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The American University in Cairo  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**The Use of the Dialogue and Speeches in al-Ṭabarī's Account  
of the Battle of Ṣiffīn**

A Thesis Submitted to  
The Department of  
Arabic and Islamic Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Arts

By  
**Yolanda Adair**

Under the supervision of **Dr. Amina Elbendary**  
and  
**Mr. Lennart Sundelin**

**May/2012**

The American University in Cairo

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## **The Use of the Dialogue and Speeches in al-Ṭabarī's Account of the Battle of Ṣiffīn**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Al-Ṭabarī compiled extensive historical accounts which include those regarding the Battle of Ṣiffīn. He reported the details of this battle in his compilation by using speeches and dialogues as a means of relaying the account to his audience. This thesis analyzes some of the speeches and dialogues that are presented in al-Ṭabarī's historical account of the Battle of Ṣiffīn. The analysis is done for the purpose of determining the reasons for and effectiveness of this particular method of presentation. In order to perform this analysis, several factors were considered. The process by which early Arabic historiography in general came to exist was one of the primary factors that was considered. A second factor was to determine what scholars have said concerning the methodology that was utilized. Furthermore, other factors that were considered include what were the sources that were used in al-Ṭabarī's compilation of the events and what scholars have determined concerning the reliability of those sources. Finally, how speeches and dialogues have been used by other historians in order to present both early Arabic and non-Arabic historical accounts, and how they compare to the presentation of this account were additional factors for consideration. Upon analyzing these and other factors, an analysis of the text was performed in order to review the methodology that was used by al-Ṭabarī in reporting this battle. In essence, these accounts which began as oral stories, continued to be passed down from the time of the event until the time of compilation. The analysis determined that he used the information as he received it directly from his sources, which used the story-telling characteristic that it originated with in order to compile his historical accounts. It was also determined that this methodology was effective in presenting the audience with an informative and entertaining narrative of the Battle of Ṣiffīn, because the information and details regarding the battle are given in an entertaining way through the use of the speeches and dialogues.

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# THE USE OF THE DIALOGUE AND SPEECHES IN AL-ṬABARĪ'S ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF ṢIFFĪN

## INTRODUCTION:

Al-Ṭabarī's reporting on the Battle of Ṣiffīn is done predominantly through the use of dialogue and speeches.<sup>1</sup> Although the battle itself has been heavily scrutinized throughout history and by many scholars, this aspect specifically, the form of narrative used, has not been targeted for analysis. I will investigate the narrative from a primarily rhetorical perspective. In this case, the term "rhetorical" will be used to indicate the purposeful usage of language, whether to advance the narrative or a particular agenda. It seems unlikely that we have verbatim transcripts of real speeches and dialogues from the battles, but the form employed by al-Ṭabarī and his sources must have provided advantages over other ways of presenting the events of the battle. A better understanding of how the battle was presented and understood subsequent to the event may help to develop a better understanding of how these accounts were constructed and their relationship to the original events. My inquiry will endeavor to answer certain questions, the most significant being: 1) How were speeches and dialogues deployed in the Ṣiffīn narratives? 2) How does the presentation of events compare to other historians' use of these narrative forms (in both Arabic historiography and other traditions of historiography)? 3) Why were the events presented this way? 4) What was the overall effectiveness, i.e. how did it advance the narrative and other agendas?

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<sup>1</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Ṭabarī (Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk). Volume XVII: The First Civil War. From the Battle of Siffīn to the Death of 'Ali A.D 656-661/ 36-40*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand, trans. Gerald R. Hawting (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 11- 99.

In the analysis, Chapter One will discuss the historical background of the Battle of Şifīn, the impact it had on the Islamic world, and some of the modern scholarship on the battle. Chapter Two will discuss early Arabic historiography and the procedure that was used to formulate it, from its origin to the written recording of the history. It will then discuss the problems associated with this type of historiography as well as various approaches and methodologies of some modern scholars. Finally, it will introduce the main historians who contributed to the narrative that will be analyzed, as well as the conclusions of modern scholars who have reviewed the work. Chapter Three will analyze the use of speeches and dialogues to record historical events. Examples will be given of speeches and dialogues in historical accounts that appear in ancient and pre-modern Greek literature, followed by a discussion of narratives that appear in early Islamic history. Modern scholars' observations concerning the use of speeches in the narrative relating to the Battle of Şifīn will be reviewed. Finally, this chapter will summarize the types and categories of speeches and dialogues that appear in the narrative which will then be analyzed in Chapter Four. It should be noted that the historicity of the speeches themselves is not the object of this study; however, this rhetorical analysis of the narrative could potentially open up new ways of thinking about their composition and transmission history.

## CHAPTER 1 - HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE OF ŞİFFĪN:

The Battle of Şiffīn was the culmination of a series of events which began with the murder of the third caliph, ‘Uṯmān b. ‘Affān (r. 23-35/644-656), and the subsequent selection of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (r. 35-40/656-661) as the fourth caliph.<sup>2</sup> In his last years as the caliph, it is reported that there had been growing resistance to the caliph ‘Uṯmān’s rule for several reasons. The Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad had played an important and influential role in the caliphates of the first two caliphs. Their influence began to wane after ‘Uṯmān came to power because of his tendencies of nepotism. This practice of nepotism was demonstrated by the appointment of his relatives into high positions in the provincial governments and in Medina as well. He began to allow his nephew, Marwān, to influence all of his decisions to the dismay of the Companions. He also had adopted a continuous practice of giving gifts and money to his family members and some of the people that he considered as some of the more important Companions of the Prophet, to the exclusion of others. The gifts included land (or exchanges of land) that had been designated as either *fay’*, *iqṭā’*, *sawāfī*, or *sādaqa*.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the loss of influence of the Companions as a whole, the government started to mistreat them.<sup>4</sup> They had begun to rebel and protest against ‘Uṯmān’s leadership and started to compare his leadership with that of ‘Umar. Then some refused to comply with the caliph

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<sup>2</sup> Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* A History of the Near East (London; New York: Longman, 1986), 69,75.

<sup>3</sup> Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82-3. These types of lands were described as those of conquered nations that previously belonged to the rulers and/or those in high positions, as well as “communal” lands that benefitted the garrison towns. Previous caliphs had considered these types of land as off limits for the state to distribute at will because of its designated purpose.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

‘Uthmān’s new decrees, he ordered that they be punished.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, it should be noted that ‘Uthmān’s relatives belonged to the Banū Umayya tribe who had fought against the Prophet and the Companions, and were, therefore, late converts to Islam. ‘Uthmān’s ruling practices angered many factions of the population, including the Ansar (original Medinan citizens who assisted the Prophet upon his arrival to their city), some members of the Quraysh (the main tribe related to the Prophet), and pious members of the community who looked up to all of the Companions.

‘Alī was the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad and one of the very first converts to Islam. During the Prophet’s life, ‘Alī played an important political role in the establishment and administration of the community. After the death of the Prophet, reports indicate that ‘Alī did not play a significant political role, although he gave his opinion on governmental affairs from time to time.<sup>6</sup> It is reported however, that ‘Alī disputed with the caliph, ‘Uthmān, primarily regarding matters relating to law and religion. Examples of the issues include changing practices of prayer and pilgrimage; the use of the *fay*’ lands; and punishments of various of the Companions.<sup>7</sup> Some of the previously allowed rules regarding the religious pilgrimage practices had been changed, such as the prohibition of the taking the ‘*umra*’ pilgrimage during the *hajj* or combining the two of them. These changes disturbed many of the Companions who thought that no

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<sup>5</sup> Martin Hinds, “The Murder of the Caliph ‘Uthmān,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, 1972, 450-469.

<sup>6</sup> Robert M. Gleave, "‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*, ed. Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson, Brill, 2011 Online.

<sup>7</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 108.

changes should be made.<sup>8</sup> It is also reported that ‘Alī tried, to the best of his ability, to prevent the mistreatment of the Companions.

In addition to the factions mentioned previously, there was also growing opposition to ‘Uthmān’s ruling practices which extended to the provinces. The main provinces that opposed the caliph’s policies most were Egypt, Basra, and Kūfa. Another important source of opposition was the “mothers of the faithful,” the Prophet’s wives, possibly led by ‘Ā’isha. It is reported that they even wrote letters to the provinces, complaining against ‘Uthmān.<sup>9</sup> The Egyptians’ main complaints were regarding the actions of their governor. Reports indicated that their grievances included maltreatment of “Muslims and protected people (*ahl al-dhimma*), and arbitrary arrogation of war booty of Muslims.”<sup>10</sup> They went to speak with ‘Uthmān about the issue twice. He promised to make the changes that they asked for. The first time, ‘Uthmān had ‘Alī and Muḥammad b. Maslama give them a guarantee that he, ‘Uthmān, would handle all of their complaints. It is said that they intercepted a messenger, with a letter to the governor of Egypt which contained ‘Uthmān’s seal and demanded that they be punished upon their return to Egypt.<sup>11</sup> They decided to return to confront ‘Uthmān directly. Upon confrontation, he denied ever writing the letter.<sup>12</sup> The Kūfans and Basrans also converged on Medina around this time. This began the siege of ‘Uthmān, however the Kūfans and Basrans were not involved in the siege.<sup>13</sup> According to Wilfred Madelung, the siege lasted forty-

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 112

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 128.

nine days total, but he indicated that it was split into two separate sieges.<sup>14</sup> The major aim of the rebels was to force the caliph ‘Uthmān to resign.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, it is said that he would not allow anyone to fight on his behalf.<sup>16</sup> ‘Uthmān did not want to fight them, but he refused to relinquish power.<sup>17</sup> Fighting began when Marwān’s freedman dropped a rock on a Companion but ‘Uthmān refused to turn him over to the rebels. They set upon him and killed him the next day. The day after ‘Uthmān’s murder, the people insisted that ‘Alī accept the caliphate, which he finally did. He was then appointed as the new caliph.

Immediately following ‘Alī’s acceptance of the office of caliph, he began to face opposition on two different fronts. First, he was informed that the governor of Syria, Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (who also happened to be the nephew of ‘Uthmān), had refused to give him allegiance and recognize him as the caliph. Mu‘āwiya was ‘Uthmān’s kinsman and demanded vengeance for ‘Uthmān’s blood.<sup>18</sup> After ‘Uthmān’s murder, his wife Nā’ila sent the caliph’s bloody clothing and her own fingers (which had been cut off during the siege) to Mu‘āwiya, who displayed them on the *minbar* for a whole year for the Syrians to see, all the while repeatedly reminding them of the unlawful spilling of ‘Uthmān’s blood.<sup>19</sup> Mu‘āwiya had been governor in Syria for twenty-three years and could count on almost unconditional loyalty from his army, experienced from

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen R. Humphreys, *Mu‘āwiya ibn Abi Sufyān: From Arabia to Empire*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 74.

<sup>19</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, Khayats Oriental Reprints, Trans. Margaret Graham Weir, Vol. 6, (Beirut: Khayats, 1963: 1927), 75.

years of fighting with the Byzantine army.<sup>20</sup> He was in a strong position and felt able to challenge ‘Alī’s assumption of the caliphate.

The second source of opposition to ‘Alī’s newly acquired office originated closer to home. ‘Ā’isha had been one of the wives of the Prophet Muḥammad as well as the daughter of the first caliph, Abū Bakr. Ṭalḥa ibn ‘Ubayd-Allāh, was one of the long-standing Companions of the Prophet who had high status and was highly regarded. He was also a relative of the first caliph, Abū Bakr. Al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām was another of the long-standing Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad who also had high status and was highly regarded. Additionally, he was ‘Alī’s cousin but was also married to ‘Ā’isha’s sister, another daughter of Abū Bakr. These three individuals had all contributed to the discontentment that existed concerning ‘Uthmān’s reign, according to some sources.<sup>21</sup> Madelung argued, however, that al-Zubayr was not really opposed to ‘Uthmān.<sup>22</sup> He also stated that ‘Uthmān had attempted to buy Ṭalḥa’s loyalty by giving him huge gifts, but that Ṭalḥa wrote letters that incited people in the provinces to revolt.<sup>23</sup> After ‘Alī was appointed caliph, ‘Ā’isha, Ṭalḥa, and al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām decided to hold him directly responsible for ‘Uthmān’s murder.<sup>24</sup> According to what they said, that was the reason for their rebellion and discontentment. However, ‘Ā’isha was Ṭalḥa’s kinswoman and she was al-Zubayr’s sister-in-law. She may have wanted to see one of them in power as opposed to ‘Alī. This is also evidenced by the fact that she did nothing to try to save ‘Uthmān during the lengthy siege against him. She did, in fact, go on

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<sup>20</sup> Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 76.

<sup>21</sup> Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, 42.

<sup>22</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 103.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>24</sup> Humphreys, *Mu‘awiya ibn abi Sufyān* 76.

pilgrimage to Mecca and leave him in Medina with his captors.<sup>25</sup> The reasons that she may have held a grudge against ‘Alī were twofold. The first of which may have been because of an event that occurred during the Prophet’s life when she was accused of infidelity. When the Prophet subsequently sought advice from his cousin, ‘Alī, he was advised to separate himself from her.<sup>26</sup> The grudge could also have been due to the fact that it took six months after the Prophet’s death before ‘Alī gave allegiance to her father, Abū Bakr, as caliph.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, there were clear indications of ‘Ā’isha’s opposition to the caliph, ‘Uthmān. During the siege, ‘Uthmān had sent Ibn ‘Abbās to the city of Mecca in order to rally support for him.<sup>28</sup> In journeying to Mecca, Ibn ‘Abbās met ‘Ā’isha and she tried to convince him to abandon the caliph and join forces with her.<sup>29</sup> Also, as mentioned previously, she had instigated dissent against ‘Uthmān, before the siege ever began, because she was not pleased with his ruling policies. Some sources indicate that Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr stayed in their home during the siege; however, it is debated as to whether al-Zubayr was present or not.<sup>30</sup> And although both Ṭalḥa and

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<sup>25</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Ṭabarī (Ta’rīkh al-Rusul wa’l-Mulūk). Volume XV: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate: The Reign of ‘Uthmān. A.D. 644-656/A.H. 24-35*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand, trans. R. Stephen Humphreys (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 209.

<sup>26</sup> Asmaa Afsaruddin, "‘Ā’isha bt. Abī Bakr," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*, ed., Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Everett Rowson, Brill, 2011 Online.

<sup>27</sup> Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi‘i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi‘ism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 20.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Abdallāh b. al-‘Abbās was highly regarded as one of the first and greatest Muslim scholars. The Abbasids were his descendants. He had been chosen by ‘Uthmān to lead the pilgrimage to Mecca, therefore, he was not in Medina during the actual siege of ‘Uthmān. He fought on ‘Alī’s side in the Battle of the Camel as well as in the Battle of Ṣiffīn. After the battle, ‘Alī appointed him as the governor of Basra until he left that office sometime later, but before the death of ‘Alī, apparently due to some differences in their views. L. Veccia Vaglieri, "‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* ed. Bearman, P., Bianquis, Th., Bosworth, C.E., van Donzel, E., and Heinrichs, W.P., Brill 2010 Online.

<sup>29</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XV: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate*, 238.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

Zubayr had given allegiance to ‘Alī, reports dispute whether either of them did so willingly.<sup>31</sup>

Once ‘Alī was appointed caliph, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr got his permission to go to Mecca for the *‘umra* (minor pilgrimage), ‘Ā’isha was already there.<sup>32</sup> According to the reports in al-Ṭabarī while she was there, she would ask for reports or updates on the situation from those who had traveled to Mecca from or through Medina; however, she did not seem to have a problem with what had been going on until she found out that ‘Alī had been appointed as caliph. At that point, she began to rally support against him in Mecca.<sup>33</sup> When she was joined by Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr, they all decided to go to Basra to do the same and oppose ‘Alī.<sup>34</sup> They chose Basra because they did not have enough resources or troops in Mecca and thought they could rally more men and financial support there.<sup>35</sup> The premise for their opposition was that ‘Alī was harboring the murderers of ‘Uṭh̄mān and that they should be brought to justice. Interestingly enough, sources report that just after ‘Uṭh̄mān’s murder and before Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr left for Mecca, they had conversed about the murder with ‘Alī and the three of them concluded that those who had committed the murder were still in control of Medina at the time, and that neither of them could do anything to any of the murderers. Additionally, during this conversation, ‘Alī had informed Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr that even their own servants and “Bedouin” had participated in the murder and were at that point in control, so there was

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<sup>31</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 144.; al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Ṭabarī (Ta’rīkh al-Rusul wa’l-Mulūk, Volume XVI: The Community Divided. The Caliphate of ‘Alī I. A.D.656-657/A.H. 35-36*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand, trans. Adrian Brockett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>32</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVI: The Community Divided*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>34</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVI: The Community Divided*, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 157.

nothing that could be done to enact the justice they spoke of, to which they all agreed.<sup>36</sup> Some of those who had participated in the siege were also supporters of ‘Alī against his opponents. This made it difficult, if not impossible, for him to punish them during this time.

As ‘Alī was contemplating what to do about the situation with Mu‘āwiya, he became aware of the plans of ‘Ā’isha, Ṭalḥa, and al-Zubayr to rally forces in Basra to oppose him. Upon finding out about this, he set off to intercept them.<sup>37</sup> He took the troops that he had planned to use to go to Syria to confront Mu‘āwiya and went to intercept them instead; however, he was unable to catch up with them.<sup>38</sup> He sent men to Kūfa to gather additional men to fight with him.<sup>39</sup> When the two opposing sides met, there was no reconciliation of their differences. The result was the famous Battle of the Camel which took place in the year 35/656. ‘Alī was victorious, Ṭalḥa and Zubayr were both killed, and ‘Ā’isha was sent back to her home.<sup>40</sup> After the Battle of the Camel, ‘Alī went from Basra to Kūfa where there were several failed attempts at negotiation between him and Mu‘āwiya, using letters and messengers to resolve their differences.<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, after reaching no agreement, ‘Alī and his men marched toward Syria and met Mu‘āwiya and his troops at Ṣiffīn, where the Battle of Ṣiffīn began. The location

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<sup>36</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVI: The Community Divided*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>40</sup> Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 76.

<sup>41</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVI: The Community Divided*, 195.

was a ruined Byzantine village close to al-Rakka and not far from the Euphrates River, the current city of Abū Hurayra.<sup>42</sup>

Reconstruction of the events relating to Battle of Şifīn is problematic for multiple reasons which will be discussed in chapters two and three. A tentative summary of the occurrences as reported by the sources will be presented here. The confrontation at Şifīn was said to have happened seven months after ‘Alī’s appointment to the caliphate.<sup>43</sup> It is reported that in the initial stage of the battle, there were several minor skirmishes that ensued periodically for a while before the actual battle began. The fact that many of the participants had family members on the opposing side made the troops reluctant to fight each other.<sup>44</sup> Long delays were described, such as the incredible report that said that a truce was signed so that they could negotiate and settle their differences. This truce prohibited fighting during the entire holy month of Muḥarram.<sup>45</sup> The prospect of over one hundred thousand men sitting in the middle of the desert for over a month and waiting to fight seems questionable.<sup>46</sup> Another reason for the delays associated with the battle, perhaps, related to the fact that they had been taught that they should not shed the blood of other Muslims.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> M. Lecker, "Siffīn", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2010 Online.

<sup>43</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 184.

<sup>44</sup> Lecker, "Siffīn".

<sup>45</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 229.

<sup>46</sup> In logistical terms, 100,000 soldiers sitting in the desert without fighting in the middle of the summer would have been difficult for the most organized pre-modern army, even in a region having plentiful agricultural resources.

<sup>47</sup> Lecker, "Siffīn".

The population of the region where the battle took place was comprised of Arabs, non-Arabs, Muslims, and non-Muslims. The participants in the battle were Arab Muslims. Most of the non-Arabs and non-Muslims did not participate. Arab tribes had long settled in parts of both Iraq and Syria and some of the same tribes were in both countries. Some of the troops, however, came from other areas such as Egypt, Mecca, and Medina. The *nisbas* of some of the men who participated indicate their diverse tribal origins: Ash'arī, Aslamī, Awsī, Azdī, Ḥaḍramī, Ḥimyarī, Kindī, Qaysī, Sulamī, Ṭā'ī, and Tamīmī, to name only a few.<sup>48</sup> Area and tribal affiliations were not the only factors that determined who a person would side with in the event. Other major issues that prevailed among the participants were religious convictions, personal considerations, and possibly even specific instructions from family members.<sup>49</sup> Two other important groups of battle participants include sons of the previous caliphs and certain Companions of the Prophet. Several of the previous caliphs' sons participated in the battle, such as Muḥammad ibn Abi Bakr, Abū Bakr's son who is reported to have been one of 'Uthmān's initial attackers and who fought on the side of 'Alī. His brother, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr, on the other hand, fought on Mu'āwiya's side.<sup>50</sup> Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Umar fought on Mu'āwiya's side and was killed in the battle. The participation of the Companions of the Prophet is an issue that has been researched by various scholars including Fu'ad Jabali who concluded that the majority of the Companions were either on the side of 'Alī or neutral.<sup>51</sup> Other Companions of the Prophet such as al-Ashtar, Abū

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<sup>48</sup> Fu'ad Jabali, *The Companions of the Prophet: A Study of Geographical Distribution and Political Alignments*. Islamic History and Civilization Studies and Texts, vol. 47, (Leiden; Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), See Appendix VIII.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>50</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, 157.

<sup>51</sup> Jabali, *The Companions of the Prophet*, Appendix VIII.

Mūsa al-Ash‘arī, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, and ‘Ammār b. Yāsir (who was killed in the battle of Ṣiffīn), all played important roles in the battle as indicated by historical reports.

One of the important participants in the battle was al-Ashtar. Although he was dedicated to ‘Alī and his cause, he was a rather overbearing supporter. He was referred to as a giant due to his height. He was described as brave, valiant, bold, zealous, and daring in battle. It was reported that after ‘Alī was appointed as the caliph, al-Ashtar forced some people to give their allegiance to him.<sup>52</sup> When ‘Uthmān was the caliph, al-Ashtar was part of a group that caused trouble for the governor of Kūfa.<sup>53</sup> Veccia Vaglieri mentioned that he participated in the siege; however, the majority of the sources, including al-Ṭabarī, indicated that he did not actually participate.<sup>54</sup> During the Battle of the Camel, al-Ashtar went to Kūfa to gather men to fight on ‘Alī’s side. He commanded ‘Alī’s right flank at the Battle of Ṣiffīn. After fighting at Ṣiffīn, he was appointed as ‘Alī’s governor in Mosul, and subsequently in Egypt; but he was poisoned by a representative of Mu‘āwiya, before arriving in Egypt.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> L. Veccia Vaglieri, "al-Ashtar." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2010 Online.

<sup>53</sup> During ‘Uthmān’s reign, al-Ashtar was part of a group of about ten men in Kūfa who had stirred up trouble. For this reason, ‘Uthmān subsequently expelled them to Mu‘awiya in Syria. They were considered rebels. After Syria, they were sent to Jazira. From there, al-Ashtar went to ‘Uthmān where he repented. He was forgiven and allowed to go wherever he wanted, so he chose to go back to Jazira. Sometime after this incident, Yazid b. Qays wanted to depose ‘Uthmān and his governor in Kūfa. He sent for al-Ashtar and the other exiled men, telling him that the Kūfans had joined their cause. Al-Ashtar returned and incited the people against Sa’īd (the Kūfan governor). He beheaded Sa’īd’s *mawla* (servant). When Sa’īd told ‘Uthmān what had happened, he appointed Abū Mūsa al-Ash‘ari (a former companion of the Prophet) as the governor in Kūfa in order to appease the people there. In al-Ṭabarī’s narrative, al-Ashtar did not directly participate in murder of ‘Uthmān, although he was complicit in the plot of the Kūfans who had planned to confront the caliph. In fact, although he was initially with those dissidents who went to Medina, he separated from them upon arrival. At one point during the siege he was, however, summoned by ‘Uthmān and asked for his advice. His advice was that the caliph should relinquish his power, submit to punishment, or be killed. al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XV: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate*, 114, 119, 133, 135, 199, 189, 190. Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 265.

