This is the published version of a paper published in .

BRILL

Emerging Patterns of Authority in Early Shiʿism: al-Mukhtār and the Aesthetics of Persuasion

Torsten Hylén
Dalarna University, Sweden
thy@du.se

Abstract

In this study the author examines some aspects of authority in the movement of the Shiʿite leader al-Mukhtār (d. 67/687). The notion of religious aesthetics as developed by Birgit Meyer is used as an analytical tool. It is argued that al-Mukhtār accomplished his political endeavour partly by introducing and controlling three "aesthetic forms" which functioned as "media" between the people and the deceased ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: his claim to act on behalf of ʿAlī's son Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, whom he called *al-mahdī*, "the rightly guided"; his call to revenge for the killing of ʿAlī's son Ḥusayn; and his exhibiting of a chair that he claimed had belonged to ʿAlī. The accounts of these three media, the author furthermore argues, have an historical foundation. Finally he holds that through these media al-Mukhtār was able to channel the needs and aspirations of many of the Shiites of Kufa into political action.

Keywords

Introduction[1]

The movement of al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd al-Thaqafī (d. 67/687) is one of the most fully recorded groups in the first century of Islam, and also one that has

---

been thoroughly investigated by modern scholarship.[2] The reason for its prominence is, firstly, that it was a politically important movement that challenged the two main contenders for power during the last decade of the seventh century CE: the Umayyad caliphate, based in Damascus, and the caliphate of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, centred on Mecca. Secondly, the movement of al-Mukhtār is important for the study of the development of the Shiʿite ideology, as several of the concepts and ideas that were promoted by him and his companions were later developed and are visible even in Shiʿism today. But why did he succeed in raising a support strong enough to challenge the two caliphates? In the present study, I will examine some aspects of authority in this movement and point to what I believe is one factor (out of several) for his achievement. These features will be investigated with the help of the concept of *religious aesthetics* developed by the German anthropologist Birgit Meyer and others. The reason I have chosen her theory about religious aesthetics in my analysis of al-Mukhtār is that it can help us understand how he was able to gain such a degree of authority.

In Meyer's studies, aesthetics is taken in its old, Aristotelian meaning. Thus, Aristotle

> understood our perception of the world through our five senses as an undivided whole. This is what he meant by *aisthesis* ...: our corporeal capability on the basis of a power given in our psyche to perceive objects in the world via our five different sensorial modes, thus in a kind of analytical way, and at the same time as a specific constellation of sensations as a whole (e.g., an apple with a texture, a taste, a smell, a sound, and a visible shape and color). An apple makes an impression or has an impact (on us) as a whole and in different sensorial ways at exactly the same time.
>
> *Aisthesis* then refers to our total sensorial experience of the world and to our sensuous knowledge of it.[3]

---

two anonymous readers, and my colleague at Dalarna University, Dr Therese Rodin, for invaluable comments. Any remaining mistake in the article is my own responsibility.

2   Some important studies of al-Mukhtār and his movement from different perspectives are Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 256-290; "Kaysāniya"; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, pp. 25-81; Fishbein, "Life of al-Mukhtār"; Hawting, "Al-Mukhtār"; Qadi, *Al-Kaysānīya*, pp. 71-137; Wellhausen, *Oppositionsparteien*, pp. 74-95. These studies are of shifting quality; some (notably Anthony, *The Caliph*) are truly critical in the sense that they investigate and problematize the sources according to criteria normally used in modern academic scholarship; others (particularly Wellhausen and Dixon) are mainly compilations and attempts to harmonise the sources.

3   Meyer and Verrips, "Aesthetics," p. 21.

Meyer applies this concept to religion in contrast to the post-enlightenment understanding, according to which religion is confined to the mind. Thus, she holds that religion affects the whole human being, both body and mind, and writes that

> [i]n order to be present in the world … religion requires tangible, sensational forms. Therefore, one should analyze religion as offering a particular aesthetics, provided we … ground our understanding of aesthetics beyond the body-mind divide.[4]

Meyer regards religion as "a practice of mediation" that bridges the gap between the temporal and the perceived divine.[5] This bridging is accomplished through various kinds of media such as persons, artefacts, texts, and actions that create in the believers sensational experiences of the transcendent. Meyer argues that the person who controls such media can "distribute" the experiences, and thus obtains authority.[6]

In the present study, I will investigate three such media employed by al-Mukhtār to channel and remould the veneration for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son in law of the Prophet Muḥammad, into a means to support his own authority: his claim to act on behalf of one of ʿAlī's sons, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya; his promise to avenge the death of Ḥusayn, another of ʿAlī's sons; and his claim that he was in possession of a relic from ʿAlī, a chair that he claimed the latter had used in his lifetime.

The use of theory developed within the social sciences is not commonplace in studies of early Islam. This is unfortunate, for it has proved fruitful in many other fields of historical research. As the New Testament scholar Paula Fredriksen says: "The hope in using theory is that we can wring more information from our data".[7] In other words, theories and methods developed through studies on modern societies within disciplines such as sociology, economics, and anthropology can help us interpret data also from ancient times. Fredriksen continues:

> … the method we use, by organizing our sparse data according to its criteria, holds out the promise of helping us perceive motives or meanings

---

4 Meyer, "Aesthetics of Persuasion," pp. 749-750.
5 Meyer, "Religious Revelation," pp. 435-437; see also Meyer and Verrips, "Aesthetics," p. 25.
6 I will give further details on Meyer's theory towards the end of the article.
7 Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, p. xvii. In the context from which the quote is taken, the author does not distinguish between theory and method; both are important.

or social dynamics that are disguised, only implied, or perhaps otherwise invisible in the record once our positive evidence runs out. The method provides a "plot" by which we can organize our data into a story.[8]

Although she cautions against the excessive use of such theories, she gives several examples where it has been fruitful in the field of Biblical Studies and Early Church History. Likewise, I think that the scarcity of data from early Islam can to some extent be supplemented by conclusions drawn from similar situations in modern times through the help of such theories.

Methodological Considerations

Birgit Meyer has developed her theory and the concepts related to it during her studies on Pentecostals in Ghana in the past decades. The question is whether it is at all possible to translate a modern anthropological theory to make it applicable to events related in historical documents from a totally different culture in the seventh and eighth centuries CE: accounts in historical documents based on reports given at third or fourth hand. If the events analysed are mere literary constructs, a theory like Meyer's cannot be used. The first problem with this kind of study, then, is that of determining the historicity of the events related. Hence, while describing the three media used by al-Mukhtār, I will argue that the accounts of them in the sources probably have a historical basis.

A very substantial body of scholarship, particularly since the 1970s, has demonstrated that early Islamic historiography cannot be taken at face value.[9] Just as present-day historians, medieval Muslim scholars were influenced by the culture and values of their contexts. This affected their views of history and the events that had occurred. Thus, texts from the history of Islam have to be carefully analysed in order to sift out the biases of later historians that have accumulated upon the earliest versions (which in themselves, of course, are accounts given from particular perspectives). As previous research has demonstrated, accounts with a historical basis are often merged with traditions of a more spurious character that are religiously or politically biased. Hence, the basis in historical fact must be investigated from case to case. Space constraints make it

---

8   Ibid., p. xviii.

9   Among the many works that have been published on this, here are only a few examples that give an overview of the field of Islamic historiography and the modern discussion about it; each of them have many references to other works: Noth and Conrad, *Early Arabic Historical Tradition*; Donner, *Narratives*, pp. 1-31; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, in particular, Chapter 2; Gilliot, "Débat".

impossible to present detailed arguments for the historicity of the events and notions discussed in the present study. I will however offer two basic criteria for the historicity of the cases discussed here.

First, an event is more likely to be historically based if several sources that are mutually independent relate the same thing and/or if the same event is accounted for or echoed in different forms of literature. An example, which will be more elaborated below, is the wish expressed by al-Mukhtār to take vengeance for the killing of Ḥusayn, which is narrated by Abū Mikhnaf, Ibn Saʿd, and al-Dīnawarī, probably independently of each other. That this idea was actually expressed by al-Mukhtār rather than being a motif associated with him by later tradition is strengthened by its occurrence in poems by contemporary poets.[10] Secondly, words or actions that would have created embarrassment for the later community are likely actually to have occurred. This argument applies to the appearance in the narrative of a chair which, it was claimed, had been used by ʿAlī, which became an object of cult to some of the followers of al-Mukhtār. Others regarded the cult of the chair as blasphemous. It subsequently disappeared suddenly, never to be heard of again. The chair of ʿAlī will be further discussed below.

