNITY: THE EARLY KŪFAN SOFT SHĪʿĪ TRADITIONISTS AND THE FORMATION OF THE FOUR-CALIPHS THESIS (AL-KHULAFĀʾ AL-RĀSHIDŪN)

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Abstract*

This paper addresses the factors that may have lain behind ʿAlī's elevation into being ranked among the four rightly guided caliphs by analysing the reception among proto-Sunnī traditionists of three early Kūfan traditionists noted for their Shīʿī sympathy — Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (129–197 H/746–812 CE), al-Faḍl b. Dukayn (130–219 H/748–834 CE), and ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā (d. 213–4 H/828–9 CE). Analysis of the Kūfan traditionists' scholarly standing suggests an overall acceptance of their membership in the traditionist community. This study argues that their commonalities — mild asceticism, belief in the uncreatedness of the Qurʾān, and a relatively positive attitude towards the first three caliphs — probably facilitated their convergence into the early Sunnī community. Viewed in the context of the struggles between the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and their opponents, it can be argued that the collective efforts of the traditionists to delineate their communal identity unavoidably involved concessions to the traditionists of different views, including acknowledgement of ʿAlī's privileged status.

***Keyword**: al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn; Kūfan Shīʿism; ahl al-ḥadīth; ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the idea of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafāʾ al-Rāshidūn*) seems a rather standard Sunnī position, in contrast to Shīʿī belief in ʿAlī and his descendants' exclusive rights to the leadership. The idea of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, or, the Four-Caliphs Thesis', is to some extent identified as one of the trademarks of Sunnī Islam. The four-caliphs thesis is embodied in Safīna's *ḥadīth*, "The caliphate of the prophecy (*khilāfat al-nubuwwa*) will last thirty years; then God will give the kingship (*al-mulk*) to anyone He wills."[1] The notion of the four rightly guided caliphs distinguishes the caliphates

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1 For the references to the *ḥadīth*s here and elsewhere, I give volume and page numbers, while noting in the brackets the serial numbers found the given editions. The *ḥadīth* of Safīna, quoted in the main text, is widely found in the major *ḥadīth* collections; see: Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ and Muḥammad K. Qurra Balalī (Beirut: Dār al-Risāla al-ʿĀlamiyya, 2009), vol.7, 43(4646–4647); al-Baghawī, *Maṣābīḥ al-sunna*, ed. Yūsuf ʿA. al-Maraʿshalī, Muḥammad S.I. Samāra, and Jamāl Ḥ. al-Dhahabī (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1987), vol.3, 470(4156); al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ, 2nd ed. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1983), vol.14, 74–76(3865); al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿA. ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009), vol.3, 156(4697); Aḥmad

of the first four successors after the death of the Prophet — Abū Bakr (r. 11–13 H/632–634 CE), ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23 H/634–644 CE), ʿUthmān (r. 23–35 H/644–656 CE), and ʿAlī (r. 35–40 H/656–661 CE) — from the subsequent period, which is characterised by corruptive *mulk*, in contrast to legitimate *khilāfa* or *khilāfat al-nubuwwa*. With the four caliphs' precedence in Islam and their unsurpassable merits, the first four caliphs became the paragons of Muslim rulership, taken by later Muslim historians and scholars as the role models to be imitated by their less remarkable successors.[2] The four-caliphs thesis also implies a hierarchy of excellence, which corresponds to the chronological order of their reigns, with Abū Bakr on the top, followed by ʿUmar, then ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī at the bottom. As ʿAbd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429 H/1037 CE) states, the hierarchy of the Companions of the Prophets goes as follows:

> The *ahl al-sunna* are universally agreed that the most excellent of men after the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, are Abū Bakr, then ʿUmar, then ʿUthmān, then ʿAlī, then the rest of the ten [sc. The ten Companions assured of heaven by the Prophet], then the rest of the people of Badr, then the rest of the people of Uḥud, then the rest of the people of the allegiance (*ahl al-bayʿa*), then the rest of the Companions.[3]

However, that the four-caliphs thesis was always a defining Sunnī tenet is not immune from contention. Leaving aside the Imāmī Shīʿīs and the Khārijīs, who do not accept this notion,[4] questioning voices concerning its hierarchical framework can be heard within Sunnī communities of the past. In the *Kitāb Uṣūl al-niḥal,* attributed to al-Nāshiʾ al-Akbar (d. 293 H/906 CE), Kūfan *ḥadīth* scholars are noted for reversing the hierarchical order of the last two caliphs, that is, placing ʿAlī above ʿUthmān in terms of virtues, while Baghdādī traditionists, including Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn (158–233 H/775–847 CE), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (164–241 H/780–855 CE), and Abū Khaythama Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (160–234 H/777–

b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ed. Muḥammad ʿA. ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2008), vol.9, 98(22547), 99(22551). A variant of this *ḥadīth* adds that Safīna and Saʿīd b. Jumhān, who narrates the tradition from Safīna, count the reigns of the first four caliphs to make up the thirty years of the *khilāfat al-nubuwwa*; then Saʿīd b. Jumhām notes the Banū Umayya's (or, Muʿāwiya's, as in Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī's work) claim to caliphate, to which Safīna retorts, saying that they are kings of worst kind; see: al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-kabīr*, ed. Bashshār ʿA. Maʿrūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996), vol.4, 82(2226); Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī, *Musnad Abī Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿA. al-Turkī (Giza: Dār Hajar, 1999), vol.2, 430–431(1203). Another variant suggests that it is the Banū Umayya (the 'Banū al-Zarqāʾ' in the *matn*) who exclude ʿAlī from the rightly guided caliphs; see: Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, ed. Majdī M.S. al-Shūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), 66(245).

2 Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 16; Hugh Kennedy, *Caliphate: The History of an Idea* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 7–8; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, ed. Muḥammad N. al-Albānī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1980), 29–30(54–59).

3 ʿAbd al-Qāhir's view is quoted by: Asma Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 18 (translation is hers).

4 For Imāmī Shīʿī and Khārijī takes on the early caliphate, see: Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 56–57, 117–18. The assertion of the four-caliphs thesis thus serves also the Sunnī polemics against the Shīʿīs (or, more accurately, the Rāfiḍīs) and the Khārijīs. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Iṣḥāq al-Ṣibghī's (258–342 H/872–957 CE) work, which elucidates the right path taken by the Companions and Successors, that is, submission to the rightly guided caliphs, and which is imitated by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (336–430 H/948–1038 CE), is a case in point; see: Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Faḍāʾil al-khulafāʾ al-arbaʿa wa-ghayri-him*, ed. Ṣāliḥ M. al-ʿAqīl (Medina: Dār al-Bukhārī li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1997), 33.

849 CE), debar ʿAlī from this list, for his reign was a period of *fitna*.[5] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (577–643 H/1181–1245 CE), in his *ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth*, also identifies the *ḥadīth* masters, such as Sufyan al-Thawrī (97–161 H/716–778 CE) and Ibn Khuzayma (223–311 H/838–924 CE), as the followers of the Kūfan *madhhab* in their prioritizing of ʿAlī over ʿUthmān.[6] Al-Nasāʾī (d. 303 H/915 CE), the author of one of the 'Six Books', compiled a collection, titled as *Khaṣāʾiṣ Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, to guide local Damascenes, who were notorious for their aversion to ʿAlī.[7] Four centuries after al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 H/1328 CE) compiled a treatise, *al-Khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn*, in response to a disillusioned Sunnī, who doubted the superiority of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān over ʿAlī and argues, on the basis of a number of the *ḥadīth*s on ʿAlī's *faḍāʾil*, that ʿAlī is the best of them.[8] If the four-caliphs thesis, as a Sunnī tenet, could be — and, indeed, was — challenged even in 13th- and 14th-century Greater Syria, dominated by Shāfiʿīs, Ḥanbalīs, and the burgeoning Salafī movement, then it is beyond doubt that the notion was more disputable in the early Islamic period.[9]