<sup>54</sup> L. Veccia Vaglieri, "al-Ashtar." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī was a Companion of the Prophet. He is known for establishing a *muṣḥaf* of the *Qur’ān* which “outlived the composition of the vulgate of ‘Uthmān.”<sup>56</sup> He fought in several battles during the life of the Prophet and also during Abū Bakr’s rule. He was appointed as the governor of Basra by the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and while in that position, he conquered several cities. The Kūfans requested that he become their governor during ‘Uthmān’s reign, shortly before the murder. When the Battle of the Camel began, he encouraged people to take a neutral stance. Subsequently, he was dismissed from his governorship, but later granted *amān* (protection or safety). He was appointed as the arbitrator on the side of ‘Alī.<sup>57</sup>

‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ is described as one of the Prophet’s contemporaries, but his Companion status is still debated. He fought in several battles before conquering Egypt, where he established a government and governed until ‘Abdallāh b. Sa’d was appointed as the governor. ‘Amr was reportedly responsible for stirring up some of the people against ‘Uthmān. Mu‘āwiya formed an alliance with him which would give him back the governorship of Egypt upon the conclusion of Battle of Ṣiffīn. He then became a confidant of Mu‘āwiya and served as the commander of the Syrian army in the Battle of Ṣiffīn. After the fighting stopped, he went back to Egypt, reestablished his power base there, and was the governor there until his death.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> L. Veccia Vaglieri, "al-Ash‘arī, Abū Mūsā, Ibn Kays." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Ed., P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs, Brill 2010 Online.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> A. J. Wensinck, "‘Amr b.al-‘Āṣ (al-‘Āṣī) al-Shamī." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed., Bearman by: P. Bearman , Th. Bianquis , C.E. Bosworth , E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs , Brill 2010 Online.

According to the reports, Mu‘āwiya’s cunning confidant, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, suggested that their troops hold up copies of pages of the Qur’ān on their spearheads in order to stop the fighting. This gesture had been used to no avail during the Battle of the Camel.<sup>59</sup> The raising of the *masāhif* was clearly a ploy used by Mu‘āwiya and ‘Amr to stop the fighting. It was reported that his side was losing at the time. The reason that it may have been successful in this case is that the *qurrā* (those who recited the Qur’ān ) made up a very large part of ‘Alī’s fighting force.<sup>60</sup> As Qur’ān readers, the *qurrā* considered the act very seriously because they were being called to honor the Qur’ān, their sacred Book. ‘Alī warned his troops when Mu‘āwiya used the *masāhif* that Mu‘āwiya and his supporters actually had no idea what the Qur’ān contained, indicating that he was ungodly.<sup>61</sup> ‘Alī’s attempts to reason with them were unsuccessful. The *qurrā* then threatened to kill ‘Alī if he did not stop fighting, so he was forced to give in to the cease fire. According to some reports, ‘Alī’s men were winning the battle at the time that the *masāhif* was raised. This plot by Mu‘āwiya and ‘Amr accomplished the intended goal, which was to divide ‘Alī’s ranks. Indeed, this event was the beginning of divisions between ‘Alī’s troops. ‘Alī’s staunch supporters continued to side with him. The first sign of a split was regarding whether or not to acknowledge the gesture of Mu‘āwiya’s army. Some wanted to continue fighting, whereas others did not. It was decided that they would stop the fighting.

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<sup>59</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVI: The Community Divided*, 131-132.

<sup>60</sup> The exact meaning of this term is a matter of dispute; however, here it is referring to the Qur’ān reciters.

<sup>61</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, 79.

Once the fighting had stopped, Mu‘āwiya suggested arbitration. Then there were differences between ‘Alī’s men about whether to accept arbitration or not. Again, the troops insisted that ‘Alī agree and arbitrate, although he again warned them that it was merely a plot. It was then decided that each side would appoint someone to arbitrate on their behalf in order to settle the dispute. However, they could not agree on a representative to arbitrate for their side.<sup>62</sup> The troops wanted Abū Mūsa to be their arbitrator, but because of Abū Mūsa’s neutrality ‘Alī did not agree initially. Ibn Abbās was ‘Alī’s first choice as a negotiator whereas Al-Ashtar was ‘Alī’s second choice. ‘Alī was forced, once again, to acquiesce to his men’s wishes, agreeing to Abū Mūsa. The arbitrators were to present their findings to both sides (who were to bring 400 followers) at *Dūmat al-Jandal* or the following year at *Adhruh*.<sup>63</sup> When the arbitration agreement was drawn up, there were major defections from ‘Alī’s side because he allowed the agreement to be written using his name without his official title of *amīr al-mu‘minīn*.<sup>64</sup> Once the agreement was drawn up, the *qurrā* finally became convinced that they had been wrong for not continuing the fight. Moreover, they were furious about the fact that ‘Alī was to allow men to decide the issue rather than Allāh.<sup>65</sup> When he refused to resume fighting, some of them defected. Those members of the *qurrā* who defected became known as the *Khawārij*.<sup>66</sup> The arbitration ended when ‘Alī’s representative, Abū Mūsa al-Ash‘ari, was tricked by Mu‘āwiya’s representative, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ. First they found

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<sup>62</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 250.

<sup>63</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, 90.

<sup>64</sup> Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 78.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Hinds, “The Siffin Arbitration Agreement,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 17, no. 1: 93-129, 1972.

<sup>66</sup> The *Khawārij* did not align themselves with a particular leader, but their aim was to keep the Qur’ān and Sunna (deeds and sayings) of the Prophet and first two caliphs. They did not acknowledge any authority of the Quraysh to rule. Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 253.

that ‘Uthmān was innocent and his murder was unjustified.<sup>67</sup> After this decision was reached, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ then publicly nominated Mu‘āwiya as the caliph in place of ‘Alī.<sup>68</sup> It was at that point that (only) the Syrians proclaimed Mu‘āwiya as the caliph.<sup>69</sup> The arbitration agreement did not resolve the conflict between the two sides; however, fighting did not resume because of divisions in ‘Alī’s camp that he was forced to resolve. ‘Alī did attempt to reason with the *Khawārij* and win them over again, but he was only able to retrieve a few of them. The internal conflict among ‘Alī’s ranks led to war, the Battle of Nahrawān.<sup>70</sup> During this time Mu‘āwiya was sending men throughout Arabia on raids to intimidate and threaten the inhabitants to submit to his authority.<sup>71</sup> After the war with the *Khawārij*, and before resuming the fighting with Mu‘āwiya, ‘Alī was killed by one of the *Khawārij*.<sup>72</sup> At the time of his death, four years after the Battle of Ṣiffīn, he was again gathering troops to fight against Mu‘āwiya. After ‘Alī’s death, Mu‘āwiya officially became the fifth caliph of the Muslim people, thus began the ‘Umayyad dynasty. Many of those who he governed questioned his right to the caliphate because he imposed his rule by force.<sup>73</sup> Subsequently, he even paid a sum to ‘Alī’s son, al-Hasan b. ‘Alī, for the undisputed privilege of holding the office.<sup>74</sup> This gesture was only to appease the few who may have supported him although he was not a real contender for the caliphate at the time.

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<sup>67</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 256.

<sup>68</sup> Lecker, "Siffīn", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>69</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 257.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>71</sup> M. Hinds, "Mu‘āwiya Ib. Abī Sufyān." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Ed. P. Bearman; , Th. Bianquis; , C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011 Online. Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 300.

<sup>72</sup> Momen, *An Introduction to Shi‘i Islam*, 25.

<sup>73</sup> M. Hinds, "Mu‘āwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

The conflict was considered the first *fitna*, civil war.<sup>75</sup> There was never a distinct resolution to the differences between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya. After the battle and over the centuries that followed, three distinct groups of Muslims emerged, *Sunnī*, *Shī‘ī*, and *Khawārij*, whose origins are traced back to the conflicts of the civil war.<sup>76</sup> The *Sunnīs* came to refer to the majority of Muslims. They accept each of the first four caliphs as being rightly guided. They adhere to the Qur’ān and the *sunna* (actions and sayings of the Prophet and the first caliphs). Initially, the *Shī‘ī* faction was comprised of those who were on the side of ‘Alī with respect to the battle, as the word indicates the connotation of a political party. In time however, the term evolved and came to refer to those who considered ‘Alī the rightful heir of the caliphate after the Prophet Muḥammad’s death and recognized only those who were of ‘Alī’s genealogical line as the legitimate rulers.<sup>77</sup> The *Khawārij* had a general belief that the Qur’ān should be applied and interpreted rigidly and that strict punishments should be applied to anyone who should commit an offense. They also believed that the most excellent Muslim should rule, regardless of his descent.<sup>78</sup> Shortly after the *Khawārij* formed, they engaged in polemical debates relating

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<sup>75</sup> L. Gardet, "Fitna." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Ed., P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2010 Online. The use of the word here may refer to the meaning that relates to the concept of “revolt, disturbances, civil war, but a civil war that breeds schism and in which the believers' purity of faith is in grave danger”..... “Struggles of the early period of Muslim history are *fitna* (pl. *fitan*), and include “questions contested regarding the legitimacy of the *Imām*s or caliphs and the armed conflicts that they aroused have a direct bearing on the values of faith. The series of events which includes the murder of ‘Uthmān, the designation of ‘Alī as *Imām*, the battle of Ṣiffīn and the development of both the *shī‘at ‘Alī* and the *khawārij* schisms, and the seizing of power by Mu‘āwiya, is often called ‘the first *fitna*’, and also ‘the *fitna*’ *par excellence* or ‘the great *fitna*’. On account of the struggles that marked Mu‘āwiya’s advent, the term *fitna* was later applied to any period of disturbances inspired by schools or sects that broke away from the majority of believers ( *al-djumla* ).”

<sup>76</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, xv.

<sup>77</sup> The religious concept of the *Shī‘ī* did not come about until after the death of ‘Alī’s son, al-Hasan. Sources say that it appeared after the martyrdom of ‘Alī’s son al-Husayn. The *Shī‘ism* that existed previous to these events was only political, only indicating which position that the Hashim line should hold in regards to political offices. Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi‘i Islam*, 63.

<sup>78</sup> Levi Della Vida, G. "Khārijites." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Ed. P. Bearman; Th. Bianquis; C.E. Bosworth; E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011 Online.

to the negotiations, truce, and the arbitration, which related to the debate regarding their position on these issues at Şifīn.<sup>79</sup> This battle impacted the Islamic world from both a political and a religious perspective, because, after this incident the ‘Umayyad dynasty came to power. Mu‘āwiya’s caliphate was the start of that dynasty. During this period of time there was a strong tribal system and the politics of the individual tribes was an important factor in determining their position regarding who should be the ruler and what the policies should be. Furthermore, the *Khawārij* continued to be a problem to the caliph from both a religious as well as a political standpoint, because they felt it their duty to punish the unjust and rebel against unjust rulers. Controversies are still in existence today because of this incident. When N. A. Faris discussed the arbitration agreement, for example, he concluded that the arbitration was not intended to determine the rightful caliph, but whether or not the men responsible for murdering ‘Uthmān should be surrendered. Concerning the change in the purpose of the arbitration, he said, “.....how the sudden shift took place is more difficult to determine and more difficult to believe. Very likely, nothing of the sort happened.”<sup>80</sup> The importance of the Battle of Şifīn, for Islamic sectarian identities, cannot be overstated. The battle and subsequent events shaped Islam and Islamic history, and they are still being debated. They also left an indelible mark on Islamic political thought and philosophy. In the next centuries, several groups and sects, such as the *murji’a* and *mu’tazila* emerged due to debates relating to the battle.<sup>81</sup> With regard to analyzing the historical reporting that has been

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<sup>79</sup> Lecker, "Şifīn", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>80</sup> N. A. Faris, "Development in Arab Historiography as Reflected in the Struggle Between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya," *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. B. Lewis and P.M. Holt, (London: 1962), 436.

<sup>81</sup> Initially, the term *mu’tazila* only referred to those who separated themselves and remained neutral with regard to the conflict. D. Gimaret, "Mu’tazila." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Ed: P. Bearman; Th. Bianquis; , C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011 Online. The word *murji’a* represented those who believed that faith or confession of believing person was totally separate from the

passed down and relaying the events relating to it, there are factional considerations which must be taken into account. The battle of Şiffin has been used throughout Islamic history as a basis for justifying the positions the sects use for their arguments. Since no solid conclusion was ever reached before ‘Alī’s death, the rationalization for neither side can ever be proven. For this reason, it appears that there is a permanent divide between the beliefs of *Shī‘ī* and *Sunnī* Muslims.

After the battle, both sides used the previous actions and prophecy that had been given by the Prophet to support their position from a polemical and/or apologetic standpoint. There were debates concerning which of the Companions (and how many) were aligned with which side.<sup>82</sup> The answer to this debate would bolster the position of a particular side by putting them on the side of “rightness,” as well as to indicate the level of the Islamic prestige that should be assigned to either side. It could also determine the legitimacy of the opponents’ claim to the caliphate. Another aspect of prestige sought after the battle was based on the tribal element as determined based on what story emerged regarding what side they were on in the battle, their military achievements during the fighting, as well as the number of their fallen soldiers. On the other hand, the *Shī‘ī* tradition wanted to show that ‘Alī’s fight against Mu‘āwiya was a continuation of the Prophet’s fight against unbelievers now led by Mu‘āwiya, the son of Abū Sufyān, a previous enemy of the Prophet. In other words, the fact that Mu‘āwiya’s father, Abū

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actions, judgment should be reserved for God. W. Madelung, "Murdjī'a." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman; Th. Bianquis; C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2011 Online.

<sup>82</sup> M. Lecker, "Siffin", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

Sufyān, had initially fought against the Prophet and the early Muslims became, for the *Shīʿī*, a parallel to what they saw happen between Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī.

Another polemical tool that was used after the battle was eschatology in the form of prophecies.<sup>83</sup> Some prophecies that were related to the battle were attributed directly to the Prophet Muḥammad. Prophecies used to justify one side or the other's position as to which was legitimate and which was not. One prophecy pointed to the death of ʿAmmār b. Yāsir<sup>84</sup>. When this prophecy was pointed out to Muʿāwiya, he said that it was the one who sent ʿAmmār out to fight (ʿAlī) who had been the the cause of his death. To this, the *Shīʿa* indicated that Muʿāwiya was “deceiving the fools among the people of Syria.”<sup>85</sup> Another prophecy justified ʿAlī's relinquishment of the title *amīr al-muʿminīn* by using a comparison to the similar situation where the Prophet relinquished his title, *rasūl Allāh*, in an agreement with the Quraysh at al-Ḥudaybiya. The Prophet was said to have told ʿAlī, who had been the scribe of that agreement, that he, ʿAlī, would have that very same experience. This prophecy was fulfilled when ʿAlī changed his own name on the Ṣiffīn arbitration agreement. Other *Shīʿī* polemics were directed at justification of ʿAlī's behavior during the negotiations, truce, and the arbitration,<sup>86</sup> These apologetics and polemics directly affected the way that the Battle of Ṣiffīn would have been transmitted from the time of the oral transmissions, all the way down to the written narratives that are now available. The fact is that the way that the information was presented would have a direct effect on the opinions of the hearers and readers and

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *The First Civil War*, 90

<sup>85</sup> M. Lecker, "Ṣiffīn," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

influence their views. These views could legitimize or discredit the governing authority; validate or invalidate a sect, belief, or ideology; or possibly even create or dissolve certain tribal alliances. This makes the position taken by the reporter of facts an important propaganda tool, not only during the time immediately following the battle when oral transmission was the normal method, but all the way up to a period of time after the narratives were compiled and written down as historical reports. As a result, these factors must be considered in the analysis of the dialogue/speeches in order to determine which of them influence the narrative and why.

The importance of Şifḫin in the Islamic tradition meant that it has bulked large in modern scholarship about early Islamic history, too. Modern scholars who studied the Battle of Şifḫin specifically include Ladewig Erling Petersen, who analyzed methodology as well as historiography relating to Şifḫin in his book entitled *‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya in Early Arabic Tradition*. He examined how historical traditions about the battle evolved and were affected by the changing political and religious atmosphere over the next two and a half centuries after the battle.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, Martin Hinds did an extensive analysis of the battle and different aspects of it in a number of articles. These works appear together in a book called *Studies in Early Islamic History: Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*.<sup>88</sup> These articles serve to enhance an understanding of the Battle of Şifḫin because of Hinds’ elaboration on tribal and political alignments.<sup>89</sup> He

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<sup>87</sup> Ladewig Erling Petersen, *‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya in Early Arabic Tradition: Studies on the Genesis and Growth of Islamic Historical Writing Until the End of the Ninth Century*, trans. P. Lampe Christensen (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1964).

<sup>88</sup> Martin Hinds, *Studies in Early Islamic History: Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, ed. Jere Bacharach, Lawrence I. Conrad, and Patricia Crone, Series vol. 4. (Princeton, N.J: Darwin Press, 1996).

<sup>89</sup> Martin Hinds, “Kūfan Political Alignments and their Background in the Mid-Seventh Century A.D.,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2, 1971, 346.

also analyzed the banners and battle cries associated with the battle.<sup>90</sup> And he examined the facts regarding ‘Uthmân’s murder.<sup>91</sup> In his article, “The Şiffin Arbitration Agreement,” he presented a broad analysis of that document. These articles describe in detail the underlying factors behind the battle by detailing the tribal system that was in place at the time, as well as the political forces and divisions that contributed directly to ‘Uthmân’s murder. His analysis of the arbitration agreement focuses on the fact that there are two existing versions of the agreement and the wording that was used differs slightly. After analyzing the two, he gave his opinion as to which of the two was the valid one. He then summarized the reasons for the reactions of the participants to the agreement, using his opinion about which agreement was the one that should be considered as valid. Finally in Chapter Five of his book, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Ṭabarī’s History*, Boaz Shoshan analyzed some of the dialogue reported by al-Ṭabarī concerning the Battle of Şiffin to show the “irony” of the battle. In his opinion, the result that a reader of the battle narrative would expect is exactly the opposite of what actually happened (how the narrative ended). He wrote, “In the outcome of Şiffin, God’s judgment, no doubt, is manifest, but in a form that none of the historical participants, perhaps not even the modern reader, could expect.”<sup>92</sup> Basically, he concluded that the irony lay in the fact that the good guy, according to the narrative, did not win in the end.

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<sup>90</sup> Idem., “The Banners and Battle Cries of the Arabs at Siffin (657 AD),” *Al-Abhath* 24, 1971, 3-42.

<sup>91</sup> Idem., “The Murder of the Caliph ‘Uthmân,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, 1972, 450-469.

<sup>92</sup> Boaz Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Ṭabarī’s History* (Leiden, NLD: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 231.

The majority of other modern scholars' analyses have been concerned mainly with the sources of the material that will be appraised. Those who have endeavored to analyze this literature have focused primarily on the authenticity of the information presented and the reliability of the sources that al-Ṭabarī used, or that of al-Ṭabarī himself. Some of these authors are discussed in Chapter Three.

Several major scholars researched the narratives to enhance understanding of the Battle of Ṣiffīn. M. Lecker's article on the battle described the underlying factional elements that contributed to it.<sup>93</sup> He also described tribal affiliations and which tribes were associated with which side of the conflict. Furthermore, he discussed the polemics and apologetic elements that resulted from the battle and how the details of these factors were presented by the reporters. More recently, a book that relates to the battle from a somewhat different perspective is *Mu'awiya ibn abi Sufyān: From Arabia to Empire* by Stephen R. Humphreys.<sup>94</sup> This book is focused on Mu'āwiya and his role in the community and historiographical memory; however, it also includes a brief description of the events that lead up to and includes the Battle of Ṣiffīn. These works may be utilized in further evaluation of the narrative.

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<sup>93</sup> M. Lecker, "Ṣiffīn", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>94</sup> Humphreys, *Mu'awiya ibn abi Sufyān*.

## CHAPTER 2 - HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT:

In this thesis, al-Ṭabarī's account of the Battle of Ṣiffīn will be examined. One reason for using only this account is that it is thorough, highly regarded, and widely accepted as a valid compilation of historical events. Additionally, it includes many varying reports concerning this battle. Furthermore, it has been translated into the English language. Al-Ṭabarī's account was the product of over two centuries of evolution of the community's memories of this traumatic battle.<sup>95</sup>

The procedure by which early Arabic historiography came to exist is very unique. Chase F. Robinson described the process from the oral transmissions down to the actual writing down of the data.<sup>96</sup> Initially, the historical accounts were transmitted by word of mouth. Oral transmission of historical events began in pre-Islamic times, and continued to be told from generation to generation, even after the writing down of the transmissions became popular. The *Quṣṣāṣ* were the story-tellers who were responsible for giving the public information which was intended to remind, inform, warn, or authenticate events.<sup>97</sup> According to Khalil 'Athamina, they were highly educated and had "expertise in the

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<sup>95</sup> For the examination of early Arabic historiography, I have consulted the following books: Fred McGraw Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, vol. 14, (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1998). 'Abd al-'Azīz Dūrī *The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation: A Study in Identity and Consciousness [Takwīn al-Tārīkhī lil-Ummah al-'Arabīyah]*, (London; New York: Croom Helm, 1987). 'Abd al-'Azīz Dūrī and Lawrence I. Conrad. *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*. Modern Classics in Near Eastern Studies. [*Baḥṭh fī Nash'at 'Ilm al-Tārīkh 'Inda al-'Arab*], (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983). Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Tarif Khalidī, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, (Cambridge England; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*. Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam ; 3. [*Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung*], 2nd ed., Trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1994).

<sup>96</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Khalidī, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 5.

fields of history, biography, and Arabic language, grammar, and composition — in addition to subjects of a religious nature.....”<sup>98</sup> Their style was “full of illustration, glorification, and legendary material.”<sup>99</sup> According to Dūrī, the early narrators were considered more as story-tellers than historians.<sup>100</sup> The verbal accounts evolved into folklore.<sup>101</sup> Eventually, over time, the historians started to distrust them.<sup>102</sup> Patricia Crone is a modern scholar, and her view — as pointed out by Michael Lecker — was that “the storytellers distorted the historical facts.”<sup>103</sup> At some point, possibly sometime in the late seventh, or early eighth centuries, there are still debates as to exactly when, some of the transmissions began to be written down.<sup>104</sup> Some ninth century historical accounts point to written sources stemming from the late seventh or early eighth century.<sup>105</sup> In the ninth century, the method of using an *isnād* to report information became popular. An *isnād*, is basically a list of the names of the people who transmitted the information or report from one to the other. It would list each person in the chain of transmission; from the initial incident being reported (by the person who heard or saw it) and including each individual who told or wrote about the event, all the way down to the person who was giving the report at the time. If there was a reputable historian that the information came from, the *isnād* may have been shortened or may have only referred to that particular historian as the source of the information. It was the way that *hadīth* reports (the actions and sayings of the Prophet) were transmitted, and many of the historians were also *hadīth*

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<sup>98</sup> Khalil 'Athamina, “Al-Qasas: Its Emergence, Religious Origin and Its Socio-Political Impact on Early Muslim Society.” *Studia Islamica* no. 76, 1992, 54.

<sup>99</sup> Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, 31.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>102</sup> Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 116.