Shiʿite Developments before al-Mukhtār

What united many of those who called themselves Shiʿites was the idea that ʿAlī b. Abi Ṭālib, the cousin and son in law of the Prophet Muḥammad, was the rightful successor, the legatee (Ar. *waṣī*) of the Prophet.[11] They were also in constant opposition to other contestants for the political power, in particular the Umayyads, who were regarded as usurpers. It seems clear that very early— probably already during his lifetime—some groups had a considerably higher esteem of ʿAlī than as a mere political leader, and regarded him as what Amir-Moezzi calls "a semi-legendary figure of heroic and even sacred dimensions".[12]

---

10 A more extensive discussion of this criterion and its application on the movement of al-Mukhtār is found in Hylén, "Mukhtār and the *Mahdī*," pp. 145-148.

11 In this context I use the term 'Shiʿites' for the sake of convenience, although the sprawling movement had not yet crystallised and adopted many of the tenets that later Shiʿism is famous for.

12 Amir-Moezzi, "*Dīn ʿAlī*," p. 44. The view that ʿAlī had a special position in the minds of many of his followers from a very early stage is advanced by several scholars; see e.g. Anthony, *The Caliph*, passim; Dakake, *Charismatic Community*, pp. 33-69; Kohlberg, "Ṣaḥāba," pp. 145-146; Qadi, "The Term *Ghulāt*," pp. 295-301.

This veneration of him was often referred to as *dīn ʿAlī*, "the religion of ʿAlī".[13] Furthermore, immediately after his murder in 40/661 some Shiʿites, in particular the group that came to be called the Sabaʾiyya, seems either to have denied that he had died, or expected him to return from death.[14]

A couple of decades after the death of ʿAlī, his son Ḥusayn was prepared to enter the political arena. The Shiʿites of Kufa asked Ḥusayn to leave Mecca and come to their town and lead them in an insurrection against the Umayyad governor there.[15] When he was informed that his following in the town was massive and it would be safe to come to Kufa, he set off. But while he was on the long journey, the new governor of Kufa, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād, bribed and intimidated those that had pledged their allegiance to Ḥusayn into withholding their support from him. In Muḥarram 61/October 680, Ḥusayn and his little group (consisting of perhaps a hundred people: men, women, and children) were intercepted by a large army at Karbalāʾ, North West of Kufa, and cut off from all access to water. He first tried to negotiate with the enemy, but when this proved futile the only choice was to fight. Ḥusayn and most of his family and followers were killed.

Immediately after the death of Ḥusayn, many of those who had pledged to support him, but who failed to come to his help, felt deep guilt for their betrayal. One of the first expressions of this guilt is seen in the movement of the Penitents (Ar. *Tawwābūn*).[16] Some of the men who had failed to support him gathered and decided that they would take to arms and go against the Umayyad army; to kill those that had killed Ḥusayn, or be killed themselves in the attempt to find revenge for him. The Penitents were well aware that this act in all probability would lead to their own deaths, but they regarded it as an act of martyrdom for the cause of the loyalty to the Prophet and his offspring, and

---

13   Amir-Moezzi, "*Dīn ʿAlī*".

14   Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 313-317; Qadi, "The Term *Ghulāt*," pp. 300-301; Amir-Moezzi, "Muḥammad le paraclet," pp. 44-45. For a discussion of the doctrine of *rajʿa* (returning from the dead) in early Shiʿism, see Amir-Moezzi, "Rajʿa"; van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, pp. 285-287, 290-298.

15   The following summary of the Karbalāʾ tragedy is based on the sources given by al-Ṭabarī *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 216-390. The text is translated by I.K.A. Howard in al-Ṭabarī, *History, vol. XIX*, pp. 1-183. For a survey of the sources, see Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ". For more comprehensive summaries of the story see e.g. Haider, *Shīʿī Islam*, pp. 66-81; Hylén, "Ḥusayn, the Mediator," pp. 205-217; Jafri, *Origins*, pp. 174-221; Veccia Vaglieri, "Ḥusayn".

16   The most complete version of the story of the Penitents is found in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 497-513, 538-578; Eng. tr. by G. Hawting in al-Ṭabarī, *History, vol. XX*, pp. 80-97, 124-160. For summaries in translation, see Wellhausen, *Oppositionsparteien*, pp. 71-74; Halm, *Shiʿa Islam*, pp. 16-20; Calmard, "Culte," pp. 66-69; Jafri, *Origins*, pp. 222-234; Dakake, *Charismatic Community*, pp. 90-95.

thought that it would cleanse them from their offense. They set out in Rabīʿ II 65/November 684, eventually met the Umayyads at ʿAyn al-Warda in northern Iraq, and were defeated. Some of the few survivors felt great shame that they were not killed in the campaign.

On the wider political arena, things became increasingly disturbed at this time. Soon after the death of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya in 64/683, the Meccan aristocrat ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr conquered all of the Hijāz, southern Iraq, and the Western areas of Iran. From Mecca he claimed the caliphate for himself, and installed governors in the important towns of his empire, including Kufa. Thus, for about a decade (64-73/683-692), there were two caliphates competing for power over the entire region: one in the south with Ibn al-Zubayr as caliph in Mecca, and one in the north where members from the Umayyad family in Damascus claimed the authority for themselves.[17]

Many scholars agree that in the period between the Prophet Muḥammad and the beginning of the eighth century, apocalyptic ideas flourished in this part of the world.[18] In some groups, notably those that held ʿAlī in high esteem, such ideas were very prominent. In his study of the early Shiʿite group called the Sabaʾiyya, Sean Anthony discusses their idea that ʿAlī was not dead but would return—his *rajʿa*—and demonstrates that this notion had obvious messianic overtones.[19] Many of these ideas were common in Jewish, Christian, and other apocalyptic thought at the time, and had been appropriated and adapted by the Sabaʾiyya movement. Anthony maintains that several themes can be historically verified as belonging to this group: the denial of the death of ʿAlī and the belief in his return; the motive that he would gain a messianic victory over the enemies of God while carrying the lost staff of Moses; and the identification of him with the apocalyptic beast (*dābba min al-arḍ*) mentioned in the Qurʾan 27:82.[20] But, Anthony further argues,

> the full extent of Jewish influence (or Christian, Zoroastrian and Manichaean for that matter) on early Islam cannot be localized or limited

---

17 Hawting, *First Dynasty*, pp. 46-57; Robinson, *Abd al-Malik*, pp. 35-39.
18 See e.g. Arjomand, "Apocalypticism," pp. 238-257; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 75-80; Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 78-82; Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 224-225. By "apocalyptic" I mean ideas about the imminent end of the world and the signs preceding it.
19 Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 195-225.
20 Ibid., p. 218. The notion of the beast is probably an influence from apocalyptic texts in the Bible (Dan. 7:1-8; Rev. 13). In contrast to the beast in Christian tradition, however, the Islamic *dābba* is often regarded as benevolent; see Arjomand, "Apocalypticism," pp. 239-240. Hence it was possible to identify it with ʿAlī.

within the confines of a singular sectarian trend…. These sorts of influences were, rather, pervasive and much more mutual and dialectic than has, until very recently, been appreciated…. These symbols, mythemes, prophesies, etc. were "in the wind" and somehow—the fog of historical distance hinders our ability to find these intermediaries—they came to be attached to the person of ʿAlī and the hopes and ambitions of his partisans.[21]

Thus, ideas that can be called "messianic" were associated with ʿAlī from a very early period, and although many Shiʿites objected to them, at least in their more extreme forms as can be seen from the sources, they were quite widespread.[22]

Al-Mukhtār and His Movement

Following the defeat of the Penitents in 65/685, al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd al-Thaqafī—the main focus of the present study—rose to power as the most prominent political leader of the Shiʿites.[23] The sources often regard him with great suspicion, describing him as a political opportunist more interested in power than in adhering to political or religious convictions. Al-Mukhtār claimed to have been sent by a living son of ʿAlī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya. Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya was ʿAlī's son, not (like Ḥasan and Ḥusayn) with Fāṭima the daughter of the Prophet, but with a slave woman from the tribe of Ḥanīfa; hence his appellation Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya ("the son of the Ḥanafī woman"). He seems to have been very hesitant, if not outright negative to being associated with al-Mukhtār. The latter, however, called Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya *al-mahdī*, "the rightly guided".[24] He gathered around him a great number of Shiʿites, to a large extent consisting of two categories: *mawālī* (non-Arab clients to an Arab tribe), and members of South Arabian tribes who had settled in Kufa.