When the four-caliphs thesis became a Sunnī consensus is a mystery. According to Nagel, after ʿAlī's assassination, some of his fanatical partisans ('fanatischen Parteigänger') clung to his memory, while others either dispersed or turned to Muʿāwiya's (r. 41–60 H/661–680 CE) ʿUthmānī camp.[10] The boundary between the ʿUthmānīs, comprising ʿUthmān's loyalists and the protégés of the Umayyad authority, and ʿAlī's unfaltering partisans became delineated, especially after the introduction of the political ritual of vilifying ʿAlī by the Umayyad governor in Kūfa, al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba (d. 50 H/670 CE).[11] With ʿAlī's status undermined by the Umayyads, his membership in the rightly guided caliphate was not widely recognised. This is attested by a number of widely circulated reports, which echo the ʿUthmānī perspective that sees the epoch of the first three caliphs as a golden age, to the exclusion of ʿAlī.[12] That is to say, ʿAlī's status as one of the rightly-guided caliphs is contested, rather than accepted, among the early '*ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*' (the adherents of the *sunna* and the togetherness of the community).[13] However, gradually, the circle of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* came to accept ʿAlī as the fourth caliph, with proponents, such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and Jarīr b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (110–188 H/728–804 CE), elevating his status.[14] Partly, this has to do with the institutionalisation of the *sunna*, which began around the end of the 1st century of Islam; as

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5 Abū al-ʿAbbās ʿAbdallah b. Muḥammad al-Nāshiʾ al-Akbar, *Masāʾil al-imāma*, ed. Josef van Ess (Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971), 65–66.

6 Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *ʿUlūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1986), 298–299.

7 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Ḥassān ʿAbd al-Mannān (Beirut: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyya, 2004), 792.

8 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Khulafāʾ al-rāshidīn*, ed. Dār al-Ṣaḥāba li-l-Turāth (Tanta: Dār al-Ṣaḥāba li-l-Turāth, 1992), 26–30.

9 *EI²*, *s.v.* 'Ibn Taymiyya' (H. Laoust).

10 Tilman Nagel, *Rechtleitung Und Kalifat: Versuch Über Eine Grundfrage Der Islamischen Geschichte* (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität, 1975), 225–226.

11 Nagel, *Rechtleitung*, 226; Abū al-Faraj ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, ed. Yūsuf al-Baqāʿī and Gharīd al-Shaykh (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī, 2000), vol.17, 98–99.

12 Nagel, *Rechtleitung*, 228. For the traditions that endorse the ʿUthmānī three-caliphs thesis, see: al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol.6, 67, 75–77 (3697, 3707, 3710); al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Riyadh: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyya, 1998), 698(3655), 701–702(3674–3675), 704–705(3686, 3697, 3698, 3693, 3695); Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Naẓar M. al-Fāriyābī (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 2005), 1127(2403); Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan*, vol.7, 30–32(4627–4629), 34–35(4632–4636), 47(4651); Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī, *Musnad*, vol.2, 196–197(907), vol.3, 484(2097); Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 537–544(1134–1147), 548(1153–1154), 550(1157), 566–568(1190–1197), 570–571(1200–1204).

13 Nagel, *Rechtleitung*, 228–229. The sectarian categories, such as *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*, in the review of literature here and below, follow the usage of the authors in question.

14 Nagel, *Rechtleitung*, 233.

the leadership is to be based on the *sunna* of the Prophet, the memory of his Companions as the witnesses and transmitters of his model became revered.[15] Partly, the formation of the Rāfiḍī notion of authority ('die Waṣīya-Theorie'), which condemns the first two caliphs as usurpers and disparages the majority of the Companions except for the loyal followers of ʿAlī, challenges the foundation of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*.[16] Through ʿAlī's statements, such as 'the best men in this *umma* after the Prophet are Abū Bakr and ʿUmar,' the Sunnīs saliently refute Rāfiḍī doctrine and its vilification of the first two caliphs.[17] Nagel rightly pinpoints the context in which the four-caliphs thesis took shape — resentment against upheavals caused by ʿAlī in the first half of the 7th century seemed less intimidating than the living people of innovations (*ahl al-bidaʿ*) or tendentiousness (*ahl al-ahwāʾ*) cleaving to historical memory with the potential to upset the Sunnī worldview. It is against the challenges of other groups or sects that the Sunnīs formulated their collective identity. However, it is not clear, from Nagel's analysis, how and why exactly recognition of the first four caliphs as polemic against other sects evolved into a defining Sunnī doctrine.

Madelung suggests that the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* were first the partisans of the Umayyads, acknowledging only the first three caliphs. The new movement, which reshaped their nature, was led by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who succeeded in transforming the doctrine of the three-caliphs thesis into that of the four-caliphs thesis by recognising ʿAlī as the fourth rightly guided caliph, yet without strongly denouncing his colleagues, who still upheld the three-caliphs thesis. As a result, the Kūfan traditionists, who honoured the memory of ʿAlī and transmitted his *faḍāʾil*, came to converge with the nascent Sunnī community.[18] Madelung's emphasis on Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's contribution makes sense, considering the latter's influence and venerated status, but it also simplifies the heterogeneous constituents of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*. Also, the four-caliphs notion had been promoted by scholars before Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, as noted by Zaman.[19] For example, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak (118–181 H/736–797 CE), declares his veneration for the first four caliphs in his poems.[20] Elsewhere, he asserts recognition of the precedence of the four caliphs as proof of repudiation of the *tashayyuʿ*.[21] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal may not be the first to promote the four-caliphs thesis, but the controversy surrounding ʿAlī's status, as Madelung describes, is accurate. Crone suggests that it was in the course of the 9th century, or, by the beginning of the 10th century, in Iraq, that the majority of Muslims realised that the four-caliphs thesis could be 'a compromise designed to unite as many

15 Nagel, *Rechtleitung*, 235–236.

16 Nagel, Rechtleitung, 236. See also: Scott C. Lucas, *Constructive critics, Ḥadīth literature, and the articulation of Sunnī Islam: the legacy of the generation of Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Ma'īn, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 237–245.

17 Nagel, *Rechtleitung*, 236–237.

18 Wilferd Madelung, *Der Imam Al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm Und Die Glaubenslehre Der Zaiditen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965), 223–228. Afsaruddin also credits Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, along with Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204 H/820 CE), with the promotion of the four-caliphs notion; see: Afsaruddin, *Excellence*, 18.

19 This can be further supported by the fact that Safīna's tradition seems to have been first disseminated in Baṣra and Wāsiṭ; see: Muhammad Q. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 50–52, 169–173 (for a brief analysis of the chains of transmission of the *ḥadīth* in question).

20 Feryal Salem, The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunni Scholasticism: ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak and the Formation of Sunnī Identity in the Second Islamic Century (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 24–28.

21 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥ. al-Fiqī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, n.d.), vol.2, 40. I owe this reference to Crone; see: *EI²*, *s.v.* ''Uthmāniyya' (P. Crone).

believers as possible in a single community'.[22] However, in various places in her *Medieval Islamic Political Thought,* she restates that this process is yet to be investigated.[23]

Following on from these studies, this paper addresses the factors that may have accounted for the elevation of ʿAlī into the rank of the *khulafāʾ rāshidūn* by examining the reception of three early Kūfan traditionists noted for their soft Shīʿī sympathy[24] — Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (129–197 H/746–812 CE), Abū Nuʿaym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn (130–219 H/748–834 CE), and ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā (d. 213–4 H/828–9 CE[25]) — on the part of the proto-Sunnī traditionists. The adoption of Zaman's term, 'proto-Sunnī', is necessitated in order to make distinction between the eighth- and ninth-century groups who profess one or more of the ideas that are central to Sunnī Islam on one hand, and, on the other, the Sunnīs, whose identity, from the thirteenth century onward, came to be solidified, through important doctrinal, legal, and theological mutual understanding.[26] This paper focuses on the proto-Sunnī traditionists, the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, defined here as those who engaged in collection, transmission, and circulation of *ḥadīth*s in belief that this corpus constitutes a source of divine guidance for Islamic law, *modus vivendi*, and faith.[27] The *ahl al-ḥadīth*, studied here, cannot be equated with proto-Sunnīs, but their views significantly shaped the latter. Thus, examination of these soft Shīʿī traditionists may provide insights into the evolution of ʿAlī's role in the proto-Sunnī dogma.