<sup>103</sup> Lecker, Michael, “King Ibn Ubayy and the *Quṣṣāṣ*” Herbert Berg, *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*. ed. Herbert Berg. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2003, 29-71.

<sup>104</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 23.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

collectors. Therefore, this method became popular for use in both historical and *hadīth* reports. Due to the fact that many of the *hadīth* reports were found to be fabricated during this period of time, the scholars began a system of rating the reports as to their validity. The ratings were performed in order to determine which *isnāds* reported the facts more reliably as found by an analysis of each of the *isnād* associated with a transmission. The rating system was used not only for verification of the *hadīth* transmissions, but also was used in the verification of historical transmissions. The question of validity and authenticity became important in consideration of the early Arabic historical narratives. The possibility of alteration of the facts, whether accidental or tendentious, makes the resulting transmissions questionable.

Early Arabic historiography is problematic in general. In fact, some scholars believe that the traditions that were presented by the early Islamic historians are not truly reliable as sources of what actually happened. The problem of the validity of the information that was reported is one of the largest problems looming in the minds of today's scholars. One of the reasons for the difficulty has to do with the methods that were used for reporting it. Because of the methodology used for the transmissions, both written and oral, the possibility that some of the information was changed, omitted, or added to is great. Also problematic is the fact that most of the original written historical accounts were lost or somehow destroyed and therefore are not available for comparison with later compilations of reports of the events.<sup>106</sup> The compilations (that are now available) are of reports of events that had been compiled by previous historians, this started in the ninth century. Now, only the compilations of the original historical

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 23

accounts of the events are available for review, rather than the original reports themselves, this is because the original documentation did not survive and; therefore, no longer exists.<sup>107</sup> In most cases only compilations of other earlier compilations exist, as in the case of al-Ṭabarī. However, there are surviving manuscripts for some of the early compilations.<sup>108</sup> What has been determined regarding the compilations is that the compilers edited, at least by omission if not more, the content that they decided to include in their historical accounts.<sup>109</sup> Not all of every account of every event that was recorded could reasonably be included in any compilation. The compilers, including al-Ṭabarī, tended to fragment the longer narratives in order to present a different or conflicting view about the same issue. On the other hand, some narratives were simple and brief from their origination.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, the episodic/atomistic nature of the reports will be a consideration in the analysis of the narrative.

Since authenticity is important to the topic of early Arabic historiography, there are several tools which are available to the scholars that may be used to verify or authenticate transmissions. For example, various sources on the same event can be examined to determine whether the details of the event are presented in the same way. Another tool that is used for verification is the comparison of the common links of the *isnāds* between various sources of the same reports.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the material can be compared with social or political norms that existed at the time and place that the

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>108</sup> One example that is given indicates that three copies of original manuscripts dated in the 800's appear in Ibn Tawas' collection. Ibid., 30.

<sup>109</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 289.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>111</sup> Görke, Andreas, "Eschatology, History, and the Common Link: A Study in Methodology," Herbert Berg, *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*. ed. Herbert Berg. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2003, 179-208.

transmission was supposed to have been made in order to determine if the transmission matches that time period and location. Psychological factors may also be considered to determine if the transmission lines up with the thinking of the time period that is being assessed. Wadād al-Qādī, for example, analyzed various letters, especially those of Abd Hamid, in order to determine the authenticity, and described many of these types of tools that she used to do her analysis.<sup>112</sup>

There are several common themes associated with early Arabic historiography. Donner, for example, pointed out several of the themes which prevailed. During the Umayyad caliphate, themes such as *umma* (origins of believer's community), *nubūwa* (Muḥammad's status as a prophet), *futūh* (God's support of Muslim's supremacy over non-Muslims), *fiṭna* (Muslims fighting each other for leadership), and "Qur'an related narratives" were among the major themes.<sup>113</sup> Pre-Islamic Arabia was another theme that figured into this literature.<sup>114</sup> Later the new themes of *Khilāfa* and *sīrat al-Khulafā'*, both themes of administration, emerged.<sup>115</sup> Themes were used by Muslims to legitimize their perspective on the topics that were being reported.<sup>116</sup> For example, the Battle of Ṣiffīn is an important part of the *fiṭna* theme, a fact that significantly shaped the historiography of the battle. A theme or an aspect thereof that would be important in one geographical area may not have been considered as important in another area, even if the historian himself

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<sup>112</sup> Averil Cameron, Lawrence I. Conrad, and G. R. D. King. Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam. *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: Papers of the First Workshop on Late Antiquity and Early Islam*. Vol. 1. (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1992). Chapter 6. See also: Wadād al-Qādī, 'The Impact of the Qur'an on the Epistolography of 'Abd al-Hamīd. In *Approaches to the Qur'an*. Ed. G.R.hawting & Abdul-Kader A.Shareef. London: Routledge, 1993, 285-313.

<sup>113</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 277-78.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

did not agree.<sup>117</sup> The regional aspect of themes was unimportant by the end of the second century CE because the important themes, by then, had become universal in nature among the historians due to travel or books that existed by this time.<sup>118</sup>

Concerning the research that has been done recently regarding history and historiography, the narratives have been scrutinized to establish factors that should also be considered when reviewing the materials. These factors can be categorized as political, sectarian, tribal, and social. Another factor which has been recently considered relates to the time period when the actual recording of the events took place. This factor would also have played a role that would affect how the reports were presented in writing. This is true for both the time period of the original documentation of the event, as well as the time period of the compilation of the documentation into another work. The writers or the compilers could have inserted elements into the narratives in order to reflect the ideology that was in existence at that time. The editing that took place, however, could not change the actual facts of the events because the facts were well known and well supported. Editing could only have changed the perspective. Omissions or the invention of extra details to “add dimension to the account” occurred.<sup>119</sup> For example, Qasim al-Samarrai analyzed a surviving copy of *Kitāb al-ridḍa wa al-futūḥ* by Sayf ibn ‘Umar in comparison with what was reported by al-Ṭabarī in his compilation. He determined that “substantial portions” were omitted. He also indicated that some of

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 289.

the narrative was paraphrased.<sup>120</sup> The motivations for possibly making changes to any narrative, as mentioned previously, could have been sectarian, political, tribal, or possibly even social in nature. Tribal considerations occurred because of the tribal system that had been in place throughout the Arab world. For example, tribal alliances could be absolutely correctly conveyed for generations; however, they were frequently adjusted to fit the current agendas or circumstances that existed at the time of the relating of the event, a common practice.<sup>121</sup> Because of the way in which the ‘Umayyads came to power after the Battle of Şiffin, there were political considerations concerning what line of the Prophet’s family the caliphate should come from or who could legitimately hold the office of the caliphate. During the period 125AH/742CE-300AH/913CE the process of reworking narratives from the previous period began. It was most likely during this period that the pro-Umayyad/Zubayrid accounts disappeared.<sup>122</sup> After the Abbasids came to power, which is when the compilations were written, there was also the possibility that the reports could be used to solidify their power base or legitimize the violence they used to usurp the caliphate.<sup>123</sup> In fact, redactions, like inserting chronology or taxation issues, were inserted in *futūh* reports. There were also sectarian concerns which stemmed from the way in which the battle ended, and which faction should hold power. Social considerations, such as what was or was not socially acceptable at the time or in the area that the report was being presented, must be considered.<sup>124</sup> The compilers’ bias can also be seen in the use of themes. The perspective of the compiler is indicated

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<sup>120</sup> Qasim al-Samarrai, “A Reappraisal of Sayf ibn ‘Umar as a Historian in the Light of the Discovery of His Work *Kitāb al-Ridda wa al-Futūh*.” *Essays in Honour of Salah al-Din al-Munajjid*. London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation Pub. No.70, 2002.

<sup>121</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 281

<sup>123</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 26.

<sup>124</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 280.

by which of the themes they chose to include, as the tendency was to choose what was important to them at the time.<sup>125</sup> Sectarian views such as ‘Alid, Kharajite, or Umayyad can be seen in the literature that is available today. It is obscured; however, because the majority Sunni historians who used this material in their compilations changed the perspective or relative importance.<sup>126</sup> That editing of the *fitna* or leadership theme took place is shown by the fact that what literature exists on the topic discounts significantly the actual schism that occurred in the fights for leadership. It pushes forward the Quraysh rule as opposed to the Kharajite or Yemenite views that are obscured in the reports.<sup>127</sup> The majority of the reports that exist concerning Battle of Şiffin, for example, are only from the pro-Abbasid, moderate Shiite, and Uthmanite perspectives and extremist views are not clearly reflected.<sup>128</sup> These accounts also stem mostly from reports of Iraqi historians and were compiled during the Abbasid period which affects the perspective of the presentation.<sup>129</sup> The lack of a Syrian perspective on the narratives means that the reconstruction of actual events is limited. The validity of the reported history has been questioned for all of these above mentioned reasons. However, since the form of the narrative is predominately rhetorical in nature, the factors mentioned above will be considered more from that perspective than from any other.

Western scholars have adopted a number of approaches to these texts; Donner, for example, described the Western scholars’ theories regarding the literary sources as being

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>128</sup> Petersen, *‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya in Early Arabic Tradition*, 117.

<sup>129</sup> Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, 142-143.

divisible into four categories. Those four categories are: The Descriptive, Source-Critical, Tradition-Critical, and Skeptical approaches. A characteristic of the “Descriptive Approach” assumed that the narratives were representative of actual events.<sup>130</sup> This approach was used by scholars William Muir and Hugh Kennedy. The “Source-Critical Approach” came about in the middle of the nineteenth century, and was aimed at explaining which of the different narrative reports should be most valid.<sup>131</sup> Two of the scholars who used this method were Julius Wellhausen and M.J. de Goeje. The “Tradition-Critical Approach,” was initiated by Western scholar, Ignaz Goldziher, for analyzing *hadīth* reports. This type of analysis considered the “context of conflicting political, religious, and social interests” that existed at the time, in order to better understand early Islamic civilization as a whole.<sup>132</sup> Two of the scholars who were said to have used this approach were Ignaz Goldziher and Albrecht Noth. Finally the “Skeptical approach” basically views the traditions as though they do not represent any actual events.<sup>133</sup> Joseph Schacht, Michael Cook, and Patricia Crone are scholars who are said to have utilized this approach.<sup>134</sup> According to Donner, Schacht was one of the first to “articulate this method explicitly” and used it in studying Islamic law.<sup>135</sup> Crone and Cook, on the other hand indicated that it is not possible to use “Islamic sources to reconstruct Islamic origins.”<sup>136</sup> Of the approaches presented by Donner, my personal

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<sup>130</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 6.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. Books referred to by Donner for this evaluation include: Schacht, “A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions;” Schacht, “On Mūsa b. ‘Uqba’s *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*.” Schacht, *magnum opus*, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (only regarding authenticity of early Prophetic traditions); Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*; Crone, *Slaves on Horses*; Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*; Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*; Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*.

<sup>135</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 22.

<sup>136</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 25.

preference is the Tradition-Critical approach because it takes into account the varying factors that may help to determine validity, rather than discounting the reports as a whole. Furthermore, Donner not only analyzed each of these approaches, but also examined the themes that appear in early Islamic historical writing such as prophecy (*nubūwa*), community (*umma*), hegemony (*fitnah*), and leadership (*fitna*) (discussed above). Moreover, he discussed the concept of piety in Islam and how it was used to legitimize people, their characters, or their actions in early Islam.<sup>137</sup> Piety is a very important concept with regard to early Islamic historical writing, considering the origins of Islam itself. It will also be important in the analysis that will follow in Chapter Four.

Similarly, Albrecht Noth analyzed early Arab historiography. He also analyzed the themes used in Arabic historical writing and categorized them. His opinion is that the historical content of the narratives that are available today tells more about the position of the writers in the society at the time they were written down, than about the events they purport to relay to the reader.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, he disputed the famous “schools” theory that was advanced by Julius Wellhausen, which had been based on the geographical region of origin of the historian who wrote the reports. According to that theory, the two prevalent schools were the “Medinan” and the “Iraqi” schools. The perspective of the writer, according to Wellhausen, based on which of these schools they belonged to. Noth argued that chronological reasoning had become the basis for rating reliability as opposed to the location of the origin of the writer.<sup>139</sup> Donner referred to the concept as the “schools” theory, and argued that although the theory may not be a basis for determining

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>138</sup> Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, xi.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 15.

the validity of the sources, it may be a way to determine the historians' main interests. This could be accomplished by looking at the attention that was given to the narrative and noting what was included and which themes were developed. According to Donner: "It is natural to assume, for example, that an historian of al-Kūfa where popular sympathy for the cause of 'Alī and his family was widespread, might convey more material of a pro-'Alid character than historians attached to the Umayyad family and certainly would be inclined to devote more space to relating events that took place in and around al-Kūfa, and to events of great importance to the local *Shī'ī* community, even if his own opinions were not pro-'Alid."<sup>140</sup>

Although Donner and Noth agreed on the thematic nature of early Arabic historiography and social considerations that would have to be considered, Noth held a dim view of early Islamic historical literature as a whole. For example, he argued that many modern historians "express grave reservations concerning both the overall historicity of the Arab-Islamic literary tradition and the view of early Islamic history which emerged from that tradition."<sup>141</sup> An example of his skepticism regarding the subject as a whole is indicated by the fact that one of the chapters in his book focuses on *Topoi*.<sup>142</sup> This chapter is followed by a chapter entitled *Schemata*.<sup>143</sup> These are both concepts of using a pre-existing pattern as a blueprint for the event that is reported. His book strongly focuses on disputing the validity of Arabic history as it has been handed down and reported. *Topos* is a literary tool that is used to describe factual situations

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<sup>140</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 217.

<sup>141</sup> Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 24.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 173. Wellhausen was also credited for his discussion of some aspects of the concept of systemization, which falls into the category of *schemata*, 195 fn 1.

using certain inclinations, or exaggerations that transfer from one event to another. Schema is also a literary tool, but in the form of a pattern or structure. Circumstances or situations are placed in this pattern to depict what happened; whereas, the events do not have to be factually based in order to use this literary form.<sup>144</sup> These two literary formats were used in order to describe events detailed in battle narratives that related to the *ridda*, *futūh*, or *fitna* themes.

One of the examples that Noth used to show this form was in battle formation, where names were dropped into a common formation pattern.<sup>145</sup> These names were taken from the compilations of lists in early Arabic literature. These lists could be participants in a particular battle, government office holders, writers, residents of a particular place, or any of a number of groups that existed at the time of the compilation. The names could then have been used by the historians in order to “fill-in-the-blanks” (a practice called *wa-‘alā*) for any number of historically reported events.<sup>146</sup> The fact that many of the historians have differing reports about which names held a certain position led him to make the suggestion that the majority of these types of reports were also fictitious in nature.<sup>147</sup> Besides the previous scenario, he made the same conclusion about names that were associated with people who were either taken captive or killed; as well as reported messages that were sent from the battle field to the caliph. This conclusion was also due to contradictions in transmissions. One interesting observation was made in relation to those people or groups with claims of having killed a famous opponent. The motivation

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 114.

for this was the glorification of themselves, their tribes, or defamation of an enemy.<sup>148</sup> Another instance where *topos* was used was in exhorting battle participants after their death. Additional situations that were said to have been described using *topos* were: caliphs seeking advice, challenges for a single duel, or instances of martyrdom. Another type of *topoi* was one which was always finalized by the death of the person who foretold his own martyrdom — which was presented by the historian as a religious sacrifice.<sup>149</sup> The *topoi* in some of these cases may have been used in order to give fame to or to depict the heroism of the person or tribe named in the event. Noth discussed the death of the tribe of al-Namir in the battle of Şiffīn as an instance of “seeking martyrdom.” He described the deaths as “.....the arbitrary use of the motif of ‘seeking martyrdom,’ in which the simple fact of death is clothed in religious garb.”<sup>150</sup> In the chapter on *topoi*, there was a section regarding “the summons to Islam.” However, since the participants in this battle are all Muslims, the only way that this type of *topoi* could be used would have been in an accusatory manner. In this case they could only use it to make accusations in regards to whether or not their opponents were following of the principles of Islam. It could not be used, however, to summon their opponents to Islam.

In discussing schemata, Noth referred to the term “pseudo-cause,” which is used in letters or anecdotes to insinuate motive or cause. As an example, Noth used the caliph ‘Uthmān’s letter to his governor that was intercepted by the Egyptians. This was a “pseudo-cause” because it provided an excuse for the actions of the Egyptians subsequent to intercepting the letter. According to Noth, a “pseudo-cause” could have come about

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 146.

due to “factional interest or partisan advantage,” or for other less obvious reasons.<sup>151</sup> Etiologies, another aspect of schemata, represent motivations or the basis for certain events that took place, most likely this would be in association with the name of a famous place.<sup>152</sup> In this case, the use of place-names is most significant, whereas, the event reported about is actually secondary.<sup>153</sup> The process, referred to as “systematization,” generally meant putting events into a sort of a schematic pattern after the fact, giving parallel accounts of events, or making single events fit into patterns that they would not ordinarily fit into, like *topoi*. An example of this type of schemata is the *fitna* situation where individuals from three different groups, Egyptians, Kūfans, Basrans, left their respective places to confront ‘Uthmān in Medina. Because the characteristics that described each of the groups were so similar, this is considered an example of systematization in the schemata category.<sup>154</sup> Another important example was related to the fact that in one narrative, ‘Alī, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, and Mu‘āwiya were all targeted for assassination; however, only the attempt on ‘Ali’s life was successful. The method of systemization was used to point to the construction of parallel events. Some of the observations that were made by the modern scholars regarding historiography may be considered in the analysis of the text that will be presented in Chapter Four.

As can be seen above, both Donner and Noth contributed greatly to the modern study of early Arabic historiography by explaining various approaches and methodologies that can be used in order to better understand early Arabic historiography.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 199.

Noth appears to have an incredibly skeptical view and gives an impression that the validity of the majority of the traditions should be questioned. Personally, I prefer Donner's approach because it does not discount the historical accounts in the way that Noth seems to.

As mentioned previously, the majority of the original written literature concerning the Battle of Ṣiffīn is not available today. Some of the earliest historians who may have written lost manuscripts about the battle and for whom works are attributed in surviving sources are: Ishāq ibn Bishr (d. 206/821), al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823), 'Umar b. Sa'd al-Asadī (d. maybe 180/796), Hishām b. Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Kalbī (d. 204/819), al-Madā'inī (d. 235/850), Ismā'īl ibn 'Isā al-Attār (d. 232/847), Ibn Dīzīl (d. 281/894), Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā (d. 210/825), Abu 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd Allāh Thakafī (d. 314/926), Abān b. Taghlib al-Bakrī (d. 141/758-9), Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī Shayba/Ibrāhīm b. 'Uthmān (d. 235/849), Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad Thakafī (d. 283/896), Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī (d. possibly in 314/926), Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā b. Dīnār al-Baṣrī (d. 291/904), Abu 'l-Ḳāsim al-Mundhir b. Muḥammad al-Ḳābūsī (d. start of the 4th century), 'Abd 'Azīz b. Yahyā al-Djalūdī al-Azdī al-Baṣrī (d. 332/944), and Nasr ibn Muzāḥim (d. 212/827).<sup>155</sup> *Waq'at Ṣiffīn* by Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī; however, is one of the texts that has survived.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> M. Lecker, "Siffīn", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>156</sup> This book has been analyzed: 'Ali Naibi Suwaid, "A Critical Study of the Poems on the Battle of Siffīn in the book "*Waq'at Ṣiffīn*" by Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī." (Masters Thesis, American University in Cairo 162, 1971).

In addition to those authors mentioned above, Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/774) and Sayf ibn ‘Umar (d. 180/796) can be added as early Arabic historians. A review of the narratives reveals that Al-Ṭabarī’s main source for the material relating to the Battle of Ṣiffīn, as previously mentioned, was Abū Mikhnaf, while Sayf ibn ‘Umar is the main source used to report the events relating to the murder of ‘Uthmān, the Battle of the Camel, and the immediate aftermath.<sup>157</sup> Both of these authors represent the intermediate stage of collections of traditions that the later authors utilized for their compilations. Both are also said to have presented their narratives from a tribal perspective.<sup>158</sup> Sayf ibn ‘Umar used the *hadīth* style of reporting, using *isnāds* as the chain of transmission. Dūrī indicated that his style was the “folkloric *qiṣāṣ* syle” and was comparable to the *ayyām* tales.<sup>159</sup> Sayf has been criticized by medieval Muslim historians who questioned the reliability of his historical reports. The *hadīth* scholars accused him of *zandaqa*, inserting heretical concepts into his accounts. Additionally, he was accused of making up reports, glorifying his tribal members, and having untraceable sources. Some modern scholars also questioned the validity of his reports for those reasons.<sup>160</sup> However, others including Ella Landau-Tasseron analyzed the work of Sayf ibn ‘Umar and concluded that his reporting is reliable (which in this thesis means that no deliberate alterations were made and does not refer to historical accuracy).<sup>161</sup> She objected to the standards by which Sayf had been judged which were for those who were reporters of *hadīth* as opposed to *akhbār* reporters. Since Sayf was reporting on *akhbār*, his reports should be accepted as valid

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<sup>157</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XV: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate*; al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*.

<sup>158</sup> Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, 44.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>160</sup> Fred McGraw Donner, "Sayf b. ‘Umar," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Ed., P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, Brill, 2010 Online.

<sup>161</sup> Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Sayf Ibn ‘Umar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship," *Der Islam (Berlin)* 67, no. 1 (01-01, 1990), 1.

reports of the events, and he should not be judged by the standards that had been set for a different genre. Sean W. Anthony also surveyed the reports by Sayf by using the recently discovered manuscript *Kitāb al-ridda wa al-futūh* to look at what he called “the origins and corruption of Christianity.”<sup>162</sup> According to his analysis, he also noted that the medieval scholars used the *isnād* rating system, which was utilized in *hadīth* verification, in order to discredit Sayf; whereas, modern scholars recently determined that this basis for the disapproval was flawed. Finally, John Nawas concluded that Sayf ibn ‘Umar’s reports were “reliable”, and that other scholars who had previously concluded that they were not, were incorrect.<sup>163</sup> G.H.A. Juynboll also analyzed transmissions from Sayf, which were reported by al-Ṭabarī. Juynboll evaluated the *isnād* of a report about Muslims taking booty from a fleeing Persian. There were four different versions with four separate *isnāds*. He concluded that Sayf may have designed some portions of the *isnāds* that he used; however, that was a common practice at the time in order to substantiate lulls in the chain of transmission. He also concluded that the events that were reported by Sayf were most likely factual and that his methods were like those of his peers.<sup>164</sup>

Abū Mikhnaf, on the other hand, has been considered by most as a reliable source of information. His grandfather, Mikhnaf b. Sulaym al-Azdī was a staunch supporter of ‘Alī, and an important member of the Azdī tribe, who fought in both the Battle of the

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<sup>162</sup> Sean W. Anthony, “The Composition of Sayf b. ‘Umar’s Account of King Paul and His Corruption of Ancient Christianity,” *Der Islam* 85, no. 1 (01/01, 2009): 164.

<sup>163</sup> Hugh Kennedy, *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, vol.15 (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, Inc., 2008), 217.

<sup>164</sup> G. H. A. Juynboll, *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Ḥadīth*. Collected Studies Series. Vol. CS550, (Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum 1996), 190.