Most sources attest the great amount of *mawālī* (sg. *mawlā*) among the supporters of al-Mukhtār.[25] Pre-Islamic Arab society was based on a system of

---

21   Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 224-225. But cf. Cameron, "Late Antique Apocalyptic" for a more cautious approach to the phenomenon of apocalypticism in Late Antiquity.

22   On this issue, see now also Amir-Moezzi, "Muḥammad le paraclet".

23   In the following account I relate only details that are supported by at least two independent sources. For a discussion of the historicity of various elements of the story, see below.

24   I will discuss the different meanings of this term below. See also Hylén, "Mukhtār and the *Mahdī*".

25   See e.g. Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 85; Fishbein, "Life of al-Mukhtār," pp. 15-42; Urban, "Early Islamic *Mawālī*," pp. 98-104.

genealogically defined tribes. Membership in a tribe was necessary in order to be part of society.[26] Those who were not born into a tribe could become a member of society only by becoming affiliated to a tribe in a kind of contractual relationship; by becoming a *mawlā* to an Arab belonging to a tribe, a person could thereby become connected to that tribe. The *mawālī* thus comprised all non-Arabs who were part of the society, including freed slaves. It is clear that in the first century of Islam,[27] to join the movement was to join the Arab society. During the Arab conquests of the surrounding, non-Arab societies, some individuals and groups among the conquered peoples converted to the new faith and joined the ranks of the Arabs. Of those who did not convert immediately, many slaves were taken, some of whom were later manumitted on conversion. Both categories—immediate converts and freed slaves—became *mawālī*, and thus incorporated into the Arab society.[28] In spite of the shared faith, however, the *mawālī* were regarded as second class citizens by the Arabs headed by the Umayyad rulers. Patricia Crone argued that their situation was much like the indigenous peoples in the European colonies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She held that one way for the *mawālī* to assert their identity in the new society was to separate themselves from the Umayyad Arab chauvinist ideology. The main alternative open to them was to align with the Shiʿites, and adopt their reverence for the family of the Prophet which "formed a sacred lineage so greatly elevated above Arabs and non-Arabs alike that the differences between the two were drained of importance".[29] At the same time, the *mawālī* could identify with the sufferings of the *ahl al-bayt*; both groups had been treated badly by the Umayyads and those affiliated with them. Thus, seeking vengeance for Ḥusayn—the grandson of the Prophet who was killed by the Umayyads—was a very concrete way to break the ties with the Arab

---

26   For a discussion problematizing the concepts of Arabs and Arabic tribes in pre-Islamic times, see Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, esp. pp. 39-42.

27   Donner ("Believers to Muslims"; *Muhammad and the Believers*) has argued (convincingly in my opinion), that the terms *islām* and *muslim* were not used as a name for a particular religious group and its adherents until the beginning of the seventh century CE. The designation used before that time was *muʾminūn*, "Believers".

28   Hoyland, *In God's Path*, pp. 157-169; but cf. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, pp. 242-244, and esp. p. 280, n. 18.

29   Crone, "*Mawālī*," p. 186. Although Urban ("Early Islamic *Mawālī*," pp. 86-98) expresses problems with Crone's and others' "ethnification" of the concept of *mawlā*, she accepts the view that the *mawālī* tried to create new and inclusive forms of nobility, based on Islamic virtue rather than birth and lineage. In her thesis, Urban views the phenomenon of the *mawālī* from quite a different and interesting perspective than many earlier historians. A problem, however, is her often uncritical use of single sources and isolated traditions as bases for her arguments.

society in its present form, and try to shape something new.[30] As the number of *mawālī* grew, it was increasingly difficult to uphold the system of tribal af-filiation, and in the movement of al-Mukhtār they were regarded by many as a threat to the Arabs rather than as a part of society.[31]

To make a sharp distinction between Arabs and non-Arabs is, however, to oversimplify. There were plenty of *mawālī* who were loyal to their tribes in early Umayyad times, just as many Arabs loathed and fought against the Umayyads, and joined the Shiʿite movement.[32] As I have already mentioned, several sourc-es indicate that the second major group that constituted al-Mukhtār's follow-ing were Arabs belonging to South Arabian tribes.[33] The Southern Arabs seems to have been politically and religiously divided, the rifts between followers of and opponents to al-Mukhtār extending even within the tribes. The sources do not reveal the reasons why certain Southern groups or individuals joined his movement.[34]

As suggested above, one reason for al-Mukhtār's success in marshalling such large numbers was that he called the people to revenge for the blood of the family of the Prophet, in particular of Ḥusayn. He was able to win over the Arab nobleman Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar (of the southern Arabian tribe Madhḥij) by producing a letter that he alleged was written by the Mahdi, Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. Ibn al-Ashtar became one of al-Mukhtār's most successful com-manders, and the movement then managed to oust Ibn al-Zubayr's governor in Kufa. The chronology of the following events is unclear as the sources differ, but they all agree that al-Mukhtār and his movement took a harsh revenge on the Kufans who had taken part in the battle against Ḥusayn. In 67/686, al-Mukhtār sent an army led by Ibn al-Ashtar against a great Umayyad force, and managed to defeat it and to kill ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād at Naṣībīn in Northern Iraq. Ibn Ziyād had been governor in Kufa when Ḥusayn approached the town, and was responsible for his killing. Finally, a few months later, al-Mukhtār's movement was crushed by an army led by the governor of Basra, Musʿab b. al-Zubayr, brother to ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr. Kufa was regained, and al-Mukhtār was besieged in the palace of the town for some weeks before he was killed.

---

30   Crone, "*Mawālī*," pp. 184-186; *Political Thought*, pp. 84-85.
31   Urban, "Early Islamic *Mawālī*," pp. 98-104.
32   Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 85-86.
33   Djaït, "Les Yamanites," pp. 168-170; Rotter, *Bürgerkrieg*, pp. 99-101.
34   Watt's hypothesis ("Shiʿism," pp. 161-162) that South Arabian ideas about a charismatic leader was behind their promotion of ʿAlī and his descendants has not been supported by later studies, to my knowledge.

Sources for the Story of al-Mukhtār

In the introduction to this article, I mentioned that the movement of al-Mukhtār is one of the most fully recorded in the early history of Islam. What I meant by this is that there are several sources that seem to be mutually independent that relate the story of the movement in full or in part, or that touch on or allude to details in it. In this section, I will give an overview over the sources used for the present study:

(1)   Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/774) gives the most comprehensive account by far. The original text is lost to us, but it is related by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923)[35] who quite faithfully seems to have reproduced his "book" *Kitāb al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd*,[36] and in abbreviated forms by al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) and Ibn Aʿtham.[37] Al-Balādhurī's and Ibn Aʿtham's versions are much more edited than that of al-Ṭabarī, and I will not refer to them in the analysis. (Al-Balādhurī does have some material not found in al-Ṭabarī's version, but since it does not have any significance for the present study, I will not consider it.)

(2)   Al-Dīnawarī's (d. around 290/902) account differs considerably from that of Abū Mikhnaf when it comes to wording and chronology, and thus seems to be independent of it.[38] Fishbein argues that al-Dīnawarī drew some of his material from al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823) or his sources.[39]

(3)   The parts of Ibn Saʿd's (d. 230/845) entry about Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya where anecdotes about the dealings between the latter and al-Mukhtār are

---

35   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 599-746. In the following, I will normally refer only to the Leiden edition of al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*. The English translation made by G. Hawting al-Ṭabarī, *History, vol. XX.*, and M. Fishbein al-Ṭabarī, *History, vol. XXI* also give the pagination of the Leiden edition in the margin, and it should be easy for any reader to consult the English text even though it is not referred to directly. Only when the translation is quoted, I refer to it. Fishbein's thesis "Life of al-Mukhtār" to a large extent is a translation of the entire text of al-Ṭabarī about al-Mukhtār. It is useful for comparison with Hawting's translation.

36   This text is mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 93; see also Sezgin, *Abū Miḥnaf*, pp. 108-109. I have put the word "book" within quotation marks in order to show that by this I do not mean a published book in the modern sense. For a discussion of the question of oral and written material, see Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, pp. 28-44.

37   Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. V, pp. 207-208, 212-273; Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, vol. VI, pp. 53-58, 73-77, 87-200. The date of Ibn Aʿtham's death has been contested. Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtham," pp. 90-96 has suggested the beginning of the ninth century; Lindstedt, "Sources," however, has convincingly argued for the more traditional date a century later.