These three traditionists are chosen for the enquiry of this paper, because they are Shīʿī to variegated degrees and all based in Kūfa. No doubt, they are not the only Kūfan Shīʿī traditionists in the period concerned here. However, their shared qualities seem indicative of how the early traditionists with different perspectives on the early history of the Muslim community came to a compromise that is significant enough for them to leave behind disagreements. Being members of the Kūfan traditionists, these three subjects' Shīʿī inclination, according to what is noted in the sources, ranges from denouncing the first two caliphs (*al-rafḍ*) to placing ʿAlī above ʿUthmān in the hierarchy of virtue. Examination of their scholarly standing, as defined by contemporary scholars, suggests an overall acceptance of their membership in the traditionist community. An analysis of their lives and intellectual outputs shows commonalities, that is, belief in the uncreatedness of the Qurʾān, the *zuhd* (mild asceticism), and a somewhat favourable attitude towards the caliphs before ʿAlī, which also feature in other early traditionists. Although these three subjects by no means represent the entire worldview of the soft Shīʿī Kūfan traditionists living in the 8th and 9th centuries, the characteristics identified in them may flesh out the trajectory of the formation of the four-caliphs thesis, as propounded in

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22 Crone, *Medieval*, 233.

23 Crone, *Medieval*, 93, 135, 219.

24 The term, 'Soft Shīʿīs', is used by Crone, perhaps under the influence of al-Nawbakhtī's heresiography, to refer to those who see ʿAlī rather than ʿUthmān as caliph or hold ʿAlī superior to ʿUthmān, but, in general, accept a less virtuous one (*al-mafḍūl*) as the leader of the community. This perspective is essentially close to the Batrī Zaydī notion of the leadership; see: Crone, *Medieval*, 72, 99–100; al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī and Saʿd b. ʿAbdallah al-Qummī, *Firaq al-shīʿa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥafnī (Cairo: Dār al-Rashād, 1992), 71–72. This term is used in this paper, for, as will be unfolded in the following sections, its connotation seems most apposite here.

25 Contradictory dates are given; see: Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, ed. Akram Ḍ. al-ʿAmrī, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1985), 181; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 2638–2639.

26 Zaman, *Religion*, 49–59. In the thirteenth century, Sunnī scholars gradually agreed upon latitude of divergences (especially between Ashʿarism and Mātūrīdism) over theological issues and the validity of the legal rulings derived from the four Sunnī legal schools. Such mutual recognition did not exist among the traditionists in the eighth and ninth centuries, concerned here; see: Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 75–76.

27 About the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, see: Crone, *Medieval*, 125–141.

previous studies.[28] Viewed in the context of the struggles between the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, on the one hand, and the *ahl al-raʾy* (the adherents of reason) and other 'people of innovations', on the other, it can be suggested that the collective efforts of the traditionists to delineate their communal identity ineluctably involve concessions to the traditionists of different views, including acknowledgement of ʿAlī's privileged status. With the soft Shīʿī traditionists' admission into the proto-Sunnī domain, their narrations that honour ʿAlī and enumerate his merits also flowed into the *ḥadīth* collections and further consolidated the idea of the four rightly guided caliphs.

In what follows, this paper first outlines the biographies of these three scholars, in chronological order. Then, it recapitulates the characteristics shared between these soft Shīʿī scholars and their traditionist colleagues in the light of the contention between the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* and other groups labelled as the people of innovations.

THE THREE KŪFAN TRADTIONISTS IN THE COMMUNITY OF THE *AHL AL-ḤADĪTH*

Kūfa, being the stronghold of ʿAlī and the headquarters of several Hāshimī/Shīʿī movements, is associated with Shīʿism in the first centuries of Islam.[29] In this context, it comes as no surprise that many *ḥadīth* scholars active or settled in this city are noted for their Shīʿī inclination or favourable attitude towards the family of ʿAlī or the *ahl al-bayt* in general.[30] Such sentiment is characterised by the sources as *tashayyuʿ* or *rafḍ*. According to al-Dhahabī (673–748 H/1274–1348 CE), innovation (*bidʿa*) exists in two forms: the major *bidʿa* and minor one. The latter refers to the extremism (*ghuluww*) in *tashayyuʿ* or just *tashayyuʿ* without extremism, which implies discussion or vilification of ʿUthmān and ʿAlī's opponents. Many Successors and the generation that follows profess *tashayyuʿ*, but in a way that does not impugn their religion, piety, or honesty. In contrast, the major *bidʿa,* such as *al-rafḍ al-kāmil* or *al-ghuluww fī al-rafḍ*, involves demeaning Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Accordingly, the *ḥadīth*s from the minor innovators are acceptable, but those from the major innovators to be rejected.[31] Later on, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852 H/1371–1449

[28] Other Kūfan soft-Shīʿī traditionists displaying one or more of the given commonalities include: Khālid b. Makhlad (d. 213 H/828 CE): al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1601; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAlī M. ʿUmar (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), vol.8, 530; al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-iʿtidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. ʿAlī M. Muʿawwaḍ and ʿĀdil A. ʿAbd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995), vol.2, 425; Muḥammad b. Fuḍayl (d. 195 H/811 CE): Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 511; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār ʿA. Maʿrūf (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1987), vol.26, 293–298; al-Jūzjānī, *al-Shajara fī aḥwāl al-rijāl*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm ʿA. al-Bastawī (Faisal Abad: Hadith Academy, 1990), 87; Sharīk b. ʿAbdallāh (d. 177 H/794 CE): Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 499–500; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.12, 462–475; al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, vol.3, 372–376; Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. ʿĀdil A. ʿAbd al-Mawjūd and ʿAlī M. Muʿawwiḍ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), vol.5, 10–36; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, ed. Bashshār ʿA. Maʿrūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), vol.10, 384–401; and Zayd b. al-Ḥubāb (d. 203 H/818–9 CE): Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, ed. Tharwat ʿUkāsha, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 517; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.10, 40–47; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1743; al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, vol.3, 148; al-ʿIjlī, *Tārīkh al-thiqāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Qalʿajī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1984), 171; Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil*, vol.4, 165–167. The interaction of the traditionists who were based in other cities and noted for their *tashayyuʿ*, such as ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211 H/827 CE) and Hushaym (d. 183 H/799 CE), with the early *ahl al-ḥadīth* and their confluence into the proto-Sunnī community may be understood through the framework suggested here. For further information on the early Shīʿī traditionists, see: Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, 624.

[29] For an outline of the early history of Kūfa, see: Najam Haider, *The Origin of the Shīʿa: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Place in Eighth-Century Kūfa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3–14.

[30] See footnote 5.

[31] al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, vol.1, 118.

CE) further narrows down the denotation of the *tashayyuʿ* as viewing ʿAlī above ʿUthmān in terms of virtues and righteous in all the battles which he undertook. Among the *mutashayyiʿ* traditionists, some see ʿAlī as being the best after the Prophet, while others regard him as the best after the two *shaykh*s, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Both scholars agree that, as long as the *mutashayyiʿ* scholars are virtuous, honest, and pious, their narrations are acceptable.[32] Although *tashayyuʿ* and *rafḍ* seem well-delineated, with the term, *rafḍ*, compared with *tashayyuʿ*, being used as a derogatory name for those who vilify the first two caliphs or any of the Companions,[33] it has to be borne in mind that the application of the terms, *rafḍ* and *tashayyuʿ*, like any label used in the pre-modern Islamic world, can vary in accordance with the context, the addressee, and the purpose.[34] One who holds ʿAlī better than ʿUthmān or Abū Bakr — essentially, an expression of *tashayyuʿ*, as defined by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī — can be taken as having engaged in *rafḍ*.[35] As such, the fluidity of the use of these labels is attested by the biographers' assessment of the three traditionists, studied here.

Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ was born in Kūfa to a well-off family; his father, al-Jarrāḥ was the supervisor of the city's treasury, while his mother left 100,000 dirhams to him.[36] While still a young pupil of the science of *ḥadīth*, his potential caught the attention of the leading scholars.[37] Without surprise, he took over the seat of his teacher, Sufyān al-Thawrī, after the latter's death.[38] Wakīʿ narrated traditions from and to traditionists in different regions, including Iraq, Greater Syria, and Ḥijāz.[39] His tenacious memory and breadth of knowledge in *ḥadīth* won him the admiration of his contemporaries,[40] despite the accuracy

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32 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Zaybaq and ʿĀdil Murshid (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, n.d.), vol.1, 93–94.

33 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is said to have suspected one who sees ʿAlī better than the first two caliphs as Rāfiḍī; see: Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, ed. ʿAṭiyya al-Zahrānī (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1989), vol.1, 489, 492–493. As an Imāmī communal identity gradually came into being with its distinctive rituals and holy space in the 8th century, the connotation of the two terms, *tashayyuʿ* and *rafḍ*, became somewhat divided, as Melchert notes, but in no way categorical; see: Najam Haider, 'Prayer, Mosque, and Pilgrimage: Mapping Shīʿī Sectarian Identity in 2nd/8th Century Kūfa', *Islamic Law and Society* 16, no. 2 (2009): 151–174. Haider, *The Origin*, 224–225; Christopher Melchert, 'Sectaries in the Six Books: Evidence for Their Exclusion from the Sunni Community', *The Muslim World* 82(1992): 290–291. See also footnote 66.

34 As Haider observes, in his discussion of al-Aʿmash, many Kūfan traditionists straddled multiple sectarian boundaries in the manner that the later constructed categories, as those defined by al-Dhahabī, are analytically inadequate; see: Haider, *The Origin*, 224–227. *Ipso facto*, Bernheimer's ʿAlidism and Shīʿism, although reflecting the disparateness between classical Sunnī or Sufī veneration of ʿAlī and his offspring, on one hand, and, on the other, sectarian Shīʿism, are of limited use in discussion of the Kūfan traditionists, here; see: Teresa Bernheimer, 'Genealogy, Marriage, and the Drawing of Boundaries among the ʿAlids (eighth-twelfth centuries)' in Morimoto Kazuo (ed.), *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: the Living Links to the Prophet* (London: Routledge, 2012), 75–91.

35 al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, vol.1, 489.

36 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4122.

37 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4122–4123; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.15, 651, 653.

38 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4122.

39 al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.30, 463–467; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. ʿUmar b. Gh. al-ʿAmrī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), vol.63, 60, 73–74, 87–89.

40 For a contemporary testimonial, see: Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (attributed), *Kitāb al-ʿIlal wa-maʿrifat al-rijāl*, ed. Waṣī Allāh M. ʿAbbās, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār al-Khānī, 2001), 152(58). See also: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.15, 658, 663; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4122, 4125.

of his narrations being subject to critiques,[41] and his practice of the Kūfan *madhhab*, such as drinking *nabīdh*, being frowned upon.[42]

Wakīʿ was also criticised for his Shīʿī inclination. Following the *madhhab* of his townspeople, Wakīʿ opined that the most excellent men after the Prophet were Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿAlī, and then ʿUthmān — a typical Kūfan *Weltanschauung*.[43] His Shīʿī conviction was also manifest in his *ḥadīth* collection, titled *faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba*, in which the section about ʿAlī's merits was placed before that about ʿUthmān, against the convention of the time, which arranged the merits of the first four caliphs or the traditions on their authorities in chronological order.[44] His Shīʿī sentiment at the turn of the 9th century was by no means uncontested, as he was condemned by another traditionist, Marwān b. Muʿāwiya (d. 193 H/809 CE), as a Rāfiḍī.[45] A controversy, perhaps caused by Wakīʿ's Shīʿī tendency, left him in trouble. When teaching in Mecca in 184/800–1, Wakīʿ narrated a *ḥadīth* stating that the Prophet's body was left without being buried for a day and a night, till it swelled. Upon hearing this, the Quraysh gathered in riot and attempted to lynch Wakīʿ by crucifying him. Only through the intervention of Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (107–198 H/725–814 CE) did Wakīʿ narrowly escape.[46]

Yet, the Shīʿī inclination did not vitiate Wakīʿ's standing in the traditionist community. Wakīʿ was highly esteemed by the leading *ḥadīth* critics of his time, including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.[47] However, that narrating the account, which implies the Companions'

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41 al-Dhahabī cites ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī's (161–234 H/778–849 CE) view: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4125.

42 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.15, 654–655. Regarding the early Kūfan legal *madhhab*, see: Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 32–38. On the debates over the consumption of the *nabīdh*, see: Najam Haider, 'Contesting Intoxication: Early Juristic Debates over the Lawfulness of Alcoholic Beverages', *Islamic Law and Society* 20, no. 1–2 (2013): 48–89.

43 Al-Nāshiʾ al-Akbar, *Masāʾil*, 65.

44 I can only find the reference to and description of this *faḍāʾil* collection in: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4125. The unconventionality can be illustrated by the structures of two *musnad*s by Wakīʿ's contemporaries, al-Ḥumaydī (d. 219 H/834 CE) and Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī (133–203 H/750–818 CE). Both works start with the traditions narrated by Abū Bakr, followed by ʿUmar's narrations, then by ʿUthmān's, and finally, by ʿAlī's, before other Companions'; see: ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī, *Musnad al-Ḥumaydī*, ed. Ḥusayn S. Asad (Damascus: Dār al-Saqā, 1996), vol.2, 538; Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī, *Musnad*, vol.1, 524.

45 al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa wa-l-tārīkh*, ed. Akram Ḍ. al-ʿUmarī (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1990), vol.3, 131. For biographical information about Marwān b. Muʿāwiya, see: Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.9, 331; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.15, 191–196. That Wakīʿ was described as a Rāfiḍī also illustrates the elasticity of the application of this term in the period concerned here, as discussed above.

46 al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa*, vol.1, 175–176. Another version of this account, mentioned by Ibn ʿAsākir, claims that the caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809 CE), who happened to lead the pilgrimage in this year, presided over the trial and consulted Sufyān b. ʿUyayna and ʿAbd al-Majīd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Rawwād. The latter suggested death penalty, while the former insisted that the accused was innocent. The case was closed in favour of Wakīʿ, but it also seeded the personal grudge between Wakīʿ and Ibn Abī Rawwād. This account is likely to be fictional, for it is not mentioned by the earliest source, *viz*. al-Fasawī, and al-Rashīd did not lead the *ḥajj* in that year; see: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, vol.63, 101–102; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. Kamāl Ḥ. Murʿī (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2005), vol.4, 321.

47 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal says that he has never seen anyone more knowledgeable and firm in memory than Wakīʿ (*mā raʾaytu aḥadan awʿā li-l-ʿilm min-hu wa-lā aḥfaẓ*); see: Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (attributed), *Kitāb al-ʿIlal*, vol.1, 152(58), 323(567). See also: Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1953), vol.9, 38. According to Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (202–275 H/817–888 CE), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal never wrote *ḥadīth* from anyone more than from Wakīʿ; see: al-Ājurrī, *Suʾālāt Abī ʿUbayd al-Ājurrī li-l-imām Abī Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ashʿath al-Sijistānī fī maʿrifat al-rijāl wa-jarḥi-him wa-taʿdīli-him*, ed. Muḥammad ʿA. al-Azharī (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadītha li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 2010), 58(197). Al-ʿIjlī (181–261 H/797–875 CE) describes Wakīʿ as *thiqa*, *ʿābid*, *ṣāliḥ*, *adīb*; see: al-ʿIjlī, *Tārīkh*, 464. Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn also praises

negligence of Prophet's body, could arouse the furore of the Meccans does reveal the subtle and sensitive social atmosphere in the early 9th century, when it comes to one's sectarian take on the history of the first Muslim community. As a matter of fact, this *ḥadīth*, which caused turbulence, is fairly mild in the sense that no Companion's rectitude is cast in doubt, compared with the classical Shīʿī perspective on the aftermath of Muḥammad's death.[48] In such a social climate, it is not implausible that ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā's reputation was more debated, considering his hostility towards some Companions.

ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā was a Kūfan Qurʾānic reciter and *muḥaddith*, but his reliability as a *ḥadīth* narrator varies from *ḍaʿīf* (weak) to *thiqa* (reliable), due to his inaccurate narrations of *ḥadīth* and his spreading of tendentious ones.[49] ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā's Shīʿī conviction is well-noted, but ill-defined. Although al-Fasawī (d. 277 H/890 CE) comments that it is not far-fetched to call him a Rāfiḍī,[50] ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā still acknowledged the first two caliphs' merits, despite his alleged animosity towards ʿAlī's opponents, especially, Muʿāwiya.[51] His condemnation of the Companions warring against ʿAlī somewhat struck a nerve among the early proto-Sunnī traditionists, the example *par excellence* being the circle of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal; as a result, he is depicted as *aghlā wa-aswaʾ madhhaban* ('most extreme and vicious in belief') by al-Jūzjānī (d. 259 H/873 CE).[52] That said, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, while alert to his Shīʿī tendencies and his transmission of tendentious traditions, still accepted his credibility as a *muḥaddith*.[53] Beyond the Ḥanbalī circle, ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā's reliability was affirmed by

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him as *thiqa*; see: Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ*, vol.9, 38–39; ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Tārīkh*, ed. Aḥmad M. N. Sayf (Damascus: Dār al-Maʾmūn li-l-Turāth, n.d.), 51(49). However, when comparing Wakīʿ with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī, contradictory views are attributed to Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn; see: al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa*, vol.1, 728 (Wakīʿ is better than ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī); vol.2, 170 (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī is better in the traditions narrated from Sufyān al-Thawrī).

48 Compare with, for instance, al-Yaʿqūbī and the work attributed to Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī (d. 76 H/678 CE); see: Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Amīr Muhannā (Beirut: Sharikat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 2010), vol.2, 7–11; Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī, *Kitāb*, ed. Muḥammad B. al-Zanjānī (Qom: Maṭbaʿat al-Hādī, 1999), 138–145. For the dating of Sulaym b. Qays' *Kitāb*, see: Robert Gleave, 'Early Shiite Hermeneutics and the Dating of Kitāb Sulaym Ibn Qays', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 78, no. 1 (2015): 83–103.

49 Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 522–523.

50 This comment by al-Fasawī is quoted in a later *rijāl* work: Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.3, 29. It is not impossible to verify whether this critique indeed traces back to al-Fasawī, but ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā is one of al-Fasawī's sources; see: Akram Ḍ. al-ʿUmarī, 'Muqaddimat al-taḥqīq', in *Kitāb al-Tārīkh wa-l-maʿrifa*, by al-Fasawī, 47; al-Fasawī, *Mashyakha*, ed. Muḥammad ʿA al-Sarīʿ (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 2010), 96.

51 The account that he forbids students named Muʿāwiya from attending his lectures is only found in the later biographical sources, such as: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 2639. For ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā's transmission of the traditions highlighting ʿAlī's respect for Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, as well as the latter pair's excellence, see footnote 95.

52 al-Jūzjānī, *al-Shajara*, 130. For al-Jūzjānī's relationship with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, see: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, vol.7, 281.

53 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's views on ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā are preserved through later quotations. Al-ʿUqaylī notes that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal asks a student not to narrate traditions from him, but, in al-Mizzī's work, he simply suggests leaving out his bad traditions (*aḥādīth sūʾ*): al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ*, ed. Ḥamdī ʿU.I. al-Salafī (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 2000), 876; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.19, 168. For others' critiques, see also: al-Jūzjānī, *al-Shajara*, 129; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 523; al-ʿIjlī, *Tārīkh*, 383; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ*, vol.7, 61–62; Ibn Shāhīn, *Tārīkh asmāʾ al-thiqāt*, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Sāmarrāʾī (Kuwait: al-Dār al-Salafiyya, 1984), 186. Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī characterises ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā as a fervent Shīʿī (*shīʿī muḥtariq*), whose traditions are, however, acceptable; see: al-Ājurrī, *Suʾālāt*, 36 (16). As for his association with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, see: *EI²*, *s.v.* 'Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī' (Ch. Melchert).

leading *ḥadīth* critics, such as Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, al-ʿIjlī and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (195–277 H/810–890 CE).[54]

Contrary to ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā's stance towards the first Muslim generation, which was problematic to the extent that some of his narrations were rejected, al-Faḍl b. Dukayn's Shīʿī sentiment seems bland. He was a prolific *ḥadīth* narrator, especially in Sufyān al-Thawrī's traditions, and well-established in the traditionist world, as shown by the remarkable number of his teachers and students.[55] His reliability and accuracy in *ḥadīth* transmission were acclaimed by the leading traditionists of his time, including al-Jūzjānī, al-ʿIjlī, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, and Ibn Saʿd (168–230 H/785–845 CE).[56] Besides *ḥadīth*, he was knowledgeable in the biographical and genealogical information concerning traditionists of earlier generations.[57] Al-Faḍl b. Dukayn does not seem to have taken pride in articulating his Shīʿī profession; when asked whether one should practise *tashayyuʿ*, he answered: 'Love for ʿAlī is worship and the best form of worship is what is hidden (*ḥubb ʿAlī ʿibāda wa-afḍal ʿibāda mā kutima*).'[58] He was not impressed when being associated with *tashayyuʿ*, nor with the vilification of Muʿāwiya.[59] Yet, his love for ʿAlī and his family was exposed when his funeral was secretly led by a Ṭālibid, instead of by an ʿAbbāsid.[60]

If we disregard singular cases (ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā's standing in the Ḥanbalī circle and critiques of Wakīʿ's accuracy), the three Kūfan traditionists are overall positively evaluated and their membership in the *ahl al-ḥadīth* beyond doubt. It is not just the narration of *ḥadīth* which gained these three scholars membership in the traditionist community. Examination of their biographies suggests that they shared other characteristics central to the identity of the proto-Sunnī community, as discussed in the following section.

COMMONALITY AND COMPROMISE

The proto-Sunnī community was by no means homogenous. The biographical dictionaries note the traditionists professing divergent political, sectarian, and theological perspectives. In the course of the 9th century, a number of the tenets gradually came to be identified as the fundamentals of the *sunna*, as laid down in the dogmatic writings and the *ḥadīth* collections by the traditionists. The formation of the proto-Sunnī core doctrines was not a smooth process; rather, it involved concession to and cooperation with dissenters, in order to forge a community out of a dazzling array of truths and approaches to truths. It is

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54 al-ʿIjlī, *Tārīkh*, 319; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ*, vol.5, 334–335; ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Tārīkh*, 63(99).

55 al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.23, 197–205.

56 al-Jūzjānī, *al-Shajara*, 129; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 523; al-ʿIjlī, *Tārīkh*, 383; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ*, vol.7, 61–62; Ibn Shāhīn, *Tārīkh*, 186; al-Ājurrī, *Suʾālāt*, 161 (980). Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's evaluation of al-Faḍl b. Dukayn as *thabt* is quoted by later biographical sources, for example: al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.23, 207. In the work attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, there is no such evaluation, but Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's acceptance of al-Faḍl b. Dukayn's narrations implies recognition of his reliability; see: Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (attributed), *Kitāb al-ʿIlal*, vol.2, 364.

57 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.14, 315. Ibn Saʿd and al-Fasawī both depend on him for their own biographical works; see: Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 22, 31, 33, 59, 161, 167, 176–177, 180–181, 250, 259, 273, 292, 295–297, 307–308; al-ʿUmarī, 'Muqaddimat al-taḥqīq', 47.

58 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.14, 312.

59 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.14, 312.