Camel and the Battle of Şiffin on the side of Alī. He had been one of the Prophet’s Companions. Many of the traditions that Abū Mikhnaf reported originated from his own family members or fellow tribesmen.<sup>165</sup> He also reported accounts from other tribes, and tended to boast of tribal victories.<sup>166</sup> This is a fact that must be considered when analyzing the narrative of the battle. His pro-‘Alid/anti-Umayyad stance is clearly reflected in the narrative. Although Dūrī noted most of these factors in his analysis of Abū Mikhnaf’s historiography, his conclusion was, “nevertheless, his narratives are generally free of factional bias.”<sup>167</sup> He did, however, also indicate that Abū Mikhnaf’s style, like that of Sayf, was the “folkloric *qiṣāṣ* syle” used in the *ayyām* tales.<sup>168</sup> Ursula Sezgin has been the most widely quoted scholar who investigated the reporting of the battle that was done by Abū Mikhnaf, in her book titled, *Abū Mihnaf ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umaiyadischen Zeit*.<sup>169</sup> She analyzed the *isnāds* that were used by Abū Mikhnaf, who utilized the *hadīth* method of transmitting the events. She concluded that if the information that was reported was found to be invalid, the falsification came from the initial source, as opposed to any of the transmitters who were included in the associated *isnād*.<sup>170</sup> Juynboll also evaluated one instance of Abū Mikhnaf’s use of the *isnād*, also as reported by al-Ṭabarī. This instance concerns the Prophet’s illness. The *isnād* included one of Abū Mikhnaf’s uncles, but also went back as far as “*fuqahā’ ahl al*

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<sup>165</sup> Khalil Athamina, "Abū Mikhnaf." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*. Edited by: Gudrun Krämer, ; Denis Matringe, ; John Nawas and ; Everett Rowson. Brill, 2010 Online.

<sup>166</sup> Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, 44.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>169</sup> Ursula Sezgin, (*Abū Mihnaf ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umaiyadischen Zeit*) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971). My understanding of this book has been gleaned through book reviews, which are in the English language and by the use of Google Translate for certain sections of her book; therefore, I understand the main arguments that she has made in this work.

<sup>170</sup> Martin Hinds, Review of *Abū Mihnaf ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umaiyadischen Zeit* by Ursula Sezgin, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 22, no. 1: 126-127, 1977.

*Hijāz.*”<sup>171</sup> A comparison was made between the *isnād* reported by Abū Mikhnaf and that of others who reported the event. Juynboll’s analysis revealed that subsequent to Abū Mikhnaf’s reporting, “contemporaries and later *hadīth* collectors” edited these reports. He also indicated that Abū Mikhnaf or his uncle may have possibly altered the *isnād*. As mentioned above, this was a common practice to substantiate a lull in the chain of transmission. He also indicated that the report was most likely factual.<sup>172</sup> His overall conclusion was that Sayf and Abū Mikhnaf are comparable in *akhbār* and *hadīth* reporting. The difficulties associated with the historical transmissions that are now available are numerous. Although there are difficulties that must be taken into consideration, the overall indication is that they are relatively reliable sources, as no actual proof exists to show that they are not.

Abū Ja’far Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī (d. 301/923) was a phenomenal man in that he not only wrote the most exhaustive historical accounts known to the Islamic world up until his time, but, he also wrote *tafsīr* (Qur’ān commentary), and started a *madhhab* (school of law). It is his work as a historian that is currently of interest.<sup>173</sup> His famous historical narrative, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk*, begins with the creation of man and

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<sup>171</sup> Juynboll, *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Ḥadīth*. 186-7.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>173</sup> Important general studies on al-Ṭabarī and his methods can be found in the following sources: al-Ṭabarī and Franz Rosenthal. *General Introduction, and, From the Creation to the Flood*. SUNY series in near eastern studies. [*Tārīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk*]. Vol. 1. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). Hugh Kennedy, *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, vol.15 (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, Inc., 2008); Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press), 1994; <sup>173</sup> ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*. Modern Classics in Near Eastern Studies. [*Baḥṭh fī nash’at ‘ilm al-tārīkh ‘inda al-‘Arab*]. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Boaz Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Ṭabarī’s History* (Leiden, NLD: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004); Petersen, *‘Alī and Mu’āwiya in Early Arabic Tradition*, Jawad Ali, Mawarid Ta’rikh al-Ṭabarī, *Majallat Al-Majma’ Al-‘Ilmī Al-Iraqi*. (Vol 2; 1952): 16-56. Jawad Ali, Mawarid Ta’rikh al-Ṭabarī, *Majallat Al-Majma’ Al-‘Ilmī Al-Iraqi*. (Vol 3; 1954): 143-231.

ends with events that occurred during his lifetime.<sup>174</sup> At the age of 60, he had completed a draft of some portions of the work, which he shared in his lectures. The *isnāds* associated with some accounts indicate that he had begun his collection while still in his teens. This material came from various lectures that he attended and it is assumed that he kept notebooks containing the material.<sup>175</sup> In reporting on the Battle of Ṣiffīn, he presented a thorough narrative which, at times, included conflicting reports. In cases of conflicting reports, he occasionally indicated with a brief editorial narrative which of the reports were generally thought to be more reliable or accepted. The amount of *fitna* and Ṣiffīn material included in his compilation is quite extensive in comparison with other events that occurred during the same period, leading up to the murder of ‘Uṯmān and continuing through the death of ‘Alī. In fact, the majority of the materials relating to this time-period contain transmissions that relate to this theme in one way or another. The narratives are presented in the form of speeches, dialogues, and sometimes, poetry. There are other historians who reported on the battle; however, al-Ṭabarī’s historical reports have been chosen due to the fact that his collection of traditions concerning the battle are extensive and his reporting has been translated into several languages, including the English language. Because of my inability to completely understand his Arabic text, I will rely on the English translation for this study. It accounts for variant understandings of the original texts in the critical apparatus of the translation, thereby making it possible to determine the various meanings and/or the intentions of what is being reported. Modern scholars have weighed in with their opinions regarding al-Ṭabarī. Dūrī spoke highly of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādurī as well, by saying that both

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<sup>174</sup> Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, 71.

<sup>175</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 181.

“...provide divergent accounts on the same subject, and there is little in them and in the other historians that is partisan or prejudicial.”<sup>176</sup> He also said concerning them that their comparison of the “materials offered by earlier historians is of great assistance in providing a balanced picture of events.”<sup>177</sup> Tarif Khalidi also spoke highly of al-Ṭabarī, concerning how meticulous he was as a compiler of facts; but then he also indicated that al-Ṭabarī excluded from his reports things that he deemed offensive;<sup>178</sup> and, he also stated that the editorial comments that were made adhere to either the experts or view of the majority.<sup>179</sup> Reasons for this may have been that al-Ṭabarī was also a conservative and traditional collector of *hadīth* and a religious scholar and inclined to continue the *hadīth* model for his historical reporting. The omissions or exclusions may also indicate that he was a more critical compiler than others.

Al-Ṭabarī’s omissions have been a topic of much discussion among scholars. An example is the omission of the fact that ‘Alī’s brother, ‘Aqil, fought on Mu‘āwīya’s side in Battle of Ṣiffīn.<sup>180</sup> Correspondence between Abū Bakr’s son and Mu‘āwīya that were reported to have been exchanged was also omitted from al-Ṭabarī’s narratives.<sup>181</sup> The massacre of the Umayyad family by the Abbasids was another incident that was not reported by al-Ṭabarī.<sup>182</sup> Additionally, many of the poems that were included in Sayf ibn ‘Umar’s accounts were omitted from al-Ṭabarī’s compilation. This fact was discovered through comparing Ibn ‘Asākir’s compilation of Sayf’s work with that found in al-

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<sup>176</sup> Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, 150

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 80.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>180</sup> Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, xi.

<sup>181</sup> Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography*, 146-47.

<sup>182</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge, 41.

Ṭabarī's. The comparison also noticed differences between the long continuous nature of Sayf's narrative to the "short pieces" of the same narrative that al-Ṭabarī reported.<sup>183</sup> The episodic nature of al-Ṭabarī's battle narrative was also noted by Wellhausen who stated that "you cannot see the wood for the trees."<sup>184</sup> Wellhausen described al-Ṭabarī's attempts at unifying the reports in the compilation as a failure.<sup>185</sup> Shoshan also discussed al-Ṭabarī's omissions and placement of information. His opinion was that this showed al-Ṭabarī's own pro-Abbasīd bias.<sup>186</sup> Another major issue that has been discussed concerning al-Ṭabarī's compilation has to do with his choice of sources. Modern scholars have questioned al-Ṭabarī's reliance on Sayf ibn 'Umar's narratives, considering the controversies surrounding them. They wonder about the reasons for his choice of Sayf as opposed to other historians' narratives that were available to him at the time.<sup>187</sup>

Notwithstanding the issues that have been noted above, the overall indication is that the relative validity of the information presented in the narratives is not in question, especially when considering all of the historiographical elements that are associated with early Arabic historical narratives. However, these factors will all be taken into consideration in analyzing the narrative in Chapter Four.

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<sup>183</sup> Fred McGraw Donner, "Sayf b. 'Umar," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Ed., P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, Brill, 2010 Online.

<sup>184</sup> Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, 80.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography*, 144.

<sup>187</sup> Petersen, *Alī and Mu'āwiya in Early Arabic Tradition*, 150.

### **CHAPTER 3 – FORM AND FUNCTION OF SPEECHES AND DIALOGUES IN ṬABARĪ'S HISTORY**

In early Arabic historical texts, many of the historical accounts were told using dialogue between individuals or speeches by them. In the case of the Battle of Şifḫin, as reported by al-Ṭabarī, the entire battle is told using this method. There are very few instances of editorial intervention of the events that took place within the context of the reporting of the battle; therefore, the material that is reportedly quoted by the participants is extensive. In fact, some of the individual speeches and dialogues that were reported as attributed to the historical actors are quite lengthy.

The reasons for using speeches and dialogues to present a historical account can vary. Advancing the narrative or telling the story is their primary purpose. It could also be used out of historiographical convention, as a method of establishing the character/motivation of the individual, enlivening the narrative, or for entertainment purposes. Presenting the material in this way also was an effective and entertaining way to sway public opinion. It is a format that also allows subtle bias, even if unintentionally. This method of presentation allows moral and religious values or practical guidance and norms to be inserted into the narratives, often on the authority of important historical figures, in order to influence the readers or the hearers of the historical accounts. The Battle of Şifḫin, as reported by al-Ṭabarī for example, included some extremely long sermons that could have this type of an effect on the audience. This method had a tendency to captivate the audience, like a play or a movie would.

There is difficulty regarding the use of speeches in Arabic history. The original problems previously referred to regarding the fact that the historical reports were orally transmitted for years before ever being written down are significant in themselves. The accounts were passed down by the storytellers (both professional and amateur) from generation to generation before ever being written down. In addition, there is no solid way to validate the authenticity of the information that was eventually written down. Concerning the dialogue associated with the Battle of Şiffin, it is inconceivable to think that there was any specific recording of the dialogue verbatim that was taking place during the actual battle. And, obviously, no devices existed at the time to facilitate such a process. The actual verification of such material is virtually impossible. For this reason, many of the modern scholars (and some who are not modern scholars) do not consider the specific details of the material, such as the dialogue and speeches presented in Şiffin, as truthful accounts as they currently appear in historical annals. They do, however, seem to consider the reports as a guide or basis for determining the overall validity of events themselves.

Speeches were not only used in early Arabic historiography, but also in other pre-modern historical traditions. An example is Shakespeare's famous pre-battle speech in his work, *Henry V*. Another historian who was known for the process of using dialogue and speeches is Thucydides (460BC-395 BC). He was a classical Greek historian who included speeches and dialogues in his famous book, *History of the Peloponnesian*

War.<sup>188</sup> After his initial introduction, he kept himself completely out of his historical narrative. Although he was not the first Greek historian to utilize speeches and dialogues (Homer and Herodotus had used the form before him), his narrative is considered the *locus classicus*. His use of speeches and dialogues, however, was somewhat different than that of al-Ṭabarī. First, at the beginning of his historical account he gives the reader the indication that the speeches are only his way of presenting a summary of the events that took place, although he did not witness all of the dialogue himself. He indicates that the speeches represented an example of what could have been said by the participants; therefore, his use of dialogues and speeches differs significantly from the narratives of al-Ṭabarī, in that Thucydides admits that they emanated directly from him. The rhetorical/narrative use of speeches and dialogues, however, is similar in the texts of both Thucydides and al-Ṭabarī. Thucydides described his endeavor by saying:

“Insofar as these facts involve what the various participants said both before and during the actual conflict, recalling the exact words was difficult for me regarding speeches I heard myself and for my informants about speeches made elsewhere; in the way I thought each would have said what was especially required in the given situation, I have stated accordingly, with the closest possible fidelity on my part to the overall sense of what was actually said. . . . . Yet if they are judged useful by any who wish to look at the plain truth about both past events and those that at some future time, in accordance with human nature, will recur in similar or comparable ways, that will suffice. It is a possession for all time, not a competition piece to be heard for the moment that has been composed.”<sup>189</sup>

The speeches and dialogues that Thucydides presented were different in some respects than those of al-Ṭabarī. Although they were also rhetorical in nature, the

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<sup>188</sup> Thucydides, trans. Steven Lattimore, *The Peloponnesian War [History of the Peloponnesian War]*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998,

<sup>189</sup> Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 13-14.

dialogue flowed in the direction the war was taking. However, the events affected a greater number of political alliances and occurred over a longer time span. Although there may have been social or political motivations intended by the presentation of the events of this war, the presentation was made in such a way that those types of suggestions would be quite subtle. In al-Ṭabarī's record, the propaganda element seems to be more pronounced and direct. Lastly, Thucydides' presentation was much different than that of al-Ṭabarī's, in that his account had a chronological flow that was not present in al-Ṭabarī's work. Al-Ṭabarī's narratives were compilations of reports, therefore, sometimes the flow was interrupted and this sometimes made the dating of events difficult. Also, because the dates that were given in some of the reports that he used conflicted with other reports of the same events that were used, there was no chronological flow in his work. To indicate the style that Thucydides used in writing speeches into his narrative, an example of a speech that appears in his narrative is as follows:

“Give over to us, the Lacedaemonians, your city and houses, and indicate the boundaries of your land and the number of your trees and whatever else can be numbered. You yourselves depart for any place you wish for as long as there is war; when it is over, we will give back to you whatever we have received. Until that time, we will hold it in trust, working the land and bringing you whatever revenue should be sufficient for you.”<sup>190</sup>

In his history, al-Ṭabarī used speeches and dialogues in reporting many events including the Battle of the Camel. The reports on the Battle of the Camel were also done through the use of speeches and dialogues, as were many of the early Arabic historical

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 111.

narratives that were handed down. Although this narrative was compiled by al-Ṭabarī, the major source that he used for the compilation of this event was predominately reports from Sayf b. ‘Umar. On the other hand, the majority of the reports of the Battle of Ṣiffīn have Abū Mikhnaf as the primary source. Examples of the speeches and dialogues that are included in the narrative regarding the Battle of the Camel appear below. ‘Alī left Medina to go to Basra to confront ‘Ā’isha, Ṭalḥa, and al-Zubayr. He stopped at Kūfa and the report is presented as follows:

“When the Basran delegations had come to the Kūfans and al-Qa‘qā‘ had returned from the Mother of the Faithful and Ṭalḥa, and al-Zubayr with a similar view. ‘Alī gathered the people. He then stood on some sacks, praised Almighty and Glorious Allāh, and magnified Him and prayed for His blessing on the Prophet. He then mentioned the Jāhiliyyah and its misery and Islam and its happiness, and Allāh’s grace toward the community in its unity [recognizing] the first caliph after the Messenger of Allāh and the two who came next. ‘Then there occurred this evil event brought upon this community by groups intent only on this world. They were jealous of those Allāh had given it to on account of virtue and wanted to make a complete turnaround. ‘But Allāh attains His purpose’ and fulfills His will! Tomorrow, then, I’m setting off [toward Basrah], so all of you do likewise! All of you, that is, except anyone who helped the cause against ‘Uthmān in any way at all; they will not set off tomorrow. Let the fools rely on themselves and do without me!’”<sup>191</sup>

Another example from the same narrative follows:

“On the day of the Camel seventy from Quraysh took hold of the nose rein, and each one was killed as he held it. Al-Ashtar attacked so ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr intercepted him, and they exchanged blows. Al-Ashtar struck him down and made for him, but ‘Abdallāh leaped on him grabbed him round the chest, and fell down with him to the ground, saying, ‘Kill me and Mālik!’ The people did not know him as Mālik. Had he said, ‘and al-Ashtar,’ and had a million lives not one of them would have been spared.

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<sup>191</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVI: The Community Divided*, 103-4.

He carried on, struggling to get out of ‘Abdallāh’s grip until he managed to escape.”<sup>192</sup>

As mentioned previously, many of the events in the narrative of the Battle of the Camel are presented through the use of poetry. This poetry is put in the mouths of the participants in the same manner as speeches and dialogues. The following example shows how dialogue is mixed with poetry in al-Ṭabarī’s narrative:

“We sent Muslim b. ‘Abdallāh to call our brothers to stop, but they all shot [their arrows] at him and killed him, as the center of the army did to Ka’b. So *he* was the first to be killed in front of the Commander of the Faithful and ‘Ā’ishah. The mother of Muslim said the following verses morning him:

Oh Allāh! Muslim went to them,  
Submitting to death when he called them  
To the book of Allāh without fearing them.  
They smeared him with blood when he went to them,  
And their mother was standing, looking on,  
not restraining them as they plotted folly together.”<sup>193</sup>

As mentioned, the speech and dialogues that are presented above were included in al-Ṭabarī’s compilation, the source of these reports came through Sayf ibn ‘Umar; whereas those transmissions that relate to the Battle of Ṣiffīn stem from Abū Mikhnaf, a different source. In comparison, it is clear that Sayf b. ‘Umar’s style of writing is significantly different from that of Abū Mikhnaf. Both narratives have in common the usage of significant amount of dialogue and speeches, however, those that appear in the narrative regarding the Battle of the Camel are not consistently as long as those that

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 152.

appear in the Battle of Şifḫīn narrative. Another difference between the texts is in the narration of details, such as the fact that in the first example ‘Alī is said to have stood on some sacks to address his audience or the fact that a significant portion of what his speech was summarized by narration before his words were actually presented as a direct quote. Another difference that can be noted is that there is more actual narration of the events and descriptive detail in Sayf b. ‘Umar’s presentation. The second example is an instance that proves this point. It says, for example, that ‘Abdallāh struck down al-Ashtar and made for him. It also indicates the fact that the people did not know al-Ashtar by the name of Mālik. Furthermore, as the third example shows, the transmissions that are reported in the Battle of the Camel include more poetry and/or Quranic verses than the narratives included in those of the Battle of Şifḫīn. Much of the poetry that is presented simply gives details or a character’s perspective about a fact or event that just occurred in the narrative. As will be seen in the analysis in Chapter Four, the Battle of Şifḫīn narrative uses more of a summary approach and does not contain a significant amount of detailed descriptions, as presented in these examples. It is more straightforward in presenting what was reported to have been said by the participants. This may be due to the fact that al-Ṭabarī’s main source is Abū Mikhnaf. Also seen in Chapter Four is Abū Mikhnaf’s use of eschatology, presented in the form of various prophecies, which al-Ṭabarī chose to include in his narrative of the battle.

The time period of the original sources, between the late seventh to early ninth centuries, as well as various aspects of the style of writing of both the Battle of Şifḫīn and the Battle of the Camel narratives, as reported in al-Ṭabarī’s compilation, are similar. The

overall effect of the narratives on the readers of that time would also probably have been the same, given the circumstances that existed politically and religiously at that time. Furthermore, the motivations of the writers, Sayf b. ‘Umar, Abū Mikhnaf, and their sources, would also have been similar considering the fact that they originated from the same general area, during the space of time, and were intended for the same general audience. It should be noted that this style was utilized as well in the presentation of *hadīth* traditions.

Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī, in his narrative detailing the events regarding the Battle of Ṣiffīn, predominately used poetry but also used speeches and dialogue in *Waq‘at Ṣiffīn*. A study of the poetry in this text revealed that these poems were predominately made up of much of the same form and content of dialogue and speeches as those that were reported by al-Ṭabarī.<sup>194</sup> Therefore, although the text is called poetry, it is put in the mouths of the participants to tell the story in the same manner as speeches and dialogues are used in other narratives. In his thesis analysis of the book, ‘Ali Naibi Suwaid presented some of the poems that were reported. For a comparison with the speeches, dialogues, and poems that were presented previously, the following is one example of a poem that is attributed to ‘Ammār b. Yāsir during the Battle of Ṣiffīn:

1. Nay! By God of the House (al-Ka’abah) I  
continue to come forward  
Until I die or realize my hope.
2. I am with truth defending ‘Alī,  
Loyal in-law of the faithful Prophet.
3. We will kill his enemies with the help of the

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<sup>194</sup> ‘Ali Naibi Suwaid, “A Critical Study of the Poems on the Battle of Siffin in the book *“Waq‘at Ṣiffīn”* by Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī.” (Masters Thesis, American University in Cairo, 1971),162.

- Most High.  
And we will cut the heels (of our enemies)  
with our sharp swords.
4. God will help us against him who wishes to  
cheat us.  
And who is doing his best for that purpose  
relentlessly.<sup>195</sup>

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib’s sermons, letters, and speeches were also compiled in a book entitled *Nahjul-Balagha* (Peak of Eloquence).<sup>196</sup> Al-Ṭabarī and Abū Mikhnaf are two of the many sources that were used in the compilation. In my review of the sermons and the respective sources, it was determined that many of the sermons used al-Ṭabarī as a source. Three of the sermons cited Abū Mikhnaf as their source; however, one of those sermons indicated that he was the source through al-Ṭabarī. The other two sermons were attributed to Abū Mikhnaf through a different channel. A basic content analysis was done between these two sermons (#53 and #147) and some of those reported for the Battle of Ṣiffīn.<sup>197</sup>

Sermon 53 is a short sermon that referenced the struggle that ‘Alī faced as he considered fighting his enemies; whereas, Sermon 147 told of Ṭalḥa, and az-Zubayr and their desire for the caliphate.

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<sup>195</sup> ‘Ali Naibi Suwaid, “A Critical Study of the Poems on the Battle of Siffīn, 19.

<sup>196</sup> Sharīf al-Raḍdī, Muḥammad ibn al-Husayn, and Mohammad Askari Jafery. *Nahjul Balagha: Peak of Eloquence: Sermons, Letters, and Sayings of Imam’Alī ibn Abū Talib*. Ed. Yasin T. al-Jibouri. Elmhurst, New York : Tahrike Tarsile Quran, Inc., 2009.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 406; Ibid., 538.

Sermon #53:

“They leaped upon me as the camels leap upon each other on their arrival for drinking water, having been let loose after unfastening of their four legs till I thought they would either kill me or kill one another in front of me. I thought over this matter in and out to the extent that it prevented me from sleeping. But I found no way except to fight them or else to reject whatever has been brought by Muḥammad (ص). I found that to face war was easier for me than to face the retribution and the hardships of this world were easier than the hardships of the next world.”<sup>198</sup>

Sermon #147:

“Both of these men, Ṭalḥa, and az-Zubayr) wish the Caliphate for himself and is drawing towards himself as against the other fellow. They do not employ any connection for getting access to Allāh nor proceed towards Him through any means. Both of them hear malice against the other. Shortly his veil over it will be uncovered. But Allāh, if they achieve what they aim at, one of them will kill the other and one will finish the other. The rebellious party has stood up. Where are the seekers of virtue; for the paths have already been determined and they have been given the news. For every misguidance there is a cause and for every break of pledge there is a misrepresentation. By Allāh, I shall not be like him who listens to the voice of mourning, hears the man who brings news of death and also visits the mourner yet does not take lesson.”<sup>199</sup>

Additionally, Sermon 147 also alluded to ‘Alī’s spiritual superiority. No significant differences were found between these sermons and the speeches that were presented in al-Ṭabarī’s reports in Battle of Ṣiffīn. Those sermons that used al-Ṭabarī as a source were not considered because, with the exception of possible translation differences, they would be the same.