38   Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, vol. I, pp. 296-316. I will normally refer only to Guirgass' edition. Fishbein has translated this text ("Life of al-Mukhtār," pp. 462-495), and has included page numbers from this edition.

39   Fishbein, "Life of al-Mukhtār," pp. 15-16.

interspersed, differ in some respects from that of al-Dīnawarī. Moreover, it is clearly a source which is independent from that of Abū Mikhnaf, and thus must be taken into consideration.[40]

(4) Al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī introduce a short account which probably stems from the well-known Kufan traditionist ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797).[41] As I have mentioned above, al-Balādhurī's version is abbreviated, so in this study I will only refer to al-Ṭabarī's rendering of Ibn al-Mubārak.

(5) The historical accounts are now and then interrupted by poetry ascribed to contemporary poets, i.e. to eye witnesses that have attempted to immortalise an event through a poem. If these poems are really written by the person to whom they are ascribed they are excellent, though limited sources to the events that they depict.[42] The events studied here are illustrated by poems that are reproduced by two or more independent sources, and/or are written by famous authors that are named in the text. A poem may be forged, but it is less likely in the case of famous poets whose works were so well known that falsely attributed poetry would probably have been exposed. For that reason, I have used three poems which I have considered as genuine: one by ʿAbd Allāh b. Hammām al-Salūlī (d. after 96/715);[43] one by Aʿshā Hamdān (d. 83/702);[44] and a short poem by al-Mutawakkil al-Laythī (d. after 72/691).[45]

(6) A final source which is very valuable in spite of its limited scope of interest, is the Syriac chronicle *Rīš Mellē* by the contemporary Christian writer John bar Penkāyē. It is probably written sometime between 687 and 691 CE, and contains a passage which confirms al-Mukhtār's revolt in Kufa, his following among the *mawālī*, and the victorious battle at Naṣībīn.[46] I have used the translation by Brock.[47]

---

40   Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, pp. 72-78. Elsewhere, I have studied the relationship between Abū Mikhnaf and Ibn Saʿd's accounts about al-Mukhtār more in detail (Hylén, "Mukhtār and the *Mahdī*," pp. 145-148).

41   Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 5, p. 242; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 702-705.

42   Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 52.

43   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 636-638; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, vol. I, p. 299. On al-Salūlī, see El-Achèche, ch. 4; Pellat, "ʿAbd Allāh b. Hammām al-Salūlī".

44   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 704-705. For a discussion of different versions of this poem given in other sources and an analysis of these, see Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 277-290.

45   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, p. 705.

46   Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 194-200.

47   Brock, "North Mesopotamia".

Al-Mukhtār's Authority

As we have seen, by the time of al-Mukhtār, the myth[48] of ʿAlī was already quite developed. He was highly revered among Shiʿites in general, and, it seems, worshipped by some groups. The notion of *dīn ʿAlī*, "the religion of ʿAlī", was well-known and important to the believers. Al-Mukhtār's feat was to have found media with which to channel this reverence for ʿAlī so that it became a means to support his own authority. To use concepts from Meyer's theory, these media bridged the distance between the transcendent ʿAlī and his devotees; al-Mukhtār's control of the media and their "distribution" contributed to his authority. In the present study, three such media will be discussed:

(1)   He claimed to act on behalf of one of ʿAlī's sons, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, and called the latter *al-mahdī*, "the rightly guided";

(2)   He called to revenge for the death of ʿAlī's son Ḥusayn, and actually accomplished this;

(3)   He produced "ʿAlī's chair" (*kursī ʿAlī*).

Other such media could probably have been chosen in addition to these. For example, al-Mukhtār's use of rhymed prose (*sajʿ*)—employed by pre-Islamic soothsayers to convey revelations from the spiritual world—might have been mentioned.[49] Constraints of space oblige me to concentrate on the three media mentioned here, however. In this context I use the term "media" as an analytical tool, following Meyer. Al-Mukhtār did not, of course, use it himself. Furthermore, I do not intend to say that he cynically exploited the credulity of his followers for his own benefit. This may have been so, but in fact, contemporary or near-contemporary sources say very little about his motives, although later sources often describe him as "liar".[50] As mentioned above, I will discuss the historicity of each of the media while accounting for it and analysing its function.

Al-Mukhtār's Acting on Behalf of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya

ʿAlī, then, was regarded the legatee (*waṣī*) of the Prophet Muḥammad. Al-Mukhtār claimed that, as the most prominent son of ʿAlī still alive, Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya was now the rightful successor of the Prophet. According to Abū Mikhnaf and the poet ʿAbd Allāh b. Hammām, al-Mukhtār called him the son

---

48   I define "myth" as a narrative that is foundational to the world view or identity of a group of people. For a discussion leading up to this definition, see Hylén, "Ḥusayn, the Mediator," pp. 20-31.

49   Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 272-273, 287-289.

50   On this, see also Fishbein's comparison between the texts of Abū Mikhnaf and al-Dīnawarī regarding al-Mukhtār's motives in "Life of al-Mukhtār," pp. 46-51.

of the legatee, *ibn al-waṣī*.[51] By associating himself with Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, al-Mukhtār used the position of the former as a way to defer to ʿAlī himself, and thereby as a medium to promote his own authority. Two of the sources investigated here indicate that al-Mukhtār referred to himself as the *wazīr* ("helper") of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya: by Abū Mikhnaf in several places,[52] and Ibn Hammām in a poem quoted by Abū Mikhnaf.[53] This term is used twice in the Qurʾān to describe the relationship between Moses and Aaron, in which God makes Aaron the *wazīr*, the helper or assistant of Moses.[54] It is possible that al-Mukhtār by using it may have had the intention to establish a relationship between Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya and himself equal to that between Moses and Aaron.[55]

Al-Muktār furthermore talked of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya as *al-mahdī*, "the rightly guided one". This concept and its use in the first century of Islam have been much studied by contemporary scholarship, in particular in connection with al-Mukhtār and his movement.[56] Words created from the Arabic root *h-d-y*, here connoting divine guidance, occur frequently in the Qurʾān. Indeed, the concept is "as central to Islam as salvation is to Christianity".[57] Although the passive participle *mahdī*, "rightly guided [by God]" does not occur in the Qurʾān, it was used very early in Islam. Most scholars are of the opinion that the term did not have messianic implications at the outset of Islam; it simply meant that the person described by this epithet—normally some kind of leader—was divinely guided. Many hold, that it was only when al-Mukhtār

---

51   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 534, 611, 637. There is in fact one more instance of this expression on p. 747. In this case it is ascribed to Ibn al-Hanafiyya himself, who uses it in a letter that he allegedly wrote to al-Mukhtār. The letter is quoted in a tradition ascribed to a certain ʿAlī b. Harb al-Mawsilī, a traditionist, historian, and poet who died in 879 CE. The tradition is quite short, however, and I have not found any other version of it, so it has not been possible for me to determine its historicity. For that reason I do not consider it probative in the present context.

52   See e.g. ibid., p. 534, 608, 611.

53   Ibid., p. 638.

54   Qurʾān 20:29-34 and 25:35. Sunni as well as Shiʿi tradition equal this relationship to that between the Prophet Muḥammad and ʿAlī. I have not been able to verify any occurrences of this tradition earlier than in Ibn Saʿd's *al-Tabaqāt*, referring back to al-Wāqidī *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. III, pt. 1, pp. 14 ff. However, there are many traditions about this in both Sunni and Shiʿi *ḥadīth* collections and other sources (for references to Sunni *ḥadīth* collections, see Wensinck, *Handbook*, p. 15; for some Shiʿite sources, see Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis*, p. 156, n. 122,) so most probably it is much earlier, perhaps even going back to the lifetime of the Prophet and ʿAlī. On this theme, see also Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 26-28; Rubin, "Prophets," pp. 51-52.

55   Goitein, "Vizier"; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 77-78; Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 267-268.

56   The following section is abbreviated from Hylén, "Mukhtār and the *Mahdī*".

57   Arjomand, "Apocalypticism," p. 250; see also Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, pp. 193-195.

referred to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya as *al-mahdī* that the term first came to mean a kind of messiah.[58] There is in fact very little in the text that associates the term *al-mahdī* with any kind of messianism. I will return to this question shortly.

Most modern scholars maintain that al-Mukhtār used the epithet *al-mahdī* of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya.[59] Two independent sources state that al-Mukhtār referred to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya as *al-mahdī*: Abū Mikhnaf[60] and Ibn Saʿd.[61] In addition to these sources there is also a poem by the contemporary Ibn Hammām, where other forms of the root are used referring to him.[62] These three sources: Abū Mikhnaf, Ibn Saʿd, and ʿAbdallāh b. Hammām taken together, in my opinion, make it most probable that al-Mukhtār and his companions actually referred to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya as *al-mahdī*.