60 Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 524. For the connection between funerary rituals and articulation of religio-political ideologies, see: Muhammad Q. Zaman, 'Death, Funeral Processions, and the Articulation of Religious Authority in Early Islam', *Studia Islamica* 93 (2001): 27–58.

against the context of the solidification of the proto-Sunnī community that we should situate the entry of the three soft Shīʿīs into the nascent traditionist community.

Among the Muslim debates over the human-divine relationship, the standard position of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* predominantly supports predestination — the belief that everything, good or bad, was decreed by God — vis-à-vis the Qadarīs, the proponents of free will.[61] Predestination position is recapitulated in al-Ḥumaydī's statement:

> The *sunna* among us is for one to believe in divine decree, be it good or evil, sweet or bitter, and to know that what is to befall upon him shall not miss and what is to miss shall not befall upon him, and that all of it is decree from God (*al-sunna ʿinda-nā an yuʾmin al-rajul bi-l-qadar khayri-hi wa-sharri-hi, ḥulwi-hi wa-murri-hi wa-an yaʿlam anna mā aṣāba-hu lam yakun li-yukhṭiʾa-hu wa-anna mā akhṭaʾa-hu lam yakun li-yuṣība-hu wa-anna dhālika kulla-hu qaḍāʾ min Allāh*).[62]

The disagreement also occurred over the definition of faith. The traditionists hold that faith consists of words and works (*qawl wa-ʿamal*), and, thus, increases or decreases depending on one's commitment to religious obligations.[63] For Murjiʾīs, based in Kūfa, Baṣra, Khurāsān, and Transoxiana, verbal announcement of one's belief suffices to confirm one's status as a believer.[64]

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[61] The arguments over the *qadar* (human volition) in Islam were plausibly inherited from the currents of thought in Late Antiquity, especially among the Christian and Manichean communities. The earliest proponents of free will (*qadariyya*) in Islam date back to the Marwānid period (r. 64–132 H/684–750 CE). The group declined after the third *fitna*, but their views were later taken over by the Muʿtazilīs. For the description of the early development of the Qadarīs, see: Alexander Treiger, 'Origins of Kalām', in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 27–43; Steven Judd, 'The Early Qadariyya', in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 44–54. A number of the traditionists active in the 8th and 9th centuries were associated with the Qadariyya doctrine, such as Ibrāhīm b. Abī Yaḥyā (d. 180 H/800–1 CE): Ibn Shāhīn, *Kitāb Tārīkh asmāʾ al-ḍuʿafāʾ al-kadhdhābīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm A. al-Qashqarī, 1989, 47–48; al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ*, 73–76; Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil*, vol.1, 353–358; al-Jūzjānī, *al-Shajara*, 218; and ʿAbd al-Wārith b. Saʿīd (d. 180 H/797 CE): ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Tārīkh*, 54; al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, vol.4, 430.

[62] al-Ḥumaydī, *Musnad*, vol.2, 357–358. Belief in God's divine decree later became the standard traditionist position and was embodied in a number of the prophetic traditions; for instance: 'A slave [of God] becomes a believer only when he believes in the divine decree, good or bad, and only when he understands that what shall befall upon him will not miss and what shall miss will not befall upon him.' The *ḥadīth* is quoted from: Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ṣarīḥ al-sunna*, ed. Badr b. ʿA. al-Maʿtūq, 2nd ed. (Kuwait: Maktabat Ahl al-Athar, 2005), 29. For other traditions and doctrinal writings that identify belief in the *qadar* as one of the fundamentals of Islam; see: Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 48–52(102–111); ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, ed. Muḥammad S. S. al-Qaḥṭānī (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986), 287–289(549–554); al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol.4, 11–31(2133–2157); Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan*, vol.7, 77–94(4691–4710); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 23–24(1–4); al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1261–1264(6594–6614).

[63] al-Ṭabarī, *Ṣarīḥ*, 35–36; al-Ḥumaydī, *Musnad*, vol.2, 359–360; ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 307(599–600); Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Masāʾil al-Imām Aḥmad riwāyat Abī Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ashʿath al-Sijistānī*, ed. Ṭāriq ʿA. Muḥammad (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1999), 364–366. The anti-Murjiʾī traditions are abundantly found in the major *ḥadīth* collections; see: Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan*, vol.7, 66–76(4676–4690); al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 25(8); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 23–26(1–11); al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol.4, 355–357(2610).

[64] Although the Murjiʾī trajectory concerning the *īmān* is denounced by traditionists, their concern for the unity of the Muslim community through postponing judgment over ʿUthmān and ʿAlī influenced the formation of the classical Sunnī doctrines; see: Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 19. See also: Wilferd Madelung, 'The Early Murjiʾia in Khurāsān and Transoxania and the Spread of Ḥanafīsm', *Der Islam* 59 (1982): 32–39; Saleh S. Agha, 'A Viewpoint of the Murjiʾa in the Umayyad Period: Evolution through Application', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (1997): 1–42. There are traditionists affiliated with the Murjiʾa; to name but a few examples:

The *ahl al-ḥadīth* were also vigilantly cautious of the corruption brought about by the *ahl al-bidaʿ* or *ahl al-ahwāʾ*;[65] both categories can be seen as an umbrella term to include the 'unorthodox' parties, such as Rāfiḍīs, Muʿtazilīs, Jahmīs, and Khārijīs.[66] However, the most controversial issue, which plagued the age of the three traditionists and their junior colleagues, is the (un)createdness of the Qurʾān.

The proponents of the createdness of the Qurʾān, with its corollary tenets, including the denial of God's attributes (*al-taʿṭīl*), consist of early Muʿtazilīs and a rationalist wing of the early Ḥanafīs. This group is usually referred to by their enemies as 'Jahmīs', named after Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128 H/745–6 CE) and associated with Bishr al-Marīsī (d. *c.* 218 H/833 CE) and his generation.[67] The Jahmī doctrine was vehemently rejected by some traditionists, who insisted that the Qurʾān is the words of God, uncreated (*kalām Allāh ghayr makhlūq*), no matter how it is written or recited, whether kept in heaven, written in the celestially preserved tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*),[68] or on earth, written in the notebooks of school pupils, inscribed on rock, or memorised by heart and pronounced by mouth.[69] The anti-Jahmī sentiment reached the climax during the *miḥna* (218–237 H/833–852 CE), the official imposition of the dogma of the createdness of the Qurʾān upon the state functionaries, traditionists, and jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), which lasted from the reign of al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218 H/813–833 CE) to al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–237 H/847–861 CE).[70] The hardliners among the *ahl al-ḥadīth* equated the Jahmīs with infidels (*kuffār*), after whom the prayers were invalid, and whose blood was permissible, and whose right to inheritance and bequeathal was nullified.[71]

Abū Bakr al-Nahshalī (d. 160 H/782–3 CE): Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 499; al-Qāsim b. Maʿn (d. 175 H/791–2 CE): al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 3076–3077; and Abū Muʿāwiya (d. 195 H/810 CE): al-ʿIjlī, *Tārīkh*, 403; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 515.

65 Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 7–28(1–53).

66 For the traditionist repudiation from the Khārijīs, see: Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan*, vol.7, 136 (4758), 139–148(4762–4769); Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 438–461(904–945). The polemics against the Rāfiḍīs can be found in: Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 473–485(978–1010); al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, vol.1, 489–496.

67 Cornelia Schöck, 'Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 127/745–6) and the "Jahmiyya" and Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. 200/815)', in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 55–80; Christopher Melchert, 'The Adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal', *Arabica* 44, no. 2 (1997): 234–253; *EI²*, *s.v.* 'Djahmiyya'' (W.M. Watt)

68 About the *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*; see: Richard McGregor, 'Preserved Tablet', in *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2006), vol.4, 261–263.

69 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ṣarīḥ*, 24.