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 406.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 538.

Other authors, such as al-Wāqidī, used the speech and dialogue format also for the same reasons mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>200</sup> This is an additional proof that the presentation of historical accounts in the form of dialogue and speeches was a common method used in early Arabic historiography; the Battle of Ṣiffīn serves as the *locus classicus* for this methodology.

There seem to be no previous studies focused on the speeches and dialogues at the Battle of Ṣiffīn in al-Ṭabarī's *History*. The thesis by Ali Naibi Suwaid, which analyzed the book, *Waq'at Ṣiffīn* by Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī, is the main reference that reviews any dialogue relating to the battle itself; and the primary focus of the thesis is poetry. There is, however, a small section in Noth's book, which discussed "speeches" in general.<sup>201</sup> Noth argues of speeches that, "...we must view them as fictions from beginning to end..."<sup>202</sup>

Noth analyzed different types of speeches that are found in early Arabic historical narratives like those of caliphs to their departing armies, noting the types of instructions or prohibitions that they gave to them in general. Since the caliph in the case of this particular battle accompanied the troops, this category of speech analysis does not fit the current circumstances. Noth indicated other types of speeches that caliphs gave that may help in the analysis, for example, the *wasīya* (instructions in morality, religion or law), or the *khutba* (similar to a sermon). The *khutba* was given three different types. The first

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<sup>200</sup> Al-Wāqidī's work, *Maghāzī* is referenced by Noth for examples of various types of speeches, in addition to Abū Yūsuf and Abū 'Ubayd. Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, see footnotes 87-96.

<sup>201</sup> Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 87.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

type was like a sermon, except that Noth described it as “religious topoi strung together....”<sup>203</sup> Most of this type of *khutba* included praising Allāh and admonishing the hearers. The second type, he indicated was specifically given at the time a caliph accepted the initial office of the caliphate. The third type, according to Noth, was like an oration that gave “a specifically Islamic link between religious and moral formulae and trains of thought on the one hand and very concrete practical instructions on the other.”<sup>204</sup> Noth points to this type of *khutba* as having been used in *Waq‘at Šiffīn* by Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī. He indicated that the introductions of the speeches where ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya justified their position regarding the battle were examples of this type of speech. Additionally, he pointed out that the book “abounds with such programmatic speeches.”<sup>205</sup> Another type of speech that Noth described refers to army leaders’ or tribal chiefs’ encouragement of their soldiers. These types of speeches, although fictitious according to Noth, gave an indication of the situations or thoughts that existed at the time, an opinion that he seemed to have throughout his analysis of early Arabic historical literature as a whole. He also pointed to the religious connotations that were included in such speeches. This type of speech could also have included elements of Arab superiority or the search for booty.<sup>206</sup> His analysis of speeches included some which consisted of legal elements or which were used to make pronouncements.<sup>207</sup> Noth also argued that the traditions relating to *fitna* tended to be indicative of the legitimacy of the caliph, while

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 91-93.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 94.

those relating to *futūh* related to aspects of Islam. Both types of traditions, however, centered on issues revolving around the “theory of state.”<sup>208</sup>

In addition to speeches, Noth analyzed the transmission of documents and letters. Original copies of the documents, mostly treaties, no longer exist; however, their texts appear in some of the various compilations that he investigated. Upon comparing these documents he concluded that although most of the important details that the documents contained were the same, there were instances where minor differences were noted; which is an indication that the documents could be traced back to an original source. The differences he noted stemmed from the transmission process which would have happened somewhere along the path from the original source to the compilation.<sup>209</sup> In his review of letters, however, his analysis concluded that many of them did not correspond with known facts and therefore, did not have veracity.<sup>210</sup> Some of the analytical tools that Noth used to analyze early Arabic literature may be utilized in the examination of the *Ṣifḥīn* narrative; however, the majority of his conclusions will not assist because his perspective is not rhetorical. There were reasons why these reports were passed down as they were. Historical accounts of this nature served multiple purposes, entertainment being one, but surely not the primary reason that it was done in this way. Other reasons may have been didactic, moral, or religious guidance and norms. As mentioned before, the primary purpose was to advance the narrative and tell the story or give the historical account to the audience. A secondary goal had to do with influencing the opinions of the readers or the hearers of the historical accounts. The reasons for presenting the narrative

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 84-86.

in this way for influential purposes could range from purely political, to purely sectarian, to purely social or some combination of the three. The major periods of time that are of concern relate to firstly, the time of the first reports that appeared about the battle; secondly, the various writings that occurred after the transmissions changed from oral to written form, and thirdly, the time of the actual compilation of the various reports, which began during the ninth century. The political, social, and sectarian situations that were in effect at each of those times would have a bearing on the way that the information was presented once it was written down.

The types of speeches and dialogues that will be analyzed fall into any one of two broad categories: Narrative Function or Tendentious Texts. The Narrative Function category includes instances where the speaker narrates events; explains why something happened or why someone did something; or simply describes something in a memorable, entertaining, or colorful way. The Tendentious Texts category may be distinguished by the fact that they establish the character of the participant; explain actions taken; give an exegesis of prophecy or religious texts; or explain away uncomfortable facts. There are also tendentious texts that are not related specifically to the battle, such as giving uplifting moral, religious, or practical advice. The Narrative Function category and examples of some of the speeches that relate primarily to this category will be analyzed first. The Tendentious Texts category will then begin by reviewing those speeches and dialogues which were previously included in the Narrative Function category but could also be considered as tendentious in nature. Afterwards, those speeches and dialogues that are deemed to represent a mostly tendentious nature,

rather than serving as mostly a narrative function will follow. An example of the poetry that is included in the narrative will also be given. The dialogues and speeches that will be analyzed will predominately refer to the major characters that were introduced in Chapter Two, but could also include some minor individuals if the dialogue could be used to promote the thesis argument.

Al-Ṭabarī's narrative of the Battle of Ṣiffīn is presented in such a way as to bring life to the story and the characters. It has a similar effect to that of watching a play, or reading an exciting adventure story. The speeches and dialogues are presented to convey what the sentiments of the battle participants would have been. They could also have the effect of invoking feelings or opinions in those who would read or hear the narrative; therefore, the types of speeches and dialogues that are included vary significantly and cover a wide range of circumstances. The list that follows will give an overview of the main topics and/or contents of the speeches and dialogues that appear in the narrative. Speeches and dialogues typically show giving or seeking advice or encouragement; making accusations, alliances, suggestions, or criticisms; justifying their actions or those of others; boasting; bribing; lamenting loss of life; giving chastisements or rebukes; negotiating or arbitrating; or placing blame. There are also speeches and dialogues that issue specific challenges, give orders, commands, warnings or threats; give or receive suggestions, instructions, encouragement, praise, curses, or insults. Furthermore, there are those that have a more religious nature such as the exaltation of God; justification from God (speaker gives God or God's will as justification for an action); prayer, praise, or prophecies; threats or warnings from God; or calls to (honor) the Book of God. This

categorization is general, rather than comprehensive. It is being given only as an introduction to show the contents of the dialogues and speeches that can be expected when reading the examples that will appear in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Four, the analysis will attempt to determine the reasons that the dialogues and speeches that will be reviewed were presented as such; as well as what the motivating factors were, and the expected results of such presentation. The analysis will not attempt to review every speech or conversation that was presented; however, a reasonable sample will be assessed. Once the individual speeches or dialogues are examined, a conclusion will be reached that will explain the overall goals of the writer in making the presentation in such a way, as well as how the speeches and dialogues were to function in advancing the narrative and the effectiveness of the use of such a methodology.

## **CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS OF DIALOGUES AND SPEECHES:**

Chapter Three discussed the forms and function of speeches and dialogues; whereas, this chapter will focus on the specific analysis of some of the individual speeches and dialogues that appear in al-Ṭabarī's presentation of the Battle of Ṣiffin and the functions they fulfill in the text. The analysis will also include an example of ways in which poetry was used in order to advance the narrative. This will be performed for the sake of familiarizing the reader with another type of content that appears in the narrative. As indicated in Chapter Three, a wide variety of different types of speeches and dialogues, containing a gambit of concepts and topics appear in the narrative. Analyzing them can help in formulating an explanation as to why the battle's history was presented in such a way, as well as the intended outcome of using such a format.

As also discussed previously in Chapter Three, the speeches and dialogues used in the battle narrative fulfill one of two main functions which I place into two broad categories, Narrative Function and Tendentious Function Texts. The first major category that will be reviewed consists of those texts that have a Narrative Function. Since advancing the narrative is the primary function of the speeches and dialogues, this category is tantamount to understanding not only how the narrative was advanced, but also the reasons for the actions or behaviors which the characters ascribe to themselves or others. For example, a speech or instance of dialogue in this category may simply narrate the event that took place in an entertaining or meaningful way, explain why something happened, or explain why someone did or did not do something for the specific purpose

of advancing the narrative. An analysis of the speeches and dialogues relating to the Narrative Function will be given with an example of the type of speech or section of dialogue that is considered to be related to a particular sub-category.

As discussed in Chapter Two, by the time of al-Ṭabarī's compilation, sectarian rifts had developed which lead to prejudice and bias permeating the texts on the Civil War. The second major category, therefore, consists of Tendentious Texts. There are several facets of these types of speeches and dialogues; therefore, several sub-categories exist that relate to this broad category. These texts function to sway the opinion of the audience and create some sort of bias. In the analysis of this type of speech or dialogue, the objective will be noted in most cases. The first sub-category of this type is that of assigning motivation. This could be in the form of explaining the actions that were taken or establishing the character of an individual or group. The character traits that may be established that include, for example, instances of bravery or cowardice; justice or injustice; or piety or impiety. Other sub-categories of tendentious texts include instances where a tribal bias or a bias relating to a particular individual is written into the narrative; flattering or prejudicial language is used to describe actions or characters; communication of a religious nature, or exegesis of prophecy or religious texts are inserted; or, uncomfortable facts or situations that do not appear reasonable are explained. Finally, there are Tendentious Texts that appear in the narrative which are not specifically related to the battle, such as practical advice, or uplifting moral or religious comments. The section of Tendentious Texts will follow that of Narrative Function. Each sub-category that relates to this category will then be analyzed and followed by the speeches and

dialogues that are directly associated with that sub-category. It should be noted; however, that some of the speeches and dialogues are lengthy. And some of them could have elements relating either to both of the categories or possibly more than one sub-category. In these cases there will be a subsequent reference to the footnote number of the previously discussed section of the narrative.

The broad category of Narrative Function is important because the historical accounts are put forth in a manner that tells the story of what occurred as the event unfolded. In this text, speeches and dialogues fulfill this function. In any historical narrative, there will be an element of this process. In this particular narrative; however, the conversations and speeches portray the account. There are a series of speeches and dialogues that appear in the narrative that set the stage for the events that will occur, or to give the reader an idea of what has occurred beforehand. Although these speeches and dialogues do narrate the events, there may also be a tendentious aspect of what is categorized here. Of course, in this case, the speech or dialogue will be referred to again in a subsequent section; however, examples will first be presented here in the Narrative Function category.

### **Speeches and Dialogues that Primarily Fulfill a Narrative Function:**

The following dialogue is placed at the beginning of the narrative. This placement is important in order to set the stage and to show ‘Amr as having power with regard to Mu‘āwiya’s future decisions and actions (what will occur). When Mu‘āwiya

asked ‘Amr for his advice, upon finding out about ‘Alī’s journey toward him, ‘Amr said, “Since you have heard that ‘Alī is on his way, set out yourself and be sure to confront him with your views and your strategies.”<sup>211</sup>

Another of the first speeches that occur in the narrative shows ‘Amr stirring up the Syrian army before the battle. This speech explains why the Syrian troops will fight and it also shows how ‘Amr is motivating them and encouraging them to do so. Additionally, it presents his version of what had occurred previously by assigning blame to ‘Alī for spilling blood at the Battle of the Camel and for showing solidarity with the murderers of the Caliph. Furthermore, it gives the audience the opposing side’s perspective concerning the battle. The intention is to advance the narrative, to show reasons for the hostility and willingness to fight with ‘Alī, and to justify the actions that will occur by the Syrian army. A sense of direction for the narrative is taking shape because this is one of the first speeches that appear in the narrative. ‘Amr said:

“The men of Iraq have split among themselves, sapped their own strength, and blunted their cutting edge. Moreover, the Basrans are opposed to ‘Alī, who has done them harm and dealt death to them. Their leaders and those of the Kūfans wiped each other out at the Battle of the Camel, and ‘Alī has set out with only a band few in number, among whom are those who killed your caliph. Fear God, lest you forfeit your right to claim vengeance and allow the blood of ‘Uthmān to go unavenged.”<sup>212</sup>

A second example of a speech of this nature that was made during the battle, which clearly justifies why they were fighting was given to Mu‘āwiya’s

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<sup>211</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, 2.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

troops by the former caliph's ('Umar b. al- Khaṭṭāb) son, 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Umar who said, "Men of Syria! This clan of the men of Iraq are the killers of "'Uṭhmān b. 'Affān (may God be pleased with him) and the supporters (*ansār*) of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. If you defeat this tribe, you will attain your revenge for "'Uṭhmān, and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the men of Iraq will be destroyed."<sup>213</sup>

Many of the Narrative Function speeches or dialogues also describe previous actions of the participants to better enlighten the reader as to the current situation that exists at the time of the speech or dialogue. For this reason, an explanation of the justification of or motivation for past actions may be given. 'Alī's motivation for his past and future actions are spelled out clearly in a speech that was given when Mu'āwiya sent men to confront him and ask that he turn the killers of 'Uṭhmān and relinquish his authority. He responded to the men by saying:

"God sent Muḥammad with the truth and through him provided deliverance from error, salvation from destruction and the overcoming of division. Then God took him to Himself after he had carried out his mission. The people appointed Abū Bakr as caliph, and Abū Bakr appointed 'Umar after him, and those two conducted themselves well and led the community with justice. We resented their ruling over us, the family of the Messenger of God, but we excused them for that. Then 'Uṭhmān ruled and did things that the people found reprehensible, so that they came to him and killed him. Afterward they came to me, who was keeping out of their concerns, and they asked me to accept the oath of allegiance. I refused, but they insisted and said that the community would never find anyone acceptable but me and that, if I did not, they were afraid that division would result. So I accepted the oath of allegiance from them. But when I was surprised to find the dissension of two of those who had given me the oath of allegiance [Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr] and the opposition of Mu'āwiya, to whom God had given neither precedence in accepting the

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 60.

religion nor forebears of good character in Islam. He is one of those who were set free (*talīq*) by the Prophet, and the son of one of them, a member of those “parties” that persisted in enmity to God, His Prophet, and the Muslims, both he and his father, until they reluctantly entered Islam. But it is a surprise that you take part in his opposition and are led by him, abandoning the family of your Prophet, against which you must not show discord or opposition nor place any one on the same level. I call you to the Book of God, the precedent (*sunnah*) of His Prophet, the suppression of what is false, putting into practice the signs of the religion. That is what I have to say, and I ask God’s pardon for me and for you and for every Believer, male and female and every Muslim, male and female.”<sup>214</sup>

In the speech above, it should be noticed that ‘Alī justified his position (both his current position as well as his previous position in the Battle of the Camel) by using the people who appointed him, God, and his relation to the Prophet as a means for that justification.

Some of the dialogue describes why someone did something or why something will happen later in the narrative. The participants may suggest ideas or theories that depict the actions of the participant, the person he is speaking on behalf of, or the person he is speaking with. The series of dialogues that follows is an example. ‘Alī sent his representatives, Sa’īd b. Qays al-Hamdānī, Bashīr b. ‘Amr b. Mihsan al-Ansārī, and Shabath b. Ri’bī al-Tamīmī to speak to Mu‘āwiya. ‘Alī said, “Go to this man and summon him to God, to obedience, and to unity.”<sup>215</sup> “‘Alī replied, ‘Go to him and argue with him and find out his opinion.’”<sup>216</sup> At this point, Shabath asked, “Oh Commander of the Faithful, will you not tempt him with an offer of an office of authority and a position

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 25-6.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 16.

in which he will have influence with you if he gives you the oath of allegiance?”<sup>217</sup> The men went as directed and began disputing with Mu‘āwiya. When Sa’īd was about to speak to Mu‘āwiya, Shabath interrupted and said:

“Mu‘āwiya, I understood your reply to Ibn Mihsan, and, by God, we are not unaware of what you intend and seek. The only way you could find to misguide the people, pervert their desires, and get from them their obedience was by saying ‘Your Imam was killed unjustly, and we seek revenge for his blood!’ Some stupid riffraff responded to it, but we know that you delayed in giving ‘Uthmān help and that you desired his killing so that you might obtain this position that you now seek. There is many a one who desires something and seeks it, but God prevents it by His power, and sometimes he who desires a thing is granted his wish or even more than it. But by God, there would be no good for you in either of the cases. If you fail to attain what you hope for, then you will be the most wretched of the Arabs as a result, while, if you achieve what you desire, you will have achieved it only by deserving the flames of hell from your Lord. Fear God, oh Mu‘āwiya. Leave off what you are about, and do not contest authority with its rightful possessor.”<sup>218</sup>

This speech was used to give the audience background information about Mu‘āwiya’s inactivity regarding ‘Uthmān’s murder. It also suggests a theory that depicts Mu‘āwiya’s actions. This theory will resonate throughout the narrative. Mu‘āwiya’s response that follows does nothing to dispel the accusation that was made against him. This further advances the narrative, subtly confirming the accusation. After praising God, Mu‘āwiya said:

“The first thing in which I recognized your stupidity and low level of maturity was your interrupting the speech of this respected and high-born man, who is the leader of his people [i.e., Sa’īd b. Qays]. Then afterward you meddled with something about which you know nothing. You have lied and been base, you rude and uncouth Bedouin, in everything you have

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

referred to and described. Get out of my presence, all of you! Between you and me there is nothing but the sword”.<sup>219</sup>

In another series of dialogue of the same caliber, again a delegation was sent by ‘Alī to reason with Mu‘āwiya. The speech gives direction to the narrative. After Mu‘āwiya accused the delegation of threatening him, Yazīd b. Qays spoke to Mu‘āwiya by saying:

“We came merely to convey to you the message we have been sent with and to take back whatever we hear from you. Nevertheless, we will not refrain from offering you sound advice or from telling you what we think provides a sure argument for us against you and by means of which you will return to unity and community. Our master is he whose excellence you and the Muslims have recognized and I think it is obvious to you that the people of religion and merit will not put anyone on a level with ‘Alī or waiver in a choice between you. Fear God, Mu‘āwiya, and do not oppose ‘Alī, for we have never seen anyone more God-fearing in his deeds, more abstemious in the things of this world, or more complete in all the good qualities than he.”<sup>220</sup>

In Mu‘āwiya’s response, that follows, he is defiant, accusatory, and critical. It clearly shows the reasons for the actions that he will take in that it shows his refusal to acknowledge ‘Alī, as well as his right to exact vengeance on ‘Uthmān’s murderers.

Mu‘āwiya responded:

“You have summoned us to obedience and unity. As for the unity to which you have called us, we have it among ourselves, but as for obedience to your lord, we will not conceive of it, for he has killed our caliph and shattered our unity, and he has given shelter to those from whom we seek vengeance and those who killed ‘Uthmān. Your master claims that he did not kill him, and we will not argue with him about that,

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

but have you not seen those who killed our master and do you not know that they are the companions of your master? Let him then deliver them up to us and let us kill them in revenge for ‘Uthmān, and then we will respond to your call for obedience and honor.”<sup>221</sup>

Once Al-Ṭabarī moves to narrating the events of the battle itself, speeches and dialogues are used to tell the story. The events of the battle are also narrated through the voices of the main participants. Speeches and dialogues were used to describe the events or to show the position of a particular side. The fact that a battle occurred had to be documented, as did some of the particulars. For example, ‘Alī or some other commander would issue instructions or commands. The commands are many times of an instructional nature, but also may include encouragement for the army to defeat the enemy. Of course, this type of speech is present throughout the narrative due to its battle nature. Indeed, this type of theme is categorized by Noth as “short prohibitions” in his discussion about speeches. This category of speeches, he indicated, was usually given by a caliph just before his army was to leave for battle.<sup>222</sup>

One such transmission is stated thusly, “On every occasion on which we confronted an enemy, ‘Alī would command us in these words:”

“Do not fight them unless they attack you first. You, praise be to God, have a good cause and holding back from fighting them until they attack will strengthen it. If you fight them, and defeat them, do not kill the fugitives, do not finish off the wounded, do not uncover their nakedness, and do not mutilate their slain. If you reach their abodes, do not tear aside a curtain, enter a dwelling without permission or seize any of their property aside from what you find in the army camp. Do not do harm

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>222</sup> Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 87

against any woman, even if they utter abuse against your honor and vilify your leaders and righteous men, for women are weak of body and soul.”<sup>223</sup>

One example that tends to advance the narrative and show that the battle is taking place is a dialogue that relates to an alliance to fight that was made between ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ and one of his soldiers, Wardān. It also advances the narrative in a colorful way and is quite interesting because it shows the perspective of Mu‘āwiya’s side of the conflict. This is important because so much of the information that was passed down was presented with respect to ‘Alī or people who fought on his side. This transmission serves to be entertaining, but also showed that alliances were made on both sides of the battle. This type of transmission also keeps the battle from being perceived by the audience as one-sided. The dialogue between them was reported as: “At Ṣiffīn ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ said to Wardān: ‘Do you know what we two may be compared with? With the sorrel camel that, if it presses ahead, is hamstrung and, if it lags behind, is slaughtered. If you lag behind, I will cut off your head. Bring me a cord.’ (He did so, and ‘Amr) fixed it on the feet of Wardān, who said: ‘By God, ‘Abū ‘Abdallāh, I will lead you to the pool of death. Put your hand on my shoulder.’ Then he began to go forward, looking at ‘Amr from time to time and saying, ‘Indeed I will lead you to the pool of death.’”<sup>224</sup>

Another interesting speech that advanced the narrative in a meaningful and memorable way was through a speech that came directly from an ancestor of Abū Mikhnaf, Mikhnaf b. Sulaym. This speech related to the problem that the troops faced

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<sup>223</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, 30.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

with the reality of fighting against each other. This dialogue shows the disdain that was felt at the prospect of fighting against members of the same tribe on the opposing side and gives an explanation for the reason for doing so. As mentioned previously, unity in Islam was taught as an important concept. Mikhnaf b. Sulaym said:

“It is one of the worst wrongs and more terrible trials that we should be sent against our own people and they against us. By God, it is nothing less than cutting off our own hands and hacking off our arms with our swords. Yes, if we do not assist our community and act faithfully toward our leader, we deny our faith (*kafarnā*), and, if we do that, we abandon our honor and extinguish our fire.”<sup>225</sup>

An extremely memorable way that the Narrative Function is used occurred when someone was speaking of one's own death. This was common in early Arabic historical narratives. It is no wonder that 'Alī discussed his own death when speaking to his son, al-Hasan. By the time the narratives were written down, it was known that 'Alī, and others as well, had been killed. The narrative is advanced with a story that surrounded that approaching death and framed it and gave it meaning. It was an effective tool and made the death appear inevitable. It appeared to convey to the audience the attitudes that the writers wanted them to think that those who had passed on held about their own impending demise. In this case, it showed that 'Alī did not fear death. And he is portrayed as having courage, which gave the audience the impression that he died courageously and was, therefore, a martyr. 'Alī said to al-Hasan, “My son, there is a day coming for your father that he will inevitably face, and going fast will not postpone it for

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 50.

him, and walking normally will not hurry it up. By God it does not matter for your father whether he comes upon death or death comes upon him.”<sup>226</sup>

Boasting is a meaningful and colorful aspect of the Narrative Function. In this case, a soldier would boast of his own military prowess or personal courage. This type of speech is extremely entertaining. An example of this type of scenario occurred when ‘Abdallāh b. Khalīfah, a soldier who fought on the side of ‘Alī, gave a speech saying, “O band of Tayyi’, may all that I have which is new and all that I have which is old be a ransom for you. Fight in accordance with your noble status!”<sup>227</sup> He then said, “I am he whose sword, when the crier gives the call, penetrates through the bone, he who is spritely and excites admiration. I unhorse the one who has donned the breastplate, the one concealed by the helmet, and I kill the noble man who fights on foot.”<sup>228</sup>

The lamentation of death is another memorable and meaningful way that was used to advance the events. It thus gave added meaning to the inevitable deaths that the audience already knew had occurred. Therefore, the deaths are not in vain, but they are glorified. The instance that follows is interesting because it began before the death of the soldier and because of the particular advice that was given by the man immediately before his death actually occurred. When he was asked for final instructions, the response included advice about being loyal to ‘Alī as well as a suggestion for battle tactics. In the narrative, there was a constant underlying theme, which was that the speakers gave the indication that ‘Alī and God were on the same side, or that serving ‘Alī

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 56

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 56.

was synonymous to serving God. The following speech is an example of this parallel. In the case of the soldier, ‘Abdallāh b. Ka’b al-Murādī, one of his comrades passed him just before he died. The dialogue between them went as follows:

“‘Aswad!’ ‘Yes,’ he replied ‘what can I do for you (*labbayka*)?’ Seeing that ‘Abdallāh was on the point of death, al-Aswad said, ‘By God, your being struck down pains me. By God, if I had been with you, I would have helped you and protected you, and, if I knew who has shed your blood, then I would not want him to get away before I killed him or was joined to you (in death).’ He then dismounted and said to ‘Abdallāh, ‘Indeed, by God, your neighbor has had security against your evil conduct, and you have been one of those who frequently call God to mind, so give me your final instructions, may God have mercy on you.’ ‘Abdallāh said, ‘I recommend to you the fear of God, that you faithfully serve the Commander of the Faithful, and that you fight the transgressors (*muhillīn*) with him until you are victorious or are united with God.’ Then he said, ‘Give him my greetings and say to him, ‘Fight for the battlefield so that you put it behind you, for he who finds on the morrow that the battlefield is behind him, will be superior.’” Then he died. Upon finding out, ‘Alī said, “May God have mercy upon him. In life he made *jihād* for us against our enemies, and in death he has offered us sincere advice.”<sup>229</sup>

The events that led up to the arbitration agreement, the agreement itself, and negotiations related to it were all essential to understanding the outcome of the Battle of Šiffīn. The Narrative Function is a way that the historical account is explained, through the usage of speeches and dialogues, in showing why the participants acted as they did, or why the events unfolded as they did. It began with dialogue between Mu‘āwiya and ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ in the form of a simple suggestion and from there began a series of important negotiations. The dialogue that followed the suggestion led to a cease fire, a severe split in ‘Alī’s regiment, the arbitration, the resulting agreement, and eventually, the death of ‘Alī.