The next question, then, is what al-Mukhtār and his companions meant by this title. Despite views to the contrary by many scholars, there is in fact very little in the sources that indicates that Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya was regarded as a messianic redeemer. The only passage in the sources where al-Mukhtār purportedly uses phrases that could be interpreted in this direction is transmitted by Abū Mikhnaf, who relates al-Mukhtār's propaganda to win over the *Tawwābūn* to his side before their disastrous journey:

> I have come to you from the one who is in authority, the source of virtue, the legatee of the Legatee, and the Imām the *mahdī*, with an authority in which there is restoration of health, *removal of the covering*, fighting against the enemies, and fulfilment of favors … Listen to what I say and obey my command, and then rejoice and *spread the good news*.[63]

Arjomand quotes parts of this passage,[64] and, with him I italicise the phrases that he regards as having a particularly apocalyptic tinge. I agree with him that these clauses can, perhaps should, be interpreted from an apocalyptic

---

58 Arjomand, "Apocalypticism," p. 250; Donner, "La question du messianisme"; Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 184-185; Anthony, "Kaysāniya". For the view that the term *al-mahdī* had messianic connotations from the beginning, see Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, pp. 3-6, and in less affirmative terms, Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 75. Crone and Hinds, however, state that al-Mukhtār probably was the first to use the term, referring to Ibn al-Hanafiyya, "in the sense of a specific and long-awaited redeemer figure", *God's Caliph*, p. 103.

59 For a thorough analysis, see Hylén, "Mukhtār and the *Mahdī*," pp. 145-150.

60 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 509, 533-534, 608, 610-611, 620, 674-675, 694.

61 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, pp. 72-74.

62 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, p. 638; *History, vol. XX*, p. 222.

63 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, p. 534; *History, vol. XX*, p. 120.

64 Arjomand, "Apocalypticism," p. 250.

perspective, but as already mentioned, they are the only statements which describe the *mahdī* and the mission he has given to al-Mukhtār in such terms. Thus, it cannot be established that al-Mukhtār actually uttered these words, or something similar.

In addition to this single passage, there is a curious incident related by Ibn Saʿd, in which al-Mukhtār ascribes supernatural (although not necessarily messianic) qualities to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya as *al-mahdī*. We are told that in Mecca, Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya was harassed by Ibn al-Zubayr, who wanted a pledge of allegiance from him. Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya considered leaving the hostile situation and going to the more friendly Kufa. Al-Mukhtār heard about this but did not like it:

> [Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya's] coming was bothersome for [al-Mukhtār], and he said: "In *al-mahdī* there is a sign [ʿalāma]. He will come to this town of yours [i.e. Kufa] and in the market place a man will strike him with a sword, but it will not harm him or make a mark on him." Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya came to know about this and he stayed [where he was].[65]

According to this passage, al-Mukhtār spread the word that Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya was invulnerable and that this was a sign of his being *al-mahdī*. But, he also prophesied that someone would test this if Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya came to Kufa. In this way al-Mukhtār frightened Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya from coming and putting his life on trial. As related by Ibn Saʿd, the incident is thus a ruse of al-Mukhtār to keep Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya at arm's length. Should it be accepted as historical, it would show that the idea of a Mahdi with superhuman qualities was not alien to al-Mukhtār and his followers.[66]

These two isolated traditions are the only overt examples in the sources of any kind of messianic or superhuman traits attributed to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya by al-Mukhtār. The fact that they relate two separate events in different contexts, in my opinion makes it impossible to verify their historicity. Thus, I do not think that there is textual evidence enough to prove that it was al-Mukhtār who first associated the term *al-mahdī* with different messianic ideas. It seems evident, however, that this connection was made by the movement that evolved after his death, the Kaysāniyya, in the last decades of the first/seventh century.

---

65   Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 74, my translation.
66   It seems that to Qadi (*Al-Kaysānīya*, p. 124) this was an episode that actually occurred. In fact, it is the only incident she refers to as an argument for al-Mukhtār's promotion of Ibn al-Hanafiyya to a super-human level. Dixon (*Umayyad Caliphate*, p. 58) and Anthony (*The Caliph*, pp. 259-260) seem to leave the question of its historicity open (but cf. Anthony, "Kaysāniya").

As we have seen above, it was first and foremost ʿAlī with whom messianic traits were associated, and this will be further corroborated in the analysis of the incident of the chair of ʿAlī that follows. The notion of *al-mahdī*, on the other hand, is confined to Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya in the story of al-Mukhtār. It has been argued that ʿAlī had indeed been called *al-mahdī* (albeit in a non-messianic sense) previous to al-Mukhtār and his movement.[67] Supposedly, this occurred when Sulaymān b. Surad, the leader of the Penitents movement, during the visit at Ḥusayn's grave called the latter "the right-guided one, son of the right-guided one" (*al-mahdī ibn al-mahdī*).[68] This argument, however, confuses the *event* of the Penitents, which as we have seen occurred just before the rebellion of al-Mukhtār, with the *account* given of the movement, which cannot be dated with any kind of security before the beginning of the seventh century, i.e. a couple of decades after al-Mukhtār.[69] Hence, this text can hardly be used as an argument that ʿAlī was viewed as the Mahdi before the time of al-Mukhtār, either in a non-messianic or a messianic sense.

However, that Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya was rightly guided ("*mahdī*") was in the mind of al-Mukhtār and the Shiʿites in Kufa of course an effect of him being the legatee of ʿAlī, who in his turn was the legatee of the Prophet Muḥammad. Although it cannot be established that al-Mukhtār filled the concept of *al-mahdī* with a messianic content himself, he certainly paved the way for such a synthesis after his death. More important for the present study is that he deferred to ʿAlī by making himself the *wazīr* of the "son of the legatee". Thus, he used Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya as a medium, in Meyer's sense, between ʿAlī and the Shiʿites, to support his own authority. By producing letters from Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya (whether forged or not), al-Mukhtār buttressed his claim to have been sent by the former. It seems, however, that this platform was not as robust as he would have wished. Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya himself was cautious about being associated with al-Mukhtār, and at least initially some of the Shiʿites doubted that the latter was sent by ʿAlī's son.

Al-Mukhtār's Revenge for the Death of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī

So many independent sources relate that al-Mukhtār gained influence by summoning people to seek revenge for the killing of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, and actually killed most of the leadership of the campaign against Ḥusayn, that it can

---

67 E.g. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, p. 9; Fishbein in Ṭabarī, *History, vol. XX*, pp. 40, n. 160; Anthony, "Kaysāniya".

68 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, p. 546.

69 Moreover, on grammatical and structural grounds, I suspect that this sentence is a later insertion to the text. I plan to present my arguments for this in more detail in a coming publication.

be regarded as an established historical fact. It is normally expressed as vengeance "for the blood of Ḥusayn" or "for the blood of the Prophet's family" or something similar in the sources. Thus, al-Ṭabarī transmits material about this from Abū Mikhnaf,[70] from the poet ʿAbd Allāh b. Hammām al-Salūlī (via Abū Mikhnaf)[71] and from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak.[72] The same kind of expression is found in Ibn Saʿd and al-Dīnawarī.[73] The sources also relate how al-Mukhtār and his companions actually achieved revenge by seeking out and killing men that were involved in the battle of Karbalāʾ on the Umayyad side, including ʿUmar b. Saʿd and other leaders of the Karbalāʾ campaign living in Kufa. The victorious battle against the person ultimately responsible for the killing of Ḥusayn, ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād, is mentioned also by the Christian John bar Penkāyē. Although the latter does not mention revenge for Ḥusayn as motive for the Kufan troops (he rather adduces political and economic motives for the rebellion of al-Mukhtār), he confirms the battle at Naṣībīn and its outcome.[74]

The story about the Penitents movement shows that seeking revenge for the killing of Ḥusayn was a crucial matter for the Shiʿites in Kufa. Although the main elements of this story as presented by al-Ṭabarī (through Abū Mikhnaf) cannot be established before the beginning of the second/eighth century,[75] it would be very difficult to explain it without taking account of a real feeling of guilt of the members in the group, and that this feeling was prevalent among many of the Kufan Shiʿites. To be true, one must take into consideration the fact that the numbers of the Penitents are most probably exaggerated in the story, at least the amount of those who declared their loyalty but never showed up at the actual campaign (16,000 men according to Abū Mikhnaf).[76] Still, the movement must have had a considerable impact on the Shiʿites of the town, and reflected the feelings of many of them. Thus, it is not surprising that al-Mukhtār succeeded in rising support for himself as a leader with an alleged mission from Ḥusayn's half-brother to wreak the vengeance which the Penitents had failed to exact for Ḥusayn's death. The revenge would have caused a relief from the guilt felt towards the family of ʿAlī, thereby restoring the lost honour of those who had failed to support ʿAlī's son at Karbalāʾ. Associating to Meyer's theory, the revenge for Ḥusayn thus functioned as a medium which strengthened the link between ʿAlī and his devotees.