70 *EI²*, *s.v.* 'Miḥna' (M. Hinds). Regarding the motivation behind al-Maʾmūn's institution of the *miḥna*, see relevant discussion: John A. Nawas, 'A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for Al-Mamun's Introduction of the Mihna', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 4 (1994): 615–629; John P. Turner, 'The End of the Miḥna', *Oriens* 38 (2010): 89–106. See also: John P. Turner, *Inquisition in Early Islam: The Competition for Political and Religious Authority in the Abbasid Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

71 Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Masāʾil*, 353–354; ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Naqḍ al-Imām Abī Saʿīd ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd ʿalā al-Marīsī al-Jahmī al-ʿanīd fī-mā iftarā ʿalā Allāh ʿazza wa-jalla*, ed. Abū ʿĀṣim al-Sh. al-Atharī (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 2011), 42–44; ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 104–106, 120–123. The Ḥanbalī circle allowed no compromise on the question of the (un)createdness of the Qurʾān, when they assigned the Lafẓīs and the Wāqifa to the same category as the Jahmīs. The former held that the Qurʾān is uncreated but the sound of one's recitation of the Qurʾān created, while the latter responded to the issue with the statement, 'the Qurʾān is words of God', and fell silent afterwards; see: Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Masāʾil*, 355–356; al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, vol.5, 125–127. Nonetheless, a number of renowned *muḥaddīth*s embraced these latter two views; the Lafẓīs include al-Bukhārī (194–256 H/810–870 CE): *EI³*, *s.v.* 'al-Bukhārī' (Ch. Melchert); and Hishām b. ʿAmmār (153–245 H/770–859 CE): al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4090–4094; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, vol.74, 32–36. The examples of those who stop after saying *al-Qurʾān kalām Allāh* are: Muṣʿab b. ʿAbdallāh (d. 236 H/851 CE): al-Khaṭīb

Under the threat of the 'heretic' doctrines, posed by the *ahl al-ahwāʾ* and *ahl al-bidaʿ*, and the political persecution led by the group considered infidels, the barrier between the *ḥadīth* scholars with different perspectives on the ʿUthmān-ʿAlī episode may have been thawed, when the need to forge an alliance against mutual enemies became urgent. This seems to be the case with the three Kūfan traditionists, discussed here, who shared important doctrinal and ideological similarities with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*.

Doctrinally, two of these three soft Shīʿī traditionists agree with the *ahl al-ḥadīth* on the uncreatedness of the Qurʾān and their hostility towards the *ahl al-raʾy*.[72] Only al-Faḍl b. Dukayn was brought to the *miḥna* trial, and the sources do not take notice of ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā's perspective in this regard.[73] Wakīʿ and al-Faḍl b. Dukayn are both said to have equated Jahmīs, or those who claim that the Qurʾān is created, with infidels.[74] Wakīʿ pronounced that the Jahmīs are to be given two choices: penitence or death.[75] The latter resisted the temptation of the *miḥna* and won respect from other traditionists as a result.[76] It is mentioned that Aḥmad b. Yūnus (d. 227 H/842 CE),[77] who used to bear a grudge against al-Faḍl b. Dukayn, kissed his forehead and invoked God's reward for him, after hearing about his heroic resistance to the 'heretic' creed.[78] Facing the challenge posed by the *ahl al-raʾy* as well as the exponents of the createdness of the Qurʾān,[79] and the escalating tension during the *miḥna*, the need of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* for broader support for their theological stance may explain their compromise with their less ʿUthmān-friendly counterparts.

Indeed, this seems to be the case. The diehard *ahl al-ḥadīth* had no compunction denouncing the Jahmīs as infidel (*takfīr*), but they were less resolute with some mild Shīʿīs. A person who places ʿAlī above ʿUthmān, as in the case of Wakīʿ and, plausibly, the other two, in the hierarchy of merits brings himself disgrace (*yaftaḍiḥ*) or is evil (*rajul sūʾ* or *laysa fī-hi khayr*),[80] but this does not constitute severe innovation (*bidʿa shadīda*). When asked about his view on one who lists the best Companions as Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿAlī, with or without ʿUthmān at the bottom, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal replied: 'I do not like this view (*lā yuʿjibu-nī hādhā al-qawl*),' but 'I hate to consider it a grave innovation (*akrah an*

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al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.15, 141; and Isḥāq b. Abī Isrāʾīl (d. *c.* 245 H/859 CE): al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1067.

72 Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 14–15. Although the later sources may have projected the past in an ideal light in order to accentuate the homogeneity and 'orthodoxy' of the earlier generations of the traditionists, given one of the target groups of the *miḥna* being traditionists, it is not implausible that the three traditionists, with their devotion to the collection and documentation of the *ḥadīth*, opposed the official doctrine.

73 Although we do not know ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā's view, he was associated with a few traditionist figureheads condemning the Jahmī creed, such as Sufyān b. ʿUyayna. For Sufyān b. ʿUyayna's view; see: Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Masāʾil*, 357; ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 112.

74 For Wakīʿ, see: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, vol.63, 99–100. An early reference to al-Faḍl b. Dukayn's view is less explicit — he invokes God's damnation upon Bishr al-Marīsī; see: ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 170, 172. Al-Dhahabī also mentions al-Faḍl's condemnation of the Jahmī as infidel; see: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 3032–3033.

75 Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Masāʾil*, 356–359.

76 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, vol.14, 310–311; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.23, 207–208, 213–215.

77 Aḥmad b. Yūnus was a member of the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*, who also denounced the doctrine of the createdness of the Qurʾān; see: Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.8, 529; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.1, 375–378; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.1, 32.

78 It is noteworthy that al-Faḍl b. Dukayn accused Abū Ḥanīfa, the figurehead of the *ahl al-raʾy*, of heresy. This does resonate with the *ahl al-ḥadīth*'s suspicion against the early Ḥanafīs; for al-Faḍl b. Dukayn's accusation, see: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 3032. For the traditionist attitude, see: ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 180–189.

79 Melchert, 'The Adversaries', 234–253.

80 al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, vol.1, 376–377.

ubaddiʿa-hu al-bidʿa al-shadīda).'[81] The 'orthodoxy' for Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his peers is to give precedence to ʿUthmān over ʿAlī, but a minor revision of this doctrine can somewhat be condoned.[82] In a similar vein, al-Dārimī (b. 200 H/815 CE, d. between 280 and 282 H/893–5 CE), in his polemic against the Jahmīs, mentions that a disciple of Bishr al-Marīsī misguided the ignorant by duplicitously alleging that Jahm and al-Marīsī's doctrines concerning the oneness of God is like people's disagreement over the definition of faith (*al-īmān*), the partisanship for ʿAlī (*al-tashayyuʿ*), the divine decree (*al-qadar*), and suchlike, so that the gullible people would not find Jahm and al-Marīsī's doctrines repulsive more than the arguments of the Shīʿīs, the Murjiʾīs, and the Qadarīs. Yet, such a strategy is doomed to failure, al-Dārimī concludes, 'because, whereas the scholars did not regard these sects (that is, Shīʿīs, Murjiʾīs, and Qadarīs) as disbelievers due to something on which they disagree, none of them ever doubted the infidelity of al-Marīsī, Jahm, and their followers (*li-mā anna hādhihi al-firaq lam yukaffir-hum al-ʿulamāʾ bi-shayʾ min ikhtilāfi-him wa-l-Marīsī wa-Jahm wa-aṣḥābu-hum lam yashukka aḥad min-hum fī ikfāri-him*).'[83] After all, since other monotheistic religions, such as Christianity and Judaism, are more acceptable than Jahmīsm, according to ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak,[84] there seems to be no reason to debar the traditionist exponents of the uncreatedness of the Qurʾān with remarkable love for one of the most virtuous Companions from the *jamāʿa*.