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 75-6.

“...He [‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ] said to Mu‘āwiya, ‘What if I put something to you that can only increase our unity and their division?’ ‘All right,’ said Mu‘āwiya. ‘Amr said, ‘We will raise the *masāhif* and say, ‘their contents are to be authoritative in our dispute (*mā fīhā hukm baynanā wa-baynakum*)’ Even if some of them refuse to accept it, you will find that some of them will say, ‘Indeed, yes, we must accept it,’ and there will be a division between them. If, on the other hand, they say, ‘Yes, indeed, we accept what is in it,’ then we will have disburdened ourselves of this fighting and this warfare until an appointed time or a later occasion.’ So they raised the *masāhif* on lances and said, ‘This is the Book of God between us and you. Who will protect the frontier districts of the Syrians if they all perish, and who those of the Iraqis if they all perish?’ When the men saw that the *masāhif* was raised, they said, ‘We respond to the Book of God, and we turn in repentance to it.’”<sup>230</sup>

The conversation presented below began with ‘Alī’s speech to his men followed by their response to what he had to say. This conversation was meant to show that ‘Alī was wise and was not oblivious to the plot and plans of Mu‘āwiya and ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ. ‘Alī also justified his position with regard to the battle and the reasons for his actions. The speech advanced the narrative by also showing the reasons for the split that would later take place. A subtle reference that was given by ‘Alī in his speech to the *qurrā* was that Mu‘āwiya used the *masāhif* but had no idea what they contained. This proved to be an unsuccessful attempt to appeal to the sincerity of the *qurrā* and their religious zeal and understanding. Additionally, the audience is given the first indication that ‘Alī did not have control over his men. The subsequent response by the *qurrā* is given in the form of a justification for their actions as well as a threat to ‘Alī. It is interesting to note that they used the Book as justification for forcing ‘Alī to stop fighting, while threatening to kill him if he did not acquiesce, which would definitely be against the Book. ‘Alī’s lack of

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 78.

control was again indicated by the fact that he sent for al-Ashtar to come to him twice. This dialogue also served to confirm that ‘Alī’s men were winning the battle at the time that the *masāhif* was raised. The men’s position about the subject becomes clear, because of how they questioned ‘Alī when al-Ashtar initially refused to stop fighting, which indicated mistrust of ‘Alī.

“‘Alī said: ‘Servants of God, carry on fighting your enemies for you have truth and right on your side. Mu‘āwiya, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, Ibn Abī Mu‘ayt, Habīb b. Maslamah, Ibn Abī Sarh, and al-Dahhāk b. Qays are men without religion and without *qur’ān*. I know them better than you, for I was with them both as children and as men, and they were the worst of children and the worst of men. Alas for you! They have not exalted them (the *masāhif*), and they do not exalt them and do not know what it is that they contain. They have raised them up to you only to deceive you, to outwit you, and to trick you.’ They answered him, ‘If we are called to the Book of God, we are bound to respond.’ ‘Alī said to them, ‘The only reason I have fought against them was so that they should adhere to the authority of this Book (*li-yadīnū bi-hukmi hādihā al-kitāb*), for they have disobeyed God in what He has commanded and they have forgotten His covenant and rejected His Book.”<sup>231</sup>

Some of the *qurrā* [*qur’ān* reciters] responded to ‘Alī by saying to him, “‘Alī, respond to the Book of God when you are called to it. Otherwise we shall indeed deliver you up entirely to the enemy or do what we did with Ibn ‘Affān. It is our duty to act in accordance with what is in the Book of God. We have accepted it and, by God, if you do not do what we tell you, we will do what we say.” ‘Alī said: “do not forget that I forbade you to do this, and remember your words to me. As for me, if you are obedient to me, fight and, if disobedient, then do whatever seems best to you.” They answered, “At least send for al-Ashtar, and let him come to you.”<sup>232</sup>

Al-Ashtar’s response confirms that the plot by Mu‘āwiya and ‘Amr accomplished the intended goal; to divide ‘Alī’s ranks. His disgust over having to stop fighting was

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 79.

apparent in his insult of Mu‘āwiya. His actual loyalty to ‘Alī is also indicated because of his eventual obedience to the command for him to stop fighting and report to ‘Alī.

Al-Ashtar’s response was, “Now is not the time for you to move me from my post. I’m expecting success in battle; do not rush me.” When ‘Alī was informed of his response, “the men said to ‘Alī, ‘By God, we think you must have ordered him to give battle.’ But he replied, ‘What makes you think that? Do you think I spoke secretly with him? Did I not speak to him (the messenger) openly in your hearing?’ They answered him: ‘Send for him and have him come to you. Otherwise, by God, we will withdraw (*i’tazala*) from you.’ ‘Alī therefore, said to Yazīd (the messenger): ‘Alas for you, Yazīd! Tell him, ‘Come to me for the *fitnah* has come.’ Yazīd told al-Ashtar that, and the latter asked, ‘Is this because of the raising of the *masāhif*?’ ‘Yes,’ he answered. Al-Ashtar said: ‘By God, indeed when they were raised I thought that they would cause division and disunity. It was the counsel of the son of the harlot. Do you not see what God has done for us? Do I have to leave the enemy and go away from them?’ I (Yazīd b. Hāni) said: ‘I asked him, ‘Would you like to be victorious here while the Commander of the Faithful is driven from the place where he is or is made to submit there?’ ‘No, by God,’ he replied; ‘Glory be to God.’ Yazīd said, ‘They have told ‘Alī, ‘Send to al-Ashtar and have him come to you, or we will kill you as we killed Ibn ‘Affān.’”<sup>233</sup>

Al-Ashtar said to them, “Men of Iraq! Men of baseness and feebleness! (Will you abandon the battle) when you have won the upper hand over the enemy and they think that you are defeating them? They have raised the *masāhif*, calling you to what is in them, but by God they have abandoned what God commanded in them and the example (*sunnah*) of him to whom they were sent down. Do not respond to those people. Just grant me the respite of a time between two milkings for I sense success in battle.’ They answered, ‘No,’ He then said, ‘Just grant me the respite of a time of the running of a horse, for I am sure of victory.’ They replied, ‘In that case we would be partaking of your sin (*khati’ah*). Al-Ashtar said, ‘Tell me, now that the best of you have been killed and only the base ones remain, when were you in the right? Was it when you were fighting and the best of you were killed? In that case, since you have now withdrawn from the fighting, you are in the wrong. Or are you now in the right? In that case, those of you who have been killed whos merits you do not deny were better than you, are in hell.’ They answered: ‘Leave us alone, Ashtar! We fought

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 80.

them in God's cause and we will now leave off fighting them for His sake. We will not obey you or your master. Get away from us.' Al-Ashtar said: 'By God, you have been cheated and allowed yourselves to be duped. You have been invited to leave aside war and you have assented. Oh you of the dark foreheads, we used to think your prayers were a renunciation of this world and a longing to join God. But now I see that you merely flee to this world from death. Shame on you, you who are like the aged she-camel who seeks after filth to eat. After this you will never see glory again. May you perish just as those evil people perished' ..... 'Alī said, 'We have agreed to make the Qur'an an authority (hukm) between us and them.'"<sup>234</sup>

Speeches and dialogues are used to fulfill the Narrative Function of pointing to the events that transpired between 'Alī's side and Mu'āwiya's as a result of the raising of the *masāhif*. When 'Alī, and his men discussed whether or not to submit to a cease-fire, another important negotiation began. It should be noted that upon hearing of the proposed plan, 'Alī's first objection was not to the proposal of arbitration, but to his men's choice of who would represent them. 'Alī raised doubts about Abū Mūsa's loyalty. These doubts that are expressed in the dialogue foreshadow subsequent events, where Abū Mūsa's loyalty is tested. The dialogue in these narratives is used to advance possible reasons behind the divisions that resulted from conflict. The use of these conversations to advance the narrative was highly successful. Moreover, the historical accuracy regarding the identities of the participants' or actuality of the event occurring has not been questioned. Al-Ash'ath b. Qays was sent by 'Alī to find out what Mu'āwiya wanted. He said:

“Mu'āwiya, why have you raised these *masāhif*?” He answered, ‘So that you and we together turn to what God commanded in His book. You will send a man from among you whom you find acceptable, and we will send a man from among us; and we will impose upon them that they act

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 81.

according to what is in the Book of God, not opposing it. Then we will follow what they agree upon.’ Al-Ash’ath b. Qays said to him, ‘This is just,’ and then he went back to ‘Alī and told him what Mu‘āwiya had said. Our men said, ‘We are pleased and accept.’ The Syrians said, ‘We have chosen ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ,’ and al-Ash’ath and those who became Khawārij afterward said, ‘We are content with Abū Mūsa al-Ash‘arī.’ ‘Alī said, ‘You disobeyed me in the start of this business; do not disobey me now. I do not think I should grant power to Abū Mūsa.’ But al-Ash’ath, Zayd b. Husayn al-Ta’ī, and Mis’ar b. Fadakī insisted, ‘‘We do not find anyone else acceptable: What he warned us against we have fallen into.’ ‘Alī said: ‘I do not consider him trustworthy. He separated from me and caused the people to abandon me. Then he fled from me until I granted him security after some months. But here is Ibn Abbās; we will give him power in that matter.’ They replied, ‘It would not make any difference for us whether it was you or Ibn Abbās. We insist on someone who is equally distant from you and Mu‘āwiya, no closer to one of you than he is to the other.’ ‘Alī said, ‘I will appoint al-Ashtar.’”<sup>235</sup>

“Al-Ash’ath said, ‘Was it anybody but al-Ashtar who caused this conflagration in the land?’ He also said, [from a different *isnad*] ‘Are we not already under the authority (*hukm*) of al-Ashtar?’ ‘Alī said, ‘What is that?’ and al-Ash’ath answered, ‘That we should strike one another with swords until what you and he want comes to pass.’ ‘Alī said, ‘Do you then refuse to accept anybody but Abū Mūsa?’ and the men replied, ‘Yes.’ ‘Alī said, ‘Then do what you want.’”<sup>236</sup>

All of these types of Narrative Function speeches and dialogues advanced the story based on the actual historical events, but with the use of dialogue to assign motivation and possibly to sway opinions about them. The following speech relates to the previous one and is basically a warning of things to come. It confirmed the suspicions that ‘Alī had mentioned previously and set the pace of the narrative by giving a preview of how things were to go.

“Subsequently al-Aḥnaf said to ‘Alī, ‘‘Commander of the Faithful, you have been assaulted by a crafty and cunning man and by one who has

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 82-3.

made war against God and His messenger at the beginning of Islam. I have tested this man (Abū Mūsā) and tried him out in varying circumstances, and I have found him dull-witted and shallow in intellect. Only somebody who can get so close to the enemy as to be in the palms of their hands, and be so far from them as the Pleiades, will avail us in dealing with them. If you refuse to make me an arbitrator on the question, at least make me a second or a third (delegate). (Then) I shall untie any knot that he shall fasten, and he shall not undo any knot that I tie, unless I have (already) tied for you another more binding (*ahkamu*).” But the people insisted on (the choice of) Abū Mūsā, and acceptance of (the call to refer to) the Book. Al-Aḥnaf said, “If you insist on Abū Mūsā, then make sure someone is watching him.”<sup>237</sup>

The following statement is the first in a number of arguments that would be made against the arbitration agreement. It advances the narrative in that it gives justification to the positions of the participants for the actions that they will take. It relates to the fact that ‘Alī’s official title, Commander of the Faithful, was omitted from the written agreement. The important dialogue regarding the impact of the signed agreement follows: Al-Ash’ath read it to them, and ‘Urwah said, “Do you appoint men as arbitrators in God’s business? Authority (*hukm*) belongs to God alone.”<sup>238</sup> After this statement, the split in ‘Alī’s ranks, a historical fact, is further described by this dialogue. ‘Alī’s response speech is designed to give the audience ‘Alī’s perspective concerning the demands that he had agreed to. It also gives another confirmation of the view that the opponent’s trick had been successful. ‘Alī addressed his men after the agreement was signed and spoke about the events that led up to the agreement by saying:

“You have done something that has demolished strength, brought down might, caused weakness, and bequeathed lowliness. When you had the upper hand and your enemy feared destruction, when the slaughter was great among them and they experienced the agonies of wounds, they

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 88.

raised the *masāhif* and summoned you to what was in them so as to obtain relief from you, to break off the fighting over the issue that divides you from them, and to await the accidents of fate, as a trick and a cunning trap. You gave them what they asked and insisted on leniency and forbearance toward them, I swear by God that I do not think that henceforth you will agree upon right conduct or achieve a gate of discretion.”<sup>239</sup>

The fact that the arbitrators did not reach an agreement in their first meeting was a prelude to the reality that they would not ever agree. It should be noted that by the time the narrative was written down, it was a known fact that there no agreement was ever reached by the arbiters. The following conversation fulfills the Narrative Function and serves as a roadmap of the events that would follow. The conversation also confirms that ‘Alī had spoken correctly in saying that Abū Mūsā lacked loyalty. This was evidenced by the name that Abū Mūsā submitted for the position of the caliph.

In the negotiation process, the two arbitrators met and ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ said, “Abū Mūsā, I think that the first part of the truth we should determine is to decide in favor of those who fulfill their undertakings according to the fulfillment and against those who are perfidious according to their perfidy.” Abū Mūsā said, “What do you mean?” and ‘Amr said, “Do you not know that Mu‘āwiya and the Syrians have fulfilled their undertaking and come at the time and to the place upon which we pledged them?” “Indeed yes,” said Abū Mūsā. ‘Amr told him to write that down, and he did so. ‘Amr said: “Abū Mūsā do you accept that we should name a man who will have authority over the affairs of this community? Give me a name, and, if I can accept your suggestion, I undertake to do so; otherwise, you must accept mine.” Abū Mūsā said, “I suggest ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar.” Ibn ‘Umar was one of those who had “gone apart (*i’tazala*). ‘Amr replied, “I suggest Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān.” Their meeting ended in mutual vilification.”<sup>240</sup>

The following speech advances the narrative by showing the final meeting between the arbiters. It is similar to a final showdown in a movie. Needless to say, there

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 91-2.

was definitely an entertainment value. The final meeting between the arbiters showed that there would be no true negotiation of the issues that were between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya. The meeting was reported as follows:

“Abū Mūsa went forward, praised God, and extolled Him, and then said, ‘People, we have considered the affairs of this community and we do not think that there is anything that will be more beneficial for it or more conducive to resolving its difficulties than that upon which I and ‘Amr have agreed. That is, that we should depose ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya and that this community should confront the issue and appoint over themselves from among themselves whomever it is that they want. I have accepted the deposition of ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya, and now you confront the issue and give power over you to whomever you think is fitting for this matter.’ He then stood aside and ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ took his place. He praised God and extolled Him, then he said, ‘This fellow has spoken as you have heard and declared the deposition of the one whom he represents. Similarly, I declare that he is deposed and I confirm my support for my candidate Mu‘āwiya. He is the next-of-kin of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān and the one who seeks vengeance for his blood. Of all the people, he has most right to take his place.’ Abū Mūsa said, ‘What are you doing, may God foil you! You have acted treacherously and unrighteously. You ‘are like the dog which, if you attack it, it lolls out its tongue, or, if you leave it alone, it still lolls out its tongue!’ ‘Amr responded, ‘And you ‘are like the monkey which carries writings.’”<sup>241</sup>

The main purpose of the following portion of dialogue is to narrate the events by showing that ‘Alī still had supporters after the split in his regiment occurred, most likely a historical fact. Also shown is the perspective of the Khawārij, which seemed to change significantly through the course of the conflict. The supporters, however, justify their continued support of ‘Alī. They also launch accuse the defectors of being lost and misleading. Regarding the split in ‘Alī’s regiment, this is a series of dialogue that takes

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 109-10.

place to explain the position taken by the secessionists. It is in the form of a debate between those who continued to support ‘Alī and those who came to oppose his position.

“‘Umārah b. Rabi’ah: After ‘Alī had come to al-Kūfah and the Khawārij had separated from him, his party (*al-shi’ah*) hurried to him and said: ‘We pledge ourselves to you with a second oath of allegiance. We are friends of those whom you befriend and enemies of those to whom you are an enemy.’ The Khawārij said, ‘You and the Syrians have vied with each other in unbelief (*kuf*) like two horses in a race. The Syrians gave the oath of allegiance to Mu‘āwiya, following their whims, while you gave yours to ‘Alī, stipulating that you are friends of those whom he befriends and enemies of those to whom he shows enmity.’ Ziyād b. al-Nadr answered them, ‘By God, ‘Alī only ever offered to accept our allegiance, and we only gave him our oath, on (condition that he follows) the Book of God and the example (sunnah) of His Prophet. Only after you had opposed him did his party come to him and say, ‘We are friends of those whom you befriend and enemies of those to whom you show enmity.’ That is our position. He is following the truth and right guidance and those who oppose him are lost and misleading.”<sup>242</sup>

### **Speeches and Dialogues that Primarily Fulfill a Tendentious Function:**

Although each speech or dialogue that is included in the narrative perform some kind of Narrative Function, those that were previously presented were included in that category to set the course and steer the story in the direction in which it was headed. The following speeches and dialogues have been chosen as Tendentious Texts, because their primary element is tendentious in nature and they would create some sort of bias for the audience. It should be noted that many sub-categories were described previously but it will be necessary to elaborate on them.

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 100.

Extreme bravery is a character trait that is strongly advanced throughout the narrative, especially that of al-Ashtar. His heroics and bravery are two of the primary aspects of his character that are presented. The dialogue that was attributed to him and the Raqqans, indicates this bravery. In this dialogue, al-Ashtar uses threats to accomplish the goal at hand by instilling fear into the Raqqans. The reason for the placement of this dialogue is to show from the beginning, the bravery military prowess, and skill that would be attributed to al-Ashtar throughout the narrative. His heroic feats are an element of his character. This dialogue is a preliminary indication of what will happen during the battle. ‘Alī requested that the Raqqans build a bridge for his troops to cross over in order to go into Syria. Initially, the Raqqans refused. Al-Ashtar said to them, “People of this fortress! I swear to you by God that if the Commander of the Believers goes on without your having made a bridge for him by your town so that he can cross, I will bare the sword among you and kill the men, devastate the land, and seize your possessions.”<sup>243</sup> To this the Raqqans said, “Does not al-Ashtar fulfill what he swears or perpetrate something even worse?” “Yes.” Then they continued by saying, “We will make a bridge for you so approach.”<sup>244</sup> This dialogue is geared to give a view of the bravery of al-Ashtar and to show how he is feared, which will permeate throughout the narrative.

Accounts of single-challenges recur throughout the battle narrative. Single combat dialogue is considered by Noth as a topos.<sup>245</sup> In narrating the details of single-challenge, there are elements that describe the character of the challenger as well as that of the person who was being challenged or disclose elements of bravery or cowardice.

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>245</sup> Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 168.

Furthermore tribal or individual bias is reflected in many of the accounts of these challenges. Examples of these challenges will be presented here.