---

70   E.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 509, 608, 611, 675.
71   Ibid., p. 637.
72   Ibid., p. 714.
73   Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 73; Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, vol. I, pp. 296, 297, 299, 304.
74   Brock, "North Mesopotamia," pp. 64-67.
75   Hylén, "Date"; "Myth".
76   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 539-540.

Al-Mukhtār and ʿAlī's Chair

Several sources relate that, before embarking on the campaign against the Syrians, al-Mukhtār presented a chair (*kursī*) which he claimed had belonged to ʿAlī.[77] This chair aroused great enthusiasm among some of the followers of al-Mukhtār. The curious affair of the chair is dealt with by several of the sources mentioned above: two narratives by Abū Mikhnaf and ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak respectively, and two hostile poems by Aʿshā Hamdān and al-Mutawakkil al-Laythī. All are reported by al-Ṭabarī, and in the following I will mainly rely on his account.[78] However, Anthony relates a longer rendering of Aʿshā's poem,[79] taken from al-Jāḥiẓ's *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, and when needed I will also consider this version as it is presented by Anthony.

Why did a chair that had belonged to ʿAlī create such excitement? What did the chair represent in the life of ʿAlī, and what function could it have had for him? Two hypotheses are presented regarding this. The first, suggested by Shaul Shaked,[80] argues that the chair of ʿAlī was a replica of an Iranian symbol of power: the royal throne, which symbolised legitimate power and carried with it sacred associations. The second theory is advanced by Sean Anthony, who, against Shaked, maintains that "a more plausible explanation is that the chair was revered because ʿAlī had sat upon a chair while commanding his armies, a common practice for Arab commanders in the early Islamic period".[81] Although both hypotheses are conceivable (and perhaps not mutually exclusive) none of them can be verified by the sources.

Two versions of how the chair was introduced to al-Muktār's followers are extant. According to the version of Ibn al-Mubārak, Ṭufayl b. Jaʿda b. Hubayra—a grandson of Umm Hāniʾ a sister of ʿAlī—was once in need of money. He went to his neighbour, an oil merchant, who had a dirty old chair. Ṭufayl took the chair, cleaned it and sold it to al-Mukhtār for a large sum as being the chair of ʿAlī.[82] According to the other version, related by Abū Mikhnaf, it was al-Mukhtār who took the initiative and nagged the relatives of Umm Hāniʾ to give him ʿAlī's chair. They denied that they had it, but finally, to make an end to his pestering, the family gave al-Mukhtār a chair and said that it had been

---

77   In the following section, I am deeply indebted to the comprehensive analysis that Sean Anthony (*The Caliph*, pp. 261-290) has made of the different accounts of the chair and its significance.

78   Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 701-706.

79   Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 278-279.

80   Shaked, "From Iran to Islam," pp. 79-82.

81   *The Caliph*, p. 268, n. 82.

82   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 702-703.

'Alī's chair.[83] None of these accounts can be verified, and both give the impression of having been contrived to portray al-Mukhtār in an unfavourable light.[84]

More interesting than the stories about its origin is the way the chair was received by al-Mukhtār's followers and the ideas associated with it. The sources relate that it immediately became a kind of cultic object to some of the followers of al-Mukhtār, who regarded it on a par with the Israelite Ark of the Covenant. It was covered with silk and brocade, and the people raised their hands, circled around it,[85] and shouted. Attendants were appointed to it, and it was placed on a grey mule and brought out in the battle of Naṣībīn against the Umayyad army as a kind of talisman—a battle that, as we have seen, was very successful.

The allusion to the Ark of the Covenant is consistent with al-Mukhtār's attempt to depict himself as the representative of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. Although it is nowhere reported that al-Mukhtār states that the chair of 'Alī *is* the Ark of the Covenant, one source relates him as saying: "Among the children of Israel there was the Ark, in which there was a remnant of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron left behind. Among us, this is like the Ark."[86] The Ark of the Covenant is important in Islamic tradition.[87] It is mentioned only once in the Qur'ān, in an account where the people of Israel has asked their prophet (i.e. Samuel) to give them a king. He replies that God has chosen Ṭālūt (i.e. Saul) as their king, but they do not want him. The prophet then says:

> Surely the sign of his kingship is that the ark will come to you. In it is Sakīna from your Lord, and a remnant of what the house of Moses and the house of Aaron left behind. The angels (will) carry it. Surely in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.[88]

---

83   Ibid., p. 705-706.

84   Anthony, *The Caliph*, p. 265.

85   The word *ṭāfa*, used to denote the circling around Kaʿba, is used only in the disapproving poem by Aʿshā Hamdān (see e.g. Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. v, p. 242., and al-Jāḥiz's rendering of this poem in Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 278-279, esp. verse 6). Al-Ṭabarī (*Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 704-705) has not included this verse in his version of Aʿshā's poem. Abū Mikhnaf instead uses the word *ʿakafū* (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, p. 702), and al-Mutawakkil derogatively says that they go "leaping around its boards" (ibid., p. 705).

86   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, p. 703; *History, vol. XXI*, p. 70. See also the poem by Aʿshā Hamdān in the version given by al-Ṭabarī al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 704-705. The verse where the Ark is mentioned differs in al-Jāḥiz' version of the poem Anthony, *The Caliph*, p. 278, n. 122.

87   Rubin, "Traditions".

88   Qur'ān 2:248, Droge's translation. In the Biblical version of this story (1 Sam. 8-10), the ark is not mentioned.

Thus, in the Qurʾān the Ark has the function of legitimising authority.[89] Al-Mukhtār's association of the chair of ʿAlī with the Ark of the covenant further strengthened his authority by creating the kind of link between himself and Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya that according to tradition had first existed between Moses and Aaron, a relationship that, as we have seen, was mirrored in the relation between the Prophet Muḥammad and ʿAlī.[90] Anthony furthermore points to the widespread idea about the return of the Ark at the end of time. It had mysteriously disappeared during the Babylonian destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 587 BC, and according to Jewish and Christian apocalyptic lore God would bring it back as a sign of the end times.[91] Indeed, the words "a remnant of what the house of Moses and the house of Aaron left behind" in the verse quoted, most probably included the staff of Moses, which was closely associated with the Ark. As we have seen, this staff was a messianic insignia to be carried by ʿAlī in the final battle against the evil powers of the world.

Another significant concept in the Qurʾānic verse quoted is the presence of God expressed through the word *sakīna*. It is cognate to the Hebrew/Aramaic word *shᵉkhīnā/shᵉkhīntā*, and occurs several times in the Qurʾān. There it always

> denotes divine aid and proof of the authenticity of God's agent in the face of disbelief and adversity, and this aid or proof (or divine presence) comes in the form of divine victory in battle or its potentiality.[92]

The word *sakīna* is used by only one of the sources, the highly polemical poem by Aʿshā Hamdān.[93] However, since the notion of the Ark of the Covenant is so intimately connected with the idea of God's presence—often expressed as His *sakīna*—it is not unlikely that the chair of ʿAlī was also seen as a container or recipient of God's *sakīna* by the followers of al-Mukhtār.[94]

Moreover, it seems that the chair was regarded as some kind of medium for divine revelation in that it inspired prophecy (*waḥy*). The poet al-Mutawakkil and one of Abū Mikhnaf's sources directly ascribe this idea to those that believed in the chair.[95] And in distancing himself from them by claiming that he has followed the revelation (*waḥy*) contained in the books, Aʿshā Hamdān in

---

89   Rubin, "Traditions," p. 200.
90   Ibid., p. 209-210; Anthony, *The Caliph,* pp. 267-268.
91   Anthony, *The Caliph*, pp. 273-275.
92   Firestone, "Shekhinah," p. 590.
93   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, p. 704.
94   Rubin discusses the *sakīna* as an expression of the presence of God Rubin, "Traditions," p. 200.
95   Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, ser. II, pp. 705-706.

his poem indirectly confirms that the idea of revelation associated with the chair prevailed among them.[96]

All this made many of al-Mukhtār's followers filled with enthusiasm over the "discovery" of the chair. At the same time, there were those who warned against the danger of falling into disbelief and committing polytheism. As far as we can tell, the chair was rather short-lived, and after the battle of Naṣībīn we hear no more about it. Both Abū Mikhnaf and Ibn al-Mubārak relate that the chair and the enthusiasm raised by it were severely criticised, and the two poems by Aʿshā Hamdān and al-Mutawakkil were outright hostile to it.[97] The fact that the whole affair was passed over in silence by most later authors, notably by a Shiʿite like Ibn Aʿtham who certainly had recourse to Abū Mikhnaf's account, indicates that it was viewed by them as an embarrassment. This, in my opinion, is a strong argument in favour of its authenticity, as it could hardly have been invented by later generations.