Another factor that facilitates the assimilation of the soft Shīʿī traditionists into the wider traditionist community is mild asceticism or renunciation, practised by many leading traditionists in the 8th and 9th centuries.[85] It is found in both ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā and Wakīʿ.[86] There is no reference to al-Faḍl b. Dukayn in this regard, but it is likely that he did not lead a life of luxury, for he was forced to charge for teaching *ḥadīth* due to financial pressure.[87] Mild asceticism is also accompanied by the tendency towards disassociation from the regime, which is characteristic of many traditionists of the time, notably Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.[88] When asked to compare the rectitude of Wakīʿ with that of Yazīd, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal replied that both are virtuous, but Wakīʿ was never tarnished by the *sulṭān*.[89] That is, a traditionist who stays at a distance from power deserves extra credit. Leading a life of humbleness, without being tempted by worldly authority and wealth, embodies a worldview central to the formation of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* as a definite community. For the traditionists, religious authority is built upon the Qurʾān, the *sunna* as constituted by the Prophetic *ḥadīth* and the paradigms of the Companions, and the consensus of the

81 al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, vol.1, 378.
82 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ṣarīḥ*, 31–34; Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Masāʾil*, 370.
83 ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Naqḍ*, 43.
84 ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Naqḍ*, 42.
85 Nimrod Hurvitz, 'From Scholarly Circles to Mass Movements: The Formation of Legal Communities in Islamic Societies', *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (2003): 985–1008; Nimrod Hurvitz, 'Schools of Law and Historical Context: Re-Examining the Formation of the Ḥanbalī Madhhab', *Islamic Law and Society* 7, no. 1 (2000): 37–64; Christopher Melchert, 'The Piety of the Hadith Folk', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 3 (2002): 425–439; Christopher Melchert, 'Early Renunciants as Ḥadīth Transmitters', *The Muslim World* 92 (2002): 407–418.
86 About ʿUbaydallāh's piety, see: al-ʿIjlī, *Tārīkh*, 319; Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrāʾ*, ed. G. Bergsträsser (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2006), vol.1, 439. As for Wakīʿ, see: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, vol.63, 73, 75–77, 79, 84–85; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.30, 473, 481–482. See also footnote 47.
87 Al-Faḍl b. Dukayn earned his living by running a shop selling sheets; see: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 3031, 3033.
88 Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101–105; Nimrod Hurvitz, *The Formation of Hanbalism: Piety into Power* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 75–112.
89 al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol.30, 471–473; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, vol.63, 74, 82–83.

community (*ijmāʿ*).[90] Aloofness from the *sulṭān* allows the traditionists to claim and exercise limited but independent authority — very likely, limited to the local populace, one's circle of disciples, and the traditionist scholarly community — on the basis of the Prophet's legacy, besides the Qurʾān and *ijmāʿ*, without governmental interference. In other words, mild asceticism facilitates cultivation of their collective identity.

Finally, the three Shīʿī traditionists' take on the early history of the Muslim community is not irreversibly incompatible with the traditionist perspective. As noted above, mild Shīʿī sympathy was tolerated, but the Rāfiḍīs were condemned as the evil people of tendentiousness,[91] who do not have a share in Islam.[92] The three traditionists cannot be counted among the Rāfiḍīs, as a matter of historical fact, despite Wakīʿ and ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā being called so. Although they differ in the degree and form of their partisanship for ʿAlī and their attitude towards his opponents during the first *fitna*, as a whole, they recognize Abū Bakr and ʿUmar's caliphates. Al-Faḍl b. Dukayn, who treats Muʿāwiya with discretion, narrates the reports about the merits of the four caliphs, one of which identifies ʿUthmān as the best man in the community when elected as caliph.[93] ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā, who zealously forbad anyone named Muʿāwiya from attending his lessons, as mentioned above,[94] did transmit traditions illustrating the virtues of the first four caliphs, including ʿAlī's endorsement: 'the best of us after the Prophet are Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, may God be satisfied with them.'[95] In addition, ʿUbaydallāh b. Mūsā also narrated the *ḥadīth*s extolling the first three caliphs, as well as Safīna's tradition, which supports the four-caliphs thesis.[96] Likewise, dissemination by Wakīʿ of the first four caliphs' *faḍāʾil* is well-attested in the 9th-century major *ḥadīth* collections.[97] By

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90 Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, 1; Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī, *al-Sunna*, ed. Sālim A. al-Salafī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1988), 12–13. For the connotation of the term, *sunna*, and its change over time in early Islam, see: G. H. A. Juynboll, 'Some New Ideas on the Development of Sunna as a Technical Term in Early Islam', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987): 97–118.

91 See also footnote 66.

92 al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, vol.1, 493.

93 Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 59. Al-Faḍl b. Dukayn's *faḍāʾil* traditions on Abū Bakr: Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 161, 167, 176–177, 180–181; al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol.6, 52–53(3675); on ʿUmar: Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 250, 259, 273, 292, 295–297, 307–308; on ʿAlī: al-Nasāʾī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*, ed. Aḥmad M. al-Balūshī (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Maʿlā, 1986), 58(36), 63–64(42); Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Usāma b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadītha li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, n.d.), vol.10, 496–497(32729–32730); Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 22, 31, 33.

94 See footnote 51.

95 His narrations on the merits of Abū Bakr: Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 167, 192; al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa*, vol.1, 239–241, 450–451; vol.3, 527; on ʿUmar: Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 192, 250, 281, 301; al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa*, vol.1, 462–463; on ʿUthmān: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol.10, 475(32644); Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 59; on ʿAlī: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol.10, 485–486 (32684, 32688); Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 32, 37; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, ed. Bashshār ʿA. Maʿrūf (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1998), vol.1, 129(120); al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol.6, 84–85(3721).

96 For his narration of Safīna's tradition; see: al-Ṭabarī, *Ṣarīḥ*, 33–34.

97 Wakīʿ's traditions on Abū Bakr: Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1119–1120(2382); Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 168, 175, 177, 179; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, vol.1, 108(93), 110(96), 118–119(106); Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol.10, 446–447(32521, 32523), 449(32533), 450(32540, 32543), 456(32564); al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol.1, 45(3663); on ʿUmar: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol.10, 447(32523), 449(32533), 450(32540, 32543), 458(32573–32574), 459(32580–32581), 466–467(32613–32614); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, vol.1, 110(96), 118–119(106); al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol.6, 45(3663); Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.3, 256, 259; al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa*, vol.3, 527; on ʿUthmān: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol.10, 477–478(32655–32656); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, vol.1, 123–124(113); al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol.6, 77–78(3711); on ʿAlī: Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, vol.10, 479(32662), 480(32663), 482(32675), 486(32687), 488–489(32697),

acknowledging the first two or three caliphs, and even their superiority over ʿAlī, the soft Shīʿī traditionists and the *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* converged through their shared historical memory — the *umma* did not go astray after the death of the Prophet for failing to support ʿAlī's leadership. Compared with other contending groups, such as Khārijīs and Rāfiḍīs, the past remembered by the soft Shīʿī traditionists does not wildly diverge from that remembered by the early Sunnīs.[98] Regardless of ranking, mutual veneration for the first four caliphs very likely helped the early ʿUthmānī traditionists and soft Shīʿīs kiss away differences in order to maintain the togetherness of the community — another crucial tenet defining the *ahl al-ḥadīth*.[99]

CONCLUSION

Crone rightly points out the potential of the four-caliphs thesis to offer a compromise for the traditionists with which they could forge a collective identity. The three traditionists, with their variegated degrees of Shīʿī conviction, were not immune to critiques in terms of their sectarian inclination. However, their thought also shared many features with proto-Sunnī traditionists. Despite heterogeneity among the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, a number of characteristics can be identified, such as ascetic inclination and animosity towards the doctrine of the createdness of the Qurʾān, as embraced by the *ahl al-raʾy*. These features are more or less found in the three subjects examined here, as well as in other soft Shīʿī traditionists. With a shared historical memory and other important commonalities, the traditionists with ʿUthmānī sympathy, under the pressure of the *miḥna* as well as contention from other groups, may have realised that an alliance with the *ḥadīth* narrators with remarkable love for ʿAlī would be the least price to pay. In other words, recognition of ʿAlī's status as one of the rightly guided caliphs is an article in the package deal for preserving and expanding the community of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. By admitting the soft Shīʿīs into the traditionist community, influx of their narrations became inevitable, including those about the merits of the first three caliphs as well as those which elevate ʿAlī's standing and enumerate his merits. This then further consolidated the idea of the four rightly guided caliphs.

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98 See footnote 48.

99 Crone, *Medieval*, 134–141.

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