The first example served to substantiate the position of the opponents, but also advanced the theme of al-Ashtar's superiority in battle. Al-Ashtar, for example, sent a soldier — who happened to be his nephew Sinān — to speak to a soldier from the side of Mu'āwiya, 'Abū al-A'war, to challenge him to a single combat. From the initial portion of the dialogue between al-Ashtar and his nephew, several things become apparent. The boy was praised for his courage, as well as for his heritage (which also included al-Ashtar). Boasting about the young man's heritage or al-Ashtar's own military prowess could have been tribal bias or simply bias toward that family. The specific challenge was given, and subsequently declined. The response from the challenged man was in the form of a rebuke of al-Ashtar for his actions regarding the siege of 'Uthmān as well as insults to his sense of judgment. The fact that the duel was declined, as well as al-Ashtar's response to the declination, is a further indication to the audience that al-Ashtar was, in fact, superior in battle. There are many instances where al-Ashtar's military capabilities are projected. In this example, when al-Ashtar told the boy to go issue the challenge, the young man asked, "With me or with you?" Al-Ashtar replied, "If I told you to fight him singly would you do it?" Sinān replied, "Yes, by God, if you asked me to go against their line with my sword, I would not come back until I had struck their line with my sword." Al-Ashtar then said:

"Oh my nephew, God give you long life! By God, my love for you has increased. I am not ordering you to fight him in single combat, but to challenge him to fight me. He would not come out to fight – if he agrees –

unless against someone with the right seniority, equality of status and nobility. You, may your Lord be praised, are of a family who have equality of status and nobility, but you are a raw youth in years, and he will not undertake single combat against young men. Call on him to fight against me.”<sup>246</sup>

When the challenge was made, ‘Abū al-A’war responded by saying:

“It was al-Ashtar’s lack of sense and bad judgment that led to his driving out the officials of Ibn ‘Affan [‘Uthmān] – may God be pleased with him – from Iraq and his insubordination to him and thus his losing the fruits of his won good deeds. It was a result of al-Ashtar’s lack of good sense and his bad judgment that he went to Ibn ‘Affan in his house and dwelling place and joined in with those who killed him, and he has become liable for his blood. Indeed I have no need to fight him in single combat.”<sup>247</sup>

When al-Ashtar learned of the response, he said, “He is concerned to save himself.”<sup>248</sup>

Another very interesting challenge for single combat was made when ‘Alī personally challenged Mu‘āwiya. There were several implications that were made by this conversation. First, it should be noted that the conversation seemed to begin with ‘Alī speaking directly to Mu‘āwiya; however, after his initial statement ‘Alī did not participate in the interaction. This dialogue is considered as Tendentious Text for several reasons. Firstly, the cowardice of Mu‘āwiya’s character is clearly shown. One incredible feature is the distrust that Mu‘āwiya displays toward his faithful sidekick. Therefore, ‘Amr is confirmed as treacherous and deceptive in this dialogue. Other underlying factors were presented in this conversation such as ‘Alī’s superiority in battle and Mu‘āwiya’s fear of a direct confrontation with him, as Mu‘āwiya admits to ‘Alī’s military prowess. Mu‘āwiya distrusted ‘Amr’s motives. The presentation of this

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<sup>246</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, 10.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

conversation in this manner would give the audience a sense of mistrust for ‘Amr, considering that even Mu‘āwiya himself doubted his motives. It would also have given the audience the impression that ‘Alī was so concerned with the soldiers’ deaths that he would sacrifice himself, unlike Mu‘āwiya. It shows ‘Alī as having a sense of justice. This is another situation that would serve to sway opinions away from Mu‘āwiya and his cause, however, ‘Amr is now shown as the villain from both sides. The dialogue was presented as follows:

“Then he called for Mu‘āwiya and said: ‘Why are the people being killed in our quarrel? Come, I will entrust God with the decision between us (*uhākimuka ilā Allāhi*). Whichever of us kills the other, authority (*al-umūr*) will remain for him.’ ‘Amr said, ‘The man has made you a fair offer,’ but Mu‘āwiya replied: ‘I have not been made a fair offer. You know that he has killed everyone whom he has challenged to combat.’ ‘Amr said, ‘But it is not fitting that you should not accept the challenge and fight him.’ Mu‘āwiya said, ‘You cannot wait to get power after my death.’”<sup>249</sup>

Various types of bias appear in the narrative, therefore, several different aspects of bias will be analyzed. Previously, bias was shown toward Ibn ‘Abbās when he was given an important place as the potential arbiter for ‘Alī’s side of the conflict. This is one way that was used to establish the character of Ibn ‘Abbās. Once the Khawārij deserted ‘Alī, he did make several attempts at reconciliation. He sent Ibn ‘Abbās to speak with them but admonished him not to argue with them. The following dialogue shows that every attempt was made to justify ‘Alī’s actions. Ibn ‘Abbās said:

“‘What is it that you hold against the two arbitrators (*hakams*)? God said, ‘If the two of them desire reconciliation, God will bring about agreement

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 70.

between them.’ (If that is how it is with a married couple), how much more so with the community of Muḥammad!’ The Khawārij answered: ‘Regarding whatever God has delegated authority for to mankind and ordered them to look into and make better, that is for them just as He commanded. But what He has decided (*hakama*) and effected Himself is not for His servants to look into. God has decided for the fornicator a hundred lashes, and for the thief the cutting off of the hand and it is not for His servants to look into that.’ Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘But God says, ‘Two ‘just men’ from among you shall judge (*yahkumu*) it. The Khawārij replied, ‘Do you place the precept (*hukm*) regarding game (killed while the slayer is in a condition of ritual purity) and what passes between a man and his wife on a par with the blood of the Muslims?’”<sup>250</sup>

This response dialogue shows the position that was taken by the Khawārij on the subject of the arbitration. However, although the dialogue explains their position, it does not seem that their position is justified. They initially forced ‘Alī to stop fighting and went against his advice and suggestions. They then refused to accept the decisions that he made after he acquiesced to their wishes. They appear disloyal, stubborn, and confused because they actually turned against both sides of the conflict after the agreement was signed. Since the Khawārij had developed some very specific views by the time the narratives were transmitted, it was necessary for the writers to disclose the origin of such views. This is an attempt to do so.

“(The Khawārij said: We said to him ‘This verse separates us from you. Do you consider Ibn al-‘Āṣ a just man,’ given that yesterday he was fighting us and shedding our blood? If he is a ‘just man,’ then we are not, for we are at war with him. You have appointed men as arbitrators (*hakams*) in the affairs of God, but God has effected His precept (*hukm*) regarding Mu‘āwiya and his party – that they should be killed or repent. In the past they always rejected our appeals when we summoned them to the Book of God. Now you and he have written between you a document and agreed on a truce and discussion, but God has put an end to discussion

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 101.

and truces between the Muslims and the ‘people of war’ since the revelation of ‘Quittance,’ except for those who agree to pay the *jizyah*).”<sup>251</sup>

Tendentious Texts also include portions of the narrative that relate to tribal bias or possibly bias toward a particular individual, as mentioned above. This scenario frequently appears in the narrative, sometimes shown through alliances that were reported in the narrative. The practice of making alliances appeared several times during the battle. Al-Ashtar tends to be chosen as a frequent participant. This was done to exalt the individual or tribe and give the audience the impression of their significance. This particular dialogue again shows his bravery as well as the trust that the warriors placed in his military abilities by their having made an alliance with him. The following instance occurred when a group of troops, warriors of the Hamdān tribe, were going to retreat from fighting saying: “Would that we had an equal number from among the other Arabs who would swear an alliance with us to fight to the death. Then we and they together would advance and not retreat until we were killed or achieved the victory.”<sup>252</sup> Upon saying this, they passed al-Ashtar who said to them, “Come to me. I will swear an alliance with you and make a covenant never to retreat until we have gained the victory or have perished.”<sup>253</sup>

The Tendentious Text category may also include boasting about a tribe’s greatness, either by a member of that tribe or by another individual, which is another

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 43.

common theme in the battle narrative. Certain tribes were exalted as great warriors, very pious, or other traits that were important to people at the time. The audience may get the impression that these people or tribes are valiant and should hold a significant place in the community. Some of these situations are very colorfully presented in order to advance the narrative to show actual fighting. An example of a tribe's boasting occurred when they said:

“We are Tayyi’ of the plain, Tayyi’ of the sand, and Tayyi’ of the defenders of the two hills as far as what is between al-‘Udhayb and al-‘Ayn, we are Tayyi’ of the lances, Tayyi’ of the butting, and warriors of the morning.”<sup>254</sup>

Speeches and dialogues used to encourage the troops were common. In this battle, there are a significant number of speeches of encouragement. As mentioned previously, piety is and has been a very important characteristic. Much of the time, piety is used to judge an individual or situation. The speech by ‘Alī that follows uses the concept of piety to influence, instruct, and encourage the troops. It begins with general sermonizing and includes exaltation of and praise for God. Then the speech uses God’s punishment as a threat that is associated with cowardice. The message to the troops is that of fight and die or die and face God’s punishment. There are several tendentious aspects that are indicated in this speech. For anyone who was familiar with the battle and may have lost loved ones, it is a justification of their death because the speech also subtly points to martyrdom. An additional element is the use of God’s blessings or wrath to compel the troops to continue fighting. The effect on the audience is to garner

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 56.

understanding and support of the unfolding events and appeal to the sense their sense of piety. ‘Alī encourages the men by saying:

“‘God has guided you to a commerce that will deliver you from a bitter punishment’ and bring you to the verge of good: ‘belief in God and His Messenger, and *jihād* in the path of God,’ may His name be exalted. He has made His reward a pardon of sin ‘and blessed abodes in the gardens of Eden.’ Then He has informed you that He ‘loves those who fight in His path in lines as if they were a tightly compact building’ so make your lines even like a tightly compact building. Advance the armed man and hold back the unarmed, and grit your teeth for it makes the swords rebound from the heads. Twist the ends of the lances, for it better preserves the points. Avert your gaze, for that is more calming for the soul and more soothing for the heart. Deaden your voices, for that is better for driving out cowardice and more dignified. As for your banners, neither lower them nor abandon them, and make sure they stay in the hands of the valiant men among you. Those who defend what it is their duty to defend and are steadfast in protecting what it is obligatory for them to protect, they are the guardians who surround their banners and protect them, fighting on both sides of them, behind and in front of them, and not abandoning them. A man has given satisfaction who strikes his opponent hard – may God have mercy on you – and puts his brother on a level with himself, and does not leave his opponent to his brother, so as to acquire blame and become base. And why is it that he should not act thus, one man fighting two opponents while another who has held back his hand leaves his opponent to confront his brother, he himself fleeing or standing looking on? Whoever does that, God hates him. So do not expose yourselves to the hatred of God, praise be to Him, for your place of return is only to God. God, the mightiest of those who speak, said to a people, ‘Flight will not avail you if you flee from death or slaying; in that case you will be allowed to enjoy only a little time.’ And I swear by God that, if you escape from the sword of this world, you will not escape from that of the next. Ask for the assistance of sincerity and steadfastness, for after steadfastness, God sends down the victory.”<sup>255</sup>

Prophecy is a sub-category that appears in the broad category of Tendentious Texts. In the narrative there were two basic types of prophecies. The first type was

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 37-8. The speech includes various Qur’anic references and quotations: Qur’an 61:10-12; 61:14; 40:43; and 33:16.

prophecy which said to have come directly from the Prophet Muḥammad. The second type is a prophecy that was issued during the battle, possibly in the form of a warning, or in statements regarding impending death, which actually came to pass in the narrative. Since both types appear in the narrative, each will be discussed.

There were several negotiations which occurred in the narrative. The initial dialogue that follows explains the absence of ‘Alī’s title, Commander of the Faithful, in the arbitration agreement, and shows the reasons for subsequent events that would take place. Instances of prophecy appear in this dialogue. After the prophecy was given, a comparison of this incident was made to the situation that Prophet experienced on the day of al-Hudabiyya, which is further explained below. It was also indicated in the narrative that the Prophet had told ‘Alī that he would someday have a similar experience, which would be a prophecy that was issued directly from the Prophet. This is important because it creates for the audience an obvious bias against Mu‘āwiya, by creating a parallel between ‘Alī and the Prophet. One major point that was made during the discussions was that if the Prophet himself could remove the title, it would not be an issue for ‘Alī to do the same. Lastly, the vilification of Mu‘āwiya was complete, as the audience was shown that Mu‘āwiya’s father had been involved in the incident that caused problems for the Prophet by convincing him to remove his title. The scheme in these writings may possibly have been geared to foster more support in the direction of ‘Alī. As it was reported, during the negotiation, when they wrote the arbitration agreement, initially it contained the words, “‘Alī, Commander of the Faithful,” but ‘Amr insisted that it be erased. To this, al-Aḥnaf told ‘Alī, “Do not efface the title of the Commander of the

Faithful, for I fear that if you erase it the office will never revert to you. Do not erase it even though the people kill one another.” Later al-Ashath b. Qays said, “Erase this name for God has removed it.”<sup>256</sup> Subsequently, the state of affairs just described was compared, a bit later in the narrative, to a similar occurrence that happened when the Prophet Muḥammad removed his title from an agreement on the day of al-Ḥudaybiyya.<sup>257</sup> This whole situation of the erasure created an even greater amount of schism and division within ‘Alī’s ranks, because when the document was completed, with the title erased, and presented to the soldiers, they were sorely angered. This led to more dialogue concerning the event, defections, and unsuccessful attempts at negotiation to reconcile the differences and reunite the troops.

The sub-category of prophecy is also clear in following speech because it shows that ‘Alī was able to issue a prophecy about events before they happened. When more attempts were made to reconcile the differences between the defected troops, ‘Alī spoke directly to them. ‘Alī’s response indicated his superior knowledge and understanding of the situation from the start. He had an “I-told-you-so” attitude. All of this speech served to justify ‘Alī’s perspective to the audience and to justify his position as the one who had been right. Additionally, it stood to prove the wisdom and insight of his character. He said:

“I implore you by God! Do you know what I said to you when they raised the *masāhif*, and you said that we should respond to their call to the Book of God? I said, “I know them better than you. They are men without religion (*din*) or *Qur’ān*. I was with them and I knew them as

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 84.

children and as men, and they were the worst of children and the worst of men. Persist in your truth and your righteousness for they have raised these *masāhif* only to outwit you and to trick you.” You rejected my view and said, “No, rather we will yield to them,” and I warned you, “Do not forget what I have said to you and your disobedience to me.” When you, nevertheless; insisted that I enter into a written agreement, I stipulated to the two arbitrators that they should bring about that which the *Qur’ān* has brought into being and suppress what it has put an end to. For, if they both decide according to the authority (*hukm*) of the *Qur’ān*, it is not for us to oppose a decision that is made according to what is in the *Qur’ān*. But, if the two of them reject that, then we will be free of their authority.”<sup>258</sup>

Prophecy is also used many times in the narrative to disclose an impending death. Sometimes, the prophecy comes from the person who is going to die, and other times it comes from someone else. In the following example, the subsequent death of one famous soldier ‘Ammār b. Yāsir is an example. Also in this case, both types of prophecy appear in the narrative. ‘Ammār b. Yāsir was a companion of the Prophet. The fact that the Prophet prophesied ‘Ammār’s death as well as the fact that ‘Ammār was said to have prophesied his own death, according to the narrative, illustrates the importance that was placed on the Prophet’s companions. As indicated previously, there were disputes about which of the Companions fought and for which side, therefore, ‘Ammār’s fate would have had to be presented to the reader in a spectacular way. Also important is the fact that he fought on ‘Alī’s side. His importance is apparent also by the fact that al-Ṭabarī devoted an entire section to the reporting of this man’s death. In fact, al-Ṭabarī even used himself as a source (a very infrequent occurrence). He wrote, “Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī said, ‘It is reported that when ‘Ammār was killed, ‘Alī said to the Rabi’ah and the Hamdan, ‘You are my armor and my spear!’ .....”<sup>259</sup> This all points directly to the

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 102-3.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 69.

apparent significance that the man, ‘Ammār b. Yāsir, held to the Muslim community, at least up to the time of al-Ṭabarī’s compilation of the events. The audience is led to favor him also. Some of the dialogue relating to the death follows: A man, Habbah b. Juwayn al-Uranī and Abū Mas‘ūd asked that someone report *hadīth* to them in order to calm their fears. The conversation continued as follows:

“He replied, ‘Hold to the party in which is Ibn Sumayyah (‘Ammār b. Yāsir), for I heard the Prophet saying, ‘The party of oppression that swerves from the (right) road will kill him, and his last sustenance will be milk mixed with water.’ Habbah continued: And I saw ‘Ammār at Ṣiffīn when he was brought a drink of diluted milk in a shallow bowl with a red rim. Hudhayfah was not wrong even by the thickness of a hair, for ‘Ammār said: ‘Today I will meet the loved ones – Muḥammad and his party. By God, even if they strike us so as to bring us to the palm leaves of Hajar, we will know that we hold to the truth and they to the falsehood.’ And he began to say, ‘Death is beneath the spears and paradise beneath the flashing swords.’”<sup>260</sup>

As also presented above from a different transmission, ‘Ammār was reported to have prophesied of his own death by saying, “Press forward, Hāshim; paradise is beneath the shadows of the swords and death in the tips of the spears. The gates of heaven have been opened, and the houris have adorned themselves. Today I shall meet the beloved ones, Muḥammad and his party.”<sup>261</sup>

Noth explained the theme of martyrdom as a form of topos.<sup>262</sup> Martyrdom is a very important theme because it gives meaning to the deaths that occurred. The audience can appreciate the role played by the fallen soldiers, in that they gave their lives to fight

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 64-5.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>262</sup> Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 145.

for Islam. Additionally, those who lost loved ones in the battle could be comforted by this portrayal. Much of the time, the Tendentious Function is used for the presentation. One memorable example of this concept appears in the narrative when three brothers followed their brother saying, “We will not seek the rewards of this world after you have gone, for God has made life hateful without you. Oh God, we hope that the loss of our lives will be rewarded with You.”<sup>263</sup> They were subsequently killed.

Lamentation is a concept that appears frequently throughout the battle. The concept is considered to be in the Tendentious Text category because it deals with the uncomfortable fact that deaths took place. Many times, there is also a note of piety that is shown in the lamenting of a death. A touching lamentation conversation is included at the end of the battle narrative as ‘Alī passes the graves of some of those who had fought. This lamentation first pointed to the piety of the slain man and his status in Islam, then as a fighter for the sake of Islam. These were very important factors when the narratives were written, when they were compiled, and even until the present time. The author wished to show that ‘Alī was a just man and that he had compassion for his fallen comrades. It also clearly showed his own personal piety, which his prayer indicated. This became a very important feature in some historical reports containing ‘Alī’s words because to some people, he was considered to be an Imam, so religious statements that he made would play a vital role in shaping the future and the view of the audience as well. An example of this type of dialogue occurred when ‘Alī asked, “What are these graves?” and Qudāmah b. al-Ajlān answered, “Commander of the Faithful, after you had departed Kabbāb b. al-Aratt died, and his final wish was that he should be buried outside al-Kūfah.

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<sup>263</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, 52.

(Previously burials were made only in the people's houses and courtyards.) He was buried outside the town (may God have mercy on him), and the others were buried alongside him.”

‘Alī said, “May God have mercy on Kabbāb. He entered Islam willingly, he made *hijrah* obediently, he lived as a fighter for Islam (*mujāhid*), and he was physically put to the test on several occasions. God will not neglect the reward of he who performs good deeds.” Then he came and stood over the graves and said: “Greetings to you, you of the desolate abodes and forsaken places, of the believing men and women, and of the Muslim men and women. You are they who have gone ahead before us, while we come after you and will shortly join you. Oh God, pardon us and them and forgive us and them.” And he said: “Praise be to God, Who has created you from it (the earth) and made it the place to which you return. He will make you arise from it again and gather you together upon it. Blessings upon he who remembers the return, acts for the final reckoning, is content with a sufficiency, and is satisfied with the reward that God will bestow upon him.”<sup>264</sup>

The last example of the concept of lamentation is the following example which appears in the form of a poem, rather than simple dialogue or a speech. ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar, being the son of the late caliph, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, was an important participant of the Battle of Ṣiffīn. The fact that he chose to fight on the side of Mu‘āwīya, and died at Ṣiffīn made his life and death stand out even more. This poetry that lamented his death allowed the audience to lament his death also, as he would definitely have been well-known among the Muslims. Another aspect of this particular death was surely martyrdom. As mentioned previously, the concept of martyrdom was prevalent in many of the battle narratives. Al-Ṭabarī indicated that there was more than what he reported, however, he only included this portion of what was said. When ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 96-7.

was killed a poem was reported to have been said by Ka'b b. Ju'ayl al-Taghlabī, who lamented 'Ubaydallāh's death as follows:

“The eyes weep only for a horseman  
whose fellows fled at Şiffin while he stood firm,  
Exchanging (the company of) Asmā' (his wife) for the swords of  
Wā'il.  
He was a warrior; if only the fields of death had spared him.  
(But) they left 'Ubaydallāh on the battleground,  
His flowing veins spitting out blood from the wound.”<sup>265</sup>

### **Speeches and Dialogues fulfilling both Narrative and Tendentious Functions:**

Many of the speeches and dialogues which were presented above in the Narrative Function category also have elements of a tendentious nature. After presenting those speeches and dialogues, they were subsequently analyzed for elements that would be categorized as Tendentious Texts. The Tendentious Text category, as previously shown, consist of quite a few sub-categories; a look back at the tendentious nature of the texts that primarily fulfill the Narrative Function will be examined. The example will be referenced by the footnote number that is associated with that example.

Two of the main functions of the Tendentious Text category are assigning motivation by either establishing the character of the participant, or by explaining the actions that were taken by the participants. Since establishing character is an important sub-category in the Tendentious Text category, there are several instances of speeches and dialogues that are presented that would enable the audience to determine the

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 63.

character and/or motivation of the person that is speaking and lead them in a particular direction. The dialogue, where Mu‘āwiya asks for ‘Amr’s advice upon hearing of ‘Alī’s advance, establishes at the outset the characters of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ and Mu‘āwiya.<sup>266</sup> The fact that Mu‘āwiya is seeking ‘Amr’s advice from the outset shows the strength and power that will be attributed to ‘Amr throughout the narrative. Since ‘Amr eventually shoulders much of the blame for the trickery and deception that is accused throughout the narrative of the battle, it is necessary to establish from the outset the power position that ‘Amr has with respect to Mu‘āwiya. This dialogue supports this theme and sets the scene for ‘Amr’s later actions. A subtle implication throughout the narrative is that ‘Amr develops the schemes and Mu‘āwiya simply acquiesces to them. This presents the situation in a way that casts Mu‘āwiya in a better light because ‘Amr is always the responsible party for the treachery that takes place. The fact that Mu‘āwiya did become the caliph after the battle may be an underlying reason that the historical reports do not demonize him terribly, but give him a scapegoat for many of the actions taken.

The speech that ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar made to Mu‘āwiya’s men, where he urged them to avenge ‘Uthmān’s death, explains the uncomfortable fact that he is fighting against ‘Alī and taking Mu‘āwiya’s side.<sup>267</sup> This speech also establishes the character of ‘Ubaydallāh by showing his ideas with regard to the battle. The fact that this individual is historically important, because he is a former caliph’s son, lends some credence and legitimacy to Mu‘āwiya’s cause. His brother, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar, remained neutral throughout the battle, and did not take a side. ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar, on the other hand,

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<sup>266</sup> See ff. (211).

<sup>267</sup> See ff. (213).

had previously committed murder and was pardoned by ‘Uthmān but ‘Alī opposed the pardon. ‘Uthmān had also been accused of deviating from ‘Umar’s *sunna*, which may have been one reason for his opposition to ‘Alī. However a significant reason may also have been the fact that once ‘Alī became the caliph, he intended to punish ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar<sup>268</sup> This speech also referred to defeating the men of Iraq which would continue to be an issue during the Umayyad dynasty.

‘Alī’s character is established throughout the battle narrative. There are various aspects of his character that emerge as the pages unfold. Most of the qualities that are revealed tend to sway the audience in his direction. The speech that he gave, to Mu‘āwīya’s representatives who were sent to demand that he hand over ‘Uthmān’s killers and relinquish authority, not only gives a look at his character, but also that of Mu‘āwīya, as seen through ‘Alī’s eyes.<sup>269</sup> First his speech addressed God, the Prophet, and the position that he felt that he should have held prior to his appointment to the caliphate; which would stimulate the religious senses of the audience. He gave a very strong reminder of the place that he held due to his relationship to the Prophet. He then justified his position with regard to the caliphate, the reasons that he accepted, and the opposition that he encountered as a result. Additionally, he disparaged Mu‘āwīya’s character by portraying him and his ancestors as ungodly and not dedicated to Islam, recalling their late conversion and previous enmity with the Prophet Muḥammad. It became a common practice throughout the narrative to call someone to Book of God and the *sunna* for the purpose of showing the wrong of their position. In this case ‘Alī did this to Mu‘āwīya’s

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<sup>268</sup> Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 209.