In summary, the chair of ʿAlī was an important medium between the more enthusiastic Shiʿites and ʿAlī. Whether al-Mukhtār himself believed in its provenance we cannot know. It was a creative accomplishment which brought together, among other things, elements from the Qurʾan and contemporary apocalyptic ideas.[98]

Al-Mukhtār and the Aesthetics of Persuasion

So far, I have described the three media used by al-Mukhtār to establish and support his authority—associating with a living and present son of ʿAlī and identifying him as the Mahdi, exacting revenge for the killing of another of ʿAlī's sons, and producing the chair of ʿAlī—and argued that they probably have a historical basis. Applying Birgit Meyer's terminology, I have also in each case indicated how it could have functioned as a bridge between the Shiʿites of Kufa and ʿAlī, who was depicted as transcendent in one way or another. I will now return to theory to see if it can help wringing more information from the data available, as Fredriksen put it.

In the preceding pages, we have seen that the three media used by al-Mukhtār gave rise to much excitement among many of his followers. The significance of emotions in all kinds of religious performance and the expression and manipulation of these for political purposes have been highlighted in a

---

96   Ibid., p. 705.
97   Ibid., pp. 702-706.
98   Anthony, *The Caliph*, p. 276.

number of recent studies that use the concept of religious aesthetics as a theoretical framework, in particular those by Meyer. To repeat, Meyer holds that religion mediates between the temporal and the perceived divine. Thus media should not be regarded as something foreign to religion. She writes:

> Once religion is understood as a practice of mediation, media—in the broadest sense: images, spirit mediums, written texts, sound, films— appear not as *Fremdkörper* to religion, but as an inalienable condition on which any attempt to access and render present the divine and to communicate among religious practitioners ultimately depends.[99]

Media, understood in this broad sense, are thus essential to sensational experiences of the transcendent realm. Meyer regards media in religious contexts as active meditators that shape the religious experience rather than simply conveying it. She has coined the concept "sensational forms" for more institutionalised phenomena that act as mediators between the human and the perceived transcendental realm. Such forms are "authorized modes for invoking and organizing access to the transcendental that shape both religious content ... and norms".[100] The term "form" is not thought of in opposition to the content of a religious tradition, but as a necessary condition for expressing it.[101] Form furthermore allows religious experience to be repeated:

> Though they are felt individually, religious sensations are socially produced, and their stereotyped repetition depends on the existence of formalized, authorized practices that frame individual religious sensations and enable their reproducibility.[102]

Thus, she argues, the person who is in control of the sensational form—whether it is an artefact, a rhetorical pattern, a perceived inner authority in a person, or something else—also has the power to distribute the religious sensations at his/her discretion. Meyer uses the expression "aesthetics of persuasion" to describe such a practice of power, and she illustrates this idea with examples from her research among Pentecostals in Ghana.[103] I will point to another contemporary example, more in line with the present study, given by Vernon

---

99   Meyer, "Religious Revelation," p. 435.
100   Meyer, "Aesthetics of Persuasion," p. 751.
101   Ibid., pp. 750-751; Meyer, "Mediating," p. 1037.
102   Meyer, "Aesthetics of Persuasion," p. 754.
103   Ibid., pp. 750-758.

Schubel in his study of Shiʿite ritual in Pakistan.[104] He there describes a *majlis*, a weekly gathering, which took place in Karachi for the remembrance and mourning of the death of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī. He relates how the speaker (*zākir*) on the pulpit (*minbar*) starts with a formal sermon (*khuṭba*), and then gradually, as his sermon becomes more lively and emotional, animates the audience, who responds by shouting "Ya ʿAlī!" Then he begins relating the story of the death of Ḥusayn and his family at Karbalāʾ, which everyone in the audience have heard many times.

> At the first mention of the field of Karbalāʾ, some of the men in the audience begin to cry uncontrollably and beat their chests. The sound of women's voices wailing can be heard rising up from the other side of the curtain which divides the room.[105]

As the story proceeds, the narrator changes from past to present tense, and after a while the whole room is filled with grief. The narrator himself "collapses in tears before his audience". Schubel continues:

> As the performance ends and the crowd collects itself, those who have come to mourn the sufferings of the martyrs of Karbalāʾ have reaffirmed their loyalty and devotion to them … To the extent to which the man on the *minbar*—the *zākir*—was able to elicit tears and impart information, he has succeeded in his task.[106]

Although Schubel does not particularly analyse the role of the *zākir*s in Pakistani Shiʿism from a perspective of power, he touches upon it here and there, and demonstrates the importance of their sermons in the creation of a sense of community among Shiʿites in the country.[107] In the terminology of Meyer, religious functionaries like Pentecostal pastors and Shiʿite *zākir*s create channels or bridges between the human beings and the supernatural. By reiterating certain sensational forms—for example the *majlis* ritual—they can re-create particular religious sensations, and at the same time exclude others.[108] Their power is thus based on an ability and authority to create and reject religious sensations, or in other words, to distribute them.

---

104   Schubel, *Religious Performance*, pp. 11-12.
105   Ibid., p. 12.
106   Ibid.
107   Ibid., p. 72-74, 90-106. Schubel analyses Shiʿite performances in Pakistan using the anthropologist Victor Turner's theoretical framework as a toolbox.
108   Meyer, "Aesthetics of Persuasion," p. 755.

My argument in the present study is that al-Mukhtār to a great extent accomplished his political endeavour by controlling the three media between the people and ʿAlī that I have analysed above. These media, I hold, were successful in that they met the expectations of his followers, and in that they related to their previous experiences, religious and political. However, I am hesitant to use Meyer's concept of sensational forms to describe al-Mukhtār's moves to appeal to the people around him. When she defines and explains her concept of sensational forms, she applies it to regular or recurring rituals and religious events, such as weekly services and annual festivities. It is in these situations that the religious functionary has the power to create and recreate religious sensations. In the case of al-Mukhtār, however, none of this regularity is found. The three media were not that developed. According to Meyer, sensational forms gradually emerge in history; they are "historically generated"; they "emerge over time and are often subject to contestation and even abandonment…. They are thus an excellent point of entry into processes of religious transformation".[109] As I interpret Meyer on this point, repetitive patterns are not extant from the beginning. When a religious movement emerges or changes, different forms of religious aesthetics are as it were tested; some disappear and others crystallise into set, authorised forms of which a few develop into what Meyer calls "sensational forms".

So, al-Mukhtār did not have recourse to sensational forms as described by Meyer, since the media he used had not yet developed to that extent. However, he *did* involve his followers in "particular practices of worship and patterns of feeling".[110] These practices and patterns functioned as concrete mediators between those men and women who took them seriously and the transcendent realm to which ʿAlī belonged. It is of course difficult to fully understand why the three media were successful but I will indicate two factors that I think can be identified without reading too much into the texts.