<sup>269</sup> See ff. (214).

messengers and criticized them. The prayer that ends the speech should also be noted because he prayed for himself as well as those who he was speaking with.

Since piety was highly regarded in the Muslim community, by emphasizing ‘Alī’s own piety, the speech works as an obvious tool to sway opinions in the direction of ‘Alī. Several such tools appear throughout the narrative. The reason for this may be that the majority of the narrative that appears in al-Ṭabarī’s compilation originated with Abū Mikhnaf in Kūfa, which is also the place where most of ‘Alī’s supporters in the battle originated.<sup>270</sup> The rhetoric contained in this speech is effective, not only in advancing the narrative and assigning motive, but also in swaying opinions in the direction of preferring ‘Alī, because it spoke directly to the religious ideologies that were present throughout Islamic history.

The series of dialogue that was previously presented concerning conversations between ‘Alī and the representatives that he was sending to reason with Mu‘āwiya were followed by portions of the conversations that they had.<sup>271</sup> The original suggestion, to tempt Mu‘āwiya with a position, given to ‘Alī by Shabath, gave the impression that should ‘Alī follow the suggestion, the differences would dissipate. This also worked to undermine Mu‘āwiya’s claim to want to avenge ‘Uthmān’s murder. The dialogue that took place in this first conversation established the power hungry character of Mu‘āwiya, which would be alluded to in various ways throughout the narrative. This suggestion that was presented to ‘Alī as well as the contents of this speech introduced the possibility that

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<sup>270</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Volume XVII: The First Civil War*, 11-99.

<sup>271</sup> See ff. (215-219).

Mu‘āwīya was only interested in power. ‘Alī’s refusal to heed the suggestion indicated his position of power at the time, and his lack of a desire to compromise this power. Shabath’s speech to Mu‘āwīya further established Mu‘āwīya’s character by assigning motivations for the actions that he was taking. Shabath chastised Mu‘āwīya for not helping ‘Uthmān in his time of need and accused him of having had ulterior motives. Piety is also shown in his warning and threat to Mu‘āwīya of God’s punishment. Furthermore, it should be noted that at the end of his speech, Shabath justified ‘Alī as the rightful holder of power. The speech that followed, which was attributed to Mu‘āwīya indicated his character. In this instance, his own speech showed him as powerful but also rude. His refusal to accept the blame or the accusations that had been leveled against him and his unwillingness to negotiate a resolution to the conflict implied that Mu‘āwīya was on the wrong side of the conflict especially considering the harsh manner with which he had spoken to Shabath. These series of speeches would further sway the audience in the direction of ‘Alī and his cause.

A very important concept that appears in the narrative is that of unity in Islam. Muslims were not to kill each other. An aspect of this concept appears in the speech in which Yazīd b. Qays attempted to convince Mu‘āwīya to accept ‘Alī as the caliph.<sup>272</sup> He sermonized to give him practical advice, wherein he advised him and then appealed to his sense of community. This speech also praised ‘Alī’s piety. The speech tends to give the audience the idea that ‘Alī’s piety, Mu‘āwīya’s refusal to heed the summons, and the other characteristics that are attributed to ‘Alī in this and other speeches, further justified ‘Alī’s position. In the speech, there is even a subtle comparison of the piety of both

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<sup>272</sup> See ff. (220).

individuals. Throughout this narrative, the character traits of ‘Alī put him forth as in the right in both his legitimacy as the caliph, and in his opposition to Mu‘āwiya. However, Mu‘āwiya’s response shows a hint of legitimacy in his own position with regard to the issues at hand.<sup>273</sup> The text does not completely demonize Mu‘āwiya because it gives a potentially valid excuse for his actions through his dialogue. However, it still tends to push the audience to side with ‘Alī’s position.

Another example of the importance of piety is shown during the dispute between ‘Alī and the *qurrā*.<sup>274</sup> In this case, piety is shown on both sides of the dispute because they both indicate that they are acting in accordance with the Book of God as justification for their positions. An aspect of piety that is described in this dialogue includes the calls to God and His Book. This, in itself, displays the importance of God’s Book to the participants of the battle as well as to the audience. Also important is the fact that Mu‘āwiya and his followers are accused of having impious characters because ‘Alī said that they do not know what is in the Book. The way that these speeches and dialogues are presented with the frequent use of “by God” also indicates the importance of the use of the name of God in historical accounts and most likely in general conversation, both during the battle and subsequent to it. The audience is shown that both sides of this dispute have a measure of piety which is in contrast with the dispute between ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya.

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<sup>273</sup> See ff. (221).

<sup>274</sup> See ff. (231-232).

Just as the military character of al-Ashtar was established by citing his bravery and military prowess, the military aspect of ‘Alī’s character also had to be established. When he gave his troops instructions, the commands showed ‘Alī’s character, from both a personal and military perspective.<sup>275</sup> Fairness and justice were indicated by the specific instructions that he gave. This method presented ‘Alī in a good light and would, no doubt, give the audience a favorable opinion of the military tactics that he used.

The dialogue between ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ and his soldier, shows ‘Amr’s boldness, bravery, and military prowess in making the alliance.<sup>276</sup> This example establishes his character and gives the audience information from the opposing side of the conflict. This is an important perspective to present to the audience. It would mitigate some of the bias shown to the other side.

This series of dialogues have a tendentious function and began with ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ’s plan to divide ‘Alī’s ranks.<sup>277</sup> It is also important to notice that the plan was two-fold. First, to create a cease-fire, and secondly, to cause division within the ranks of ‘Alī, and it was successful at accomplishing both tasks. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ was shown as the person responsible for all the treachery and deception that took place on Mu‘āwiya’s side of the conflict. One reason for this is that since Mu‘āwiya was eventually the caliph and the transmissions would have begun sometime thereafter, it would make sense not to demonize him too much in the narratives. He was, therefore, given a scapegoat. This speech fully established the characters of both men. It would also give the audience the

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<sup>275</sup> See ff. (223).

<sup>276</sup> See ff. (224).

<sup>277</sup> See ff. (230).

impression that Mu‘āwiya was implicit in the event; however, not the direct source. It should be noted that the threat of punishment for disobedience to God came from Mu‘āwiya’s side, and began when the *masāhif* was raised.

Tribal or individual bias is another sub-category of the Tendentious Text category. It is reflected in the narrative in many different ways. An example is when the ancestor of Abū Mikhnaf, Mikhnaf b. Sulaym, is presented as a character of the conflict.<sup>278</sup> The reasons for the insertion of this character into the narrative could be considered as personal, or tribal bias. Similarly, this speech establishes Mikhnaf b. Sulaym’s character, as well as the difficulty that the fighters had with opposing each other, an uncomfortable fact that resulted from the battle.

Another type of bias was commonly reflected in the form of boasts from a character.<sup>279</sup> Many times, as will be shown, the boasts also came from tribes. Both at the time of the battle and at the time of the recording of the events, tribal loyalties did exist and they are reflected in the text. In this example the transmission showed praising the tribe as well as the valiancy of this particular individual. This concept is reflected in a significant amount of early Arabic literature. ‘Abdallāh b. Khalifah, was a soldier in ‘Alī’s army and a member of the Tayyi’ tribe.

The next series of dialogue also establishes character this time by showing the extreme piety of the participants in the dialogue. The case of the death of soldier,

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<sup>278</sup> See ff. (225).

<sup>279</sup> See ff. (227-228).

‘Abdallāh b. Ka‘b al-Murādī, is an example.<sup>280</sup> When he was asked his last wishes, surprisingly, he did not mention his family or friends as one would expect. He told his comrade to serve God and ‘Alī. Then he sent a message of battle instructions to ‘Alī. Even with the battle nature of the narrative, this report appears incredible. The fact that Aswad is boasting of what he would have done had he been present when his comrade was struck further proves the incredible nature of the dialogue. This text serves to instill more sympathy for ‘Alī’s cause into the audience.

In his initial response to the raising of the *masāhif*, ‘Alī’s wisdom and intuitiveness was brought to the fore because he recognized that it was a plot and warned his men of this fact.<sup>281</sup> He gave prophecy of events that would unfold should his warnings not be heeded. Wisdom is also shown in Al-Ashtar’s dialogue in response to the situation at hand. His speech also shows his bravery, courage, and strong temperament.<sup>282</sup> An incredible situation is presented, however, because when he is summoned, he speaks as though he can continue fighting and defeat the enemy single-handedly. This also is clearly shown in his subsequent speech that he said upon his arrival. In his speech he used insults to persuade the men of his position, which was unsuccessful. He first insulted them, then, he tried to reason with them when the insults did not work. He then tried to compromise with them, and when that was not successful, he again exposed the plot by Mu‘āwiya, which was intended to show it as having been successful. Finally, when nothing that he said convinced them, he insulted them further and cursed them to perish. Al-Ashtar’s usage of insulting language to unsuccessfully

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<sup>280</sup> See ff. (229).

<sup>281</sup> See ff. (235).

<sup>282</sup> See ff. (237-238).

persuade his men is another tendentious aspect of the text and is a direct contrast to the normally pious language that is found in the narrative. Additionally, the initial presentation of wisdom in the characters of both men would tend to lead the audience to side with their perspective in spite of the language that was used.

The dialogue between ‘Alī and his men regarding the cease-fire negotiation is tendentious in nature. It establishes the character of Ibn Abbās as a possible representative for ‘Alī. The fact that Ibn Abbās was shown as ‘Alī’s first choice as a negotiator should not be overlooked.<sup>283</sup> This is important because by the time the narratives were compiled the Abbāsids, who descended from him, were in power. It would not be unbelievable that historians would attempt to give him a more prestigious role in the resolution of the conflict. Al-Ashtar was ‘Alī’s second choice, despite his strong character and dedication to ‘Alī, which qualified him to have been the first choice for a negotiator. ‘Alī’s weakness in character began to show because of his passive attitude concerning the conflict within his ranks.<sup>284</sup> His lack of control started to show around this time. It is not known why the men would want a neutral party to negotiate for their cause while knowing that the opposing side’s negotiator would definitely have biases. This is an uncomfortable fact that occurred as a result of the battle with no real explanation. However, the situation was portrayed in such a way as to give sympathy to ‘Alī and his position.

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<sup>283</sup> See ff. (235-236).

<sup>284</sup> See ff. (236).

The reading of the arbitration agreement to ‘Alī’s troops begins another series of dialogue that further explains clearly the reasons behind the divisions that would come to exist and what the positions of the participants would be.<sup>285</sup> ‘Alī’s subsequent speech provides a confirmation of the truth of the warnings that he had given his troops, thus fulfilling the prophecy.<sup>286</sup> The audience would most likely, again, be swayed in the direction of ‘Alī’s cause because it would garner sympathy.

When the arbiters met for the first negotiation, the text establishes Abū Mūsa’s character and fulfills ‘Alī’s prophecy because he was not loyal to ‘Alī in the negotiation, and was unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ.<sup>287</sup> This is a Tendentious Text in that it both establishes the weakness in the character of Abū Mūsa, the strength of the character of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, and the wisdom and justification of ‘Alī, shown by his previous statements. It also explains the uncomfortable fact that no agreement was reached after all. The prophetic nature of this incident would sway the audience in the direction of ‘Alī’s cause.

The tendentious nature of the dialogue regarding the final meeting of the arbiters includes several sub-categories.<sup>288</sup> The most incredible aspect of this conversation is that it was supposed to have taken place in front of at least eight hundred people where the verdict of the arbitration was to have been read. The whole scenario was written as though it was a movie plot with ‘Amr playing the part of the villain. The cunning tactics

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<sup>285</sup> See ff. (238).

<sup>286</sup> See ff. (239).

<sup>287</sup> See ff. (241).

<sup>288</sup> See ff. (241).

that had been alluded to throughout the narrative were finally played out in this last scene. The facts that no true agreement was reached through the arbitration or that Abū Mūsā did not even indicate this fact to the crowd seemed incredible, especially since it was also not an issue that was addressed by the reporters of facts. Even Abū Mūsā's insults of 'Amr did not indicate that an agreement had not been reached, but only that he was angry. The eight hundred people who were gathered at the meeting were never informed that what they witnessed was not what had been previously agreed upon by the arbiters. Furthermore the audience was not given any indication about why Abū Mūsā left the meeting in anger.

Sometimes, the character that is established in the narrative belongs to a group of individuals rather than a single person. In the dialogue between the Khawārij and 'Alī's staunch supports, the characters of both groups were established to give the audience an understanding of their beliefs and motivations. The loyalty of those who remained as 'Alī's supporters is clearly shown. The Khawārij, on the other hand, are shown to have double standards because of the change in their loyalties. This also makes the audience sympathetic to 'Alī's and his supporters' position.<sup>289</sup>

In the above analysis it is shown in the Narrative Function category that speeches and dialogues were used primarily to advance the narrative, while conveying to the audience the motivating factors and reasons for past, present, or future actions or behaviors of the participants or in order to utilize colorful ways to describe the events.

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<sup>289</sup> See ff. (242).

This was necessary in order to inform the audience as well as to guide the story, and give the historical account. The important thing to remember is the fact that these accounts originated as verbally orchestrated stories via the *quṣṣāṣ*. Capturing and keeping the attention of the audience in telling the story would have been an important factor, therefore, the use of speeches and dialogues to accomplish the task was appropriate and successful.

The Tendentious Texts category showed that there were certain biases that were inherent the dialogue and speeches. Some of them were subtle, while others were more pronounced and obvious. The subtle biases that are present include those related to tribal or individual prowess or courage, for example. Biases toward individuals and tribes can be found throughout the narrative. This could also stem from regional influences and the need to impress upon the audience at hand, or a particular preference of the individual who was telling the story at some point. Some biases point to motivations of the participants which could sway an audience's opinion, such as how just or pious the actor was shown to be. The apparent bias that is found appears in the perspective from which the account was presented. The narrative is definitely presented in such a manner where the pro- 'Alīd perspective is resonant. It has been shown that the scholars have attributed this bias to primarily regional influences.<sup>290</sup> Interestingly enough, it is also clear that Mu'āwiya was not personally demonized terribly, nor was his perspective, even though he was shown to be on the wrong side of the conflict overall. He was given a scapegoat as a cover for his reported bad actions.

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<sup>290</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 222.

Language is also an effectively utilized tool that is put into the mouths of the participants to convey certain concepts to the audience. Many of these concepts were and still are considered to be very important to the Muslim community. Concepts such as reverence toward the Prophet and the first caliphs, and the preferential position of the Prophet's family, and the right to revenge are concepts that appear in the narrative. Language was used for sermonizing or giving religious or moral concepts to the audience. One such concept is unity in Islam, a key concept that is taught in the religion. Other concepts that appear in the narrative regard deaths, such as martyrdom and lamentations. However, the primary concept that the language displays is that of piety. With very few exceptions, the piety of the individual participants is clear to the audience, which gives an indication of its relevance to the historians and the community at large. Rather than being an actual bias, it appears to be more of a cultural norm that was written into the dialogue and speeches. Even so, it would have the same effect as a bias. Actually, many of these concepts may be categorized as such. The persona of the reports is that of a storytelling nature, although they are actual historical accounts. From the analysis, it appears that the majority of the biases, although present, were likely not intentional at all, and were very likely already present before al-Ṭabarī compiled the reports.

Chapter Three introduced a wide-range of ideas, concepts and topics that appear in the narrative. Many of these are apparent in the dialogues and speeches that have been presented and were discussed above. From the analysis of the examples that were presented, it can be noted that these concepts and topics are such that the simplest person

could be able to relate to because they clearly show the characters' emotions, motivations, opinions, ideas, points of view; and they also make the story flow easily for the audience. Also, the language is common and easy to understand so the audience can easily follow the flow of the action. The historical accounts were done in such a way, as to tell a story, using the participants' words to convey the events as they unfolded. These details point to the reality that the historical accounts were originally passed down by word of mouth and told by professional and non-professional storytellers. The previous chapters showed that the majority of the scholars do not dispute the actual historical reality that the narrative reports. Analyzing the narrative makes the storytelling nature of the reports clear. This indicates that the format of the narrative that is now in writing has not significantly changed from the original format that was used in the word-of-mouth conveying of the historical accounts by the storytellers. The most likely reason for keeping the accounts in the format of speeches and dialogues was convenience. Additionally, that format had been used as an entertaining way to enlighten audiences for years, so basically it worked well. Furthermore, once the transmissions were written down, it was most likely much easier to copy what was said in its original form (including the speeches and dialogues) rather than edit it into a narrative form. By the time of al-Ṭabarī's compilation of what had been previously written down, he chose to keep the same original format. However, as it was previously discussed, he did edit the content at least by omission, which makes sense considering the volume of the historical accounts that he compiled. His conservative, scholarly nature also could have been a reason for some of the omissions. The fact is that the convenience of copying the narrative was most likely the primary consideration in keeping this format. Additionally,

al-Ṭabarī's use of this format could effectively capture the attention of the audience, as it had for years, and give the details of the historical accounts in a way that would be remembered.

## CONCLUSION:

The historical account of the Battle of Şifḫīn as reported by al-Ṭabarī is a work that has been and will be reviewed throughout history. The importance of this event, and al-Ṭabarī's account of it, cannot be overestimated. One of the reasons for its significance is the importance of the theme of *fitna*. The causes, occurrences, and outcome of the first *fitna* have been a source of great interest and debate. This thesis has analyzed some of the speeches and dialogues that appear in al-Ṭabarī's narrative of the Battle of Şifḫīn. Chapter One described the historical background of the event. It began with events that led to the murder of the caliph, 'Uṭhmān, and ended with the death of 'Alī. A brief summary of the events that were reported on the Battle of Şifḫīn itself was also included, followed by an overview of some of the important participants. Furthermore, the importance of the event and its impact on the Islamic world was discussed as well as the sects, *Sunnī*, *Shī'ī*, and *Khawārij*, that eventually evolved due to the divisions that took place thereafter. Some examples of the polemics and apologetics that have been used by these groups to justify their positions were presented. And finally, an analysis of the modern scholarship that specifically related to the battle was discussed. Chapter Two discussed the development of early Arabic historiography, from its oral origin to its being written down. This process included an evaluation of the *quṣṣāṣ* (storytellers) and their role in the transmission process, as well as a presentation of the use of the *isnād*, which was the method that was used in the reporting of *hadīth*. Analytical tools used by historians to verify authenticity were also discussed. Common themes that were identified by the scholars were introduced, such as, *umma* (origins of believer's

community), *nubūwa* (Muḥammad's status as a prophet), *futūh* (God's support of Muslim's supremacy over non-Muslims), *fitna* (Muslims fighting each other for leadership), "Qur'an related narratives," *Khilāfa* and *sīrat al-Khulafā'*. Of those listed, the *fitna* theme, has shown to be the most important for the purpose of this analysis. The thematic nature of the accounts, as well as the topoi and schemata that were attributed to the writers of the historical accounts were discussed. Several of the problems that are associated with early Arabic historiography, such as the verbal transmission process, lack of surviving accounts, and omissions from the compilations that do exist were analyzed, as well as the opinions of the modern scholars on the issue of early Arabic historiography as a whole. Many of their approaches and methods were discussed. An introduction of the historians that were associated with this narrative, Sayf ibn 'Umar (mainly responsible for the background information) and Abū Mikhnaf and the modern scholars' opinions of them followed. Finally, al-Ṭabarī, himself, was introduced, followed by a discussion of the comments that the scholars have made regarding him. Chapter Three analyzed the concept of the usage of speeches and dialogues in historical writing. Examples were given of this use in classical Greek historiography, such as Thucydides; and, early Arabic historiography such as the reporting of the Battle of the Camel by al-Ṭabarī. Another example was then given showing the use of speeches and dialogues in early Arabic historiography, but in the form of poetry. This example was that of Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī. The use of two of Abū Mikhnaf's transmissions in the book *Nahjul-Balagha* was also discussed. Chapter Three further analyzed the Noth's observations about the use of speeches and dialogues. The possible reasons for the use of

this format of reporting was discussed and followed by an introduction to the analysis that follows in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Four the examination of the actual speeches was presented. The first category that was analyzed was the Narrative Function category. It was shown by the examples presented, that the primary purpose of the speeches that were included in this category was to advance the narrative by giving the audience a view of what happened, why something happened, why it would happen as it did, why someone did or did not do something or simply to describe something in a meaningful or memorable way. The Tendentious Texts category was then analyzed. Examples that appeared in this category performed several different functions in the narrative. They established the character of a person, explained motivations or actions that were taken, explained uncomfortable facts, used flattering or insulting language to express the sentiments of the participants, or used piety or exegesis of prophecy or religious texts or sayings. In the examples that were presented, a number of topics and/or contents were used to display the actions of the characters using the speeches and dialogues that appear in the narrative. They showed the characters giving or seeking advice or encouragement; making accusations, alliances, suggestions, or criticisms; justifying their actions or those of others; boasting; lamenting loss of life; giving chastisements or rebukes; negotiating or arbitrating; or placing blame. Speeches and dialogues were also reviewed that issued specific challenges, gave orders, commands, warnings or threats; gave or received suggestions, instructions, encouragement, praise, curses, or insults. Furthermore, some speeches or dialogues had a religious nature such as the exaltation of God; justification from God; prayer, praise, or

prophecies; threats or warnings from God; or calls to (honor) the Book of God. These were important concepts/or topics for the presentation of the events not only because they advanced the narrative, but also because they gave the audience an opportunity to see these events in such a way as that they could actually relate to them. The sentiments, feelings, motivations, that were shown in the examples, as well as the topics or concepts that were presented were all instrumental in the making the presentation effectively. The story-teller nature of the examined speeches and dialogues is apparent. Furthermore, the examination of the speeches and dialogues showed that they were presented in a way that could be understood by the simple masses. The entertainment value of the story-teller nature of the narrative cannot be overstated. As the storytellers passed the accounts down, before they were written down, it is likely that embellishments were made for audience impact and entertainment. And although the perspective of the narrative may be obvious, it appears to show mostly regional influence, due to the place of origin of al-Ṭabarī's source, and was likely inserted before the historical accounts were actually compiled.<sup>291</sup>

There may have been other reasons that the accounts could have been altered by the storytellers or those who initially wrote the reports over time. These considerations could have been social, political, religious, or factional. However, any alterations that may have occurred in the presentation of the events were likely made long before al-Ṭabarī's compilation of the narrative. This is also shown by the fact that his personal input is minimal and directly attributed to him as a source, which makes it clear to see any direct influence that he may have had on the narrative. The compilation of the events

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<sup>291</sup> Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 222.

by al-Ṭabarī was a small part of a huge time-consuming project, but the presentation of such a momentous event would have been important none-the-less. His decision to present the narrative in the format of speeches and dialogues appears to be as a result of the traditional nature of early Arabic historical reporting. Other reasons may have been due to the fact that he was a conservative and traditional collector of *hadīth* and a religious scholar and inclined to continue with the *hadīth* model of reporting. He surely had other methods to choose from that had been used by his predecessors and contemporaries. An important fact is that the transmissions had come from the story-tellers and people who had memorized the accounts word-for-word. This had been a common and successful way that events had been relayed from the beginning of Islam. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the use of speeches and dialogues to present the narrative was not necessarily a conscious decision by al-Ṭabarī; rather, he used the methods that had been used throughout Islamic history. He used what he had collected and kept the format that he was given, in its folkloric form. This presentation method had been effective for years. It was effective and it was convenient for him to include the speeches and dialogues as they had been presented to him and not alter or reorganize them into a narrative form. It would likely have been perceived that doing this would detract from the reports rather than enhance them. Finally it was shown by the analysis that the primary reason that the narrative was presented by al-Ṭabarī in the form of speeches and dialogues was, in fact, that it had worked successfully as a form of presentation from the beginning and it was a convenient to compile the narrative using the information in its as-is format.

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