Reading Meyer's description of sensational forms, it seems to me that a precondition for success in creating particular religious sensations is the *expectations* of the adherents; the believers assume that these precise sensations will appear through a particular sensational form. Such expectations intensify over time when a pattern is repeated and brings with it the same kind of sensation. Consider the example of the *majlis* in Karachi that I related above, an example of a fully developed sensational form. The audience had heard the story of Karbalāʾ innumerable times; they had participated in many *majālis* before, and they knew what would happen. Once the *zākir* had succeeded in

---

109   Ibid., p. 751.
110   Ibid.

building up the right atmosphere, only a small trigger, the mention of the word Karbalāʾ, was needed in order to make some of the participants break into sobbing. Expectations about religious sensations that follow from a particular form are not the only precondition, however. The functionary also has to be able to *relate to the experiences* of the audience. Schubel relates a rather amusing incident about a Shiite *zākir* who visited an area in North Western Pakistan where tobacco chewing was prevalent. The *zākir* did not manage to bring his message home to his audience. No one cried, although he mentioned the hunger and thirst of Ḥusayn and his family. It was not until he realised that it was because he did not relate to their own experiences that he was not able to catch the imagination of the listeners. Only when he mentioned that Ḥusayn and his followers had had no tobacco to chew for three days, the crowd burst out in uncontrollable weeping.[111]

Returning to the story of al-Mukhtār, we have seen that messianic expectations were widespread in seventh-century Kufa, often directed towards ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. Although such ideas were undoubtedly differently formulated by various groups within the amorphous movement that was called the Shiʿites, the general idea was that ʿAlī's claim to authority as religious and political leader had been transmitted to his descendants. Furthermore, the experiences of deprivation and oppression on the part of some groups, notably the *mawālī*, seem to have facilitated their identification with the sufferings of ʿAlī and his family. Thus, al-Mukhtār was able to provide forms of religious aesthetics that were accessible to his followers: an individual (Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, son of ʿAlī, legatee of the Prophet, and Mahdi), an action (taking revenge for the death of Ḥusayn, the son of ʿAlī), and an artefact (the chair of ʿAlī). The three media thus functioned as bridges between the people and ʿAlī. Although this factor alone cannot explain the authority of the people and the success of his followers, it needs to be taken into consideration in the analysis of his movement.

Going one step further, I argue that what we see in the accounts of al-Mukhtār is an early phase of a religious movement, the aesthetics of which has not yet crystallised into authorised forms. Some parts of those aesthetics would never do so. Of the three media that were used by al-Mukhtār to gain and sustain authority, one, the chair of ʿAlī, subsequently completely disappeared. Another, the revenge for the blood of Ḥusayn, was later translated both into an important element in Shiʿite ideology—the martyrdom ideal that has been

---

111   Schubel, *Religious Performance*, p. 106. Although illustrative for my argument, I cannot confirm this incident. Schubel relates it second hand, and it occurs to me that it could well be a kind of ethnic joke told among Shiʿites in Pakistan.

interpreted in different ways throughout Shi'ite history—and a set of rituals, the most famous of which is perhaps the 'Āshūrā' celebrations.[112] In this case we see how the early aesthetic form which al-Mukhtār promotes develops over the centuries into genuine sensational forms in Meyer's sense. An example is of course the *majlis* in Karachi related above. These forms are the subject for disputes and discussions, both when it comes to their performances and interpretations.[113] Of course it is impossible to know how this aspect of Shi'ism had developed without the intervention of al-Mukhtār. The death of Ḥusayn was already immensely important before al-Mukhtār's activity; what he did was to channel it into action, something which the Penitents had already tried to do. It is possible that the whole complex of ideas and rituals around the Karbalā' tragedy would have developed anyway. The third medium, however—the designation of a living son of 'Alī as the Mahdi who was the true leader in religious and political matters—was perhaps the invention of al-Mukthār that has had most significant repercussions in the following centuries. Although it cannot be demonstrated that it was with him that this concept got its messianic connotations, I do agree with many scholars who believe that al-Mukthār was instrumental in making the concept of the Mahdi popular. It is evident that in the movement that developed after him, the Kaysāniyya, this association between Mahdi and Messiah was an important feature.[114] Furthermore, as far as we know, no one before al-Mukhtār had claimed to be acting on behalf of 'Alī or any of his sons, something which later became the rule. Anthony argues that

> titling himself *wazīr al-Mahdī*, Moḵtār established an oft-repeated precedent by acting as the imam's proxy in the political arena and accommodating, if not encouraging, an entirely passive role for Ebn al-Hanafīya.[115]

To conclude, al-Mukthār was able to channel the needs and aspirations of many of the Kufans by providing them with media, some of which subsequently developed into more formalised sensational forms. In so doing, he was also able to establish new patterns of authority, which later developed and became prevalent within the different strands of Shi'ism that we know today.

---

112   Much has been written about both of these. See e.g. Aghaie, *Martyrs of Karbala*; Halm, *Shi'a Islam*; Schubel, *Religious Performance*.
113   See e.g. Ende, "Flagellations"; Aghaie, *Martyrs of Karbala*.
114   Anthony, "Kaysāniya"; Qadi, *Al-Kaysānīya*, pp. 235-238.
115   Anthony, "Kaysāniya".

Bibliography

Aghaie, Kamran Scot, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shiʿi Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali, "Muḥammad le paraclet et ʿAlī le messie: Nouvelles re-marques sur les origines de l'islam et de l'imamologie shiʿite," *L'Ésoterisme shiʿite, ses racines et ses prolongements = Shiʿi esotericism: its roots and developments*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Maria De Cillis, Daniel De Smet and Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, Turnhout: Brepols, 2016, pp. 19-54.

Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali, "Rajʿa," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2005, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/raja, (accessed Sept. 13, 2018).

Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali, "Reflections on the Expression *dīn ʿAlī*: The Origins of the Shiʿi Faith," *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History, Theology and Law*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, London: I.B. Tauris, 2014, pp. 17-46.

Anthony, Sean W., *The Caliph and the Heretic: Ibn Sabaʾ and the Origins of Shīʿism*, Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Anthony, Sean W., "Kaysāniya," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2013 http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kaysaniya, (accessed Sept. 17, 2018).

Arjomand, Saïd Amir, "Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classic Period," *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, eds. Bernard McGinn, John Joseph Collins and Stephen J. Stein, New York: Continuum, 1998, pp. 238-283.

al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. v, ed. S.D. Goitein, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1936.

Bar-Asher, Meir, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī Shiism*, Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Borrut, Antoine, "Remembering Karbalāʾ: The Construction of an Early Islamic Site of Memory," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015), pp. 249-282.

Brock, Sebastian P., "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of Johna Bar Penkāyē's *Rīš Mellē*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987), pp. 51-75.

Calmard, Jean, "Le culte de l'Imām Ḥusayn: Etude sur la commémoration du Drame de Karbalā dans l'Iran pré-safavide." Ph.D. thesis, University of Paris III: EHESS, 1975.

Cameron, Averil, "Late Antique Apocalyptic: A Context for the Qurʾan?" *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in Late Antiquity. Encounters in the Abrahamic Religions, 6th-8th Centuries*, ed. Hagit Amirav, Emmanouela Grypeou and Guy Stroumsa, Leuven: Peeters, 2017, pp. 1-19.

Conrad, Lawrence I., "Ibn Aʿtham and His History," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā: The Journal of Middle East Medievalists* 23 (2015), pp. 87-125.

Crone, Patricia, "*Mawālī* and the Prophet's Family: An Early Shīʿite View," *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, ed. Monique Bernards and John Nawas, Leiden: Brill, 2005, pp. 167-194.

Crone, Patricia, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

Crone, Patricia, and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Crone, Patricia, and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the first Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Dakake, Maria Massi, *The Charismatic Community: Shi'ite Identity in Early Islam*, New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2007.

al-Dīnawarī, Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, ed. Vladimir Guirgass and Ignace Kratchkovsky, Leiden: Brill, 1888-1912.

Dixon, Abd al-Ameer Abd, *The Umayyad Caliphate, 65-86/684-705: (A Political Study)*, London: Luzac, 1971.

Djaït, Hichem, "Les Yamanites à Kūfa au Iᵉʳ siècle de l'Hégire," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 19 (1976), pp. 148-181.

Donner, Fred M., "From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Islamic Community," *Al-Abhath: Journal of the Center for Arab and Middle East Studies, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, American University of Beirut* 50-51 (2003), pp. 9-53.

Donner, Fred M., "La question du messianisme dans l'islam primitif," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 91-94 (2000), pp. 17-28.

Donner, Fred M., *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.

Donner, Fred M., *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Princeton, N.J.: Darwin, 1998.

Droge, Arthur J., *The Qurʾān: A New Annotated Translation*, Sheffield: Equinox, 2013.

El-Achèche, Taïeb, *La poésie šiʿite des origines au IIIᵉ siècle de l'Hégire*, Damascus: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2003.

Ende, Werner, "The Flagellations of Muharram and the Shi'ite Ulama," *Der Islam* 55 (1978), pp. 19-36.

van Ess, Josef, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, 6 vols., Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991-1997.

Firestone, Reuven, "Shekhinah," *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 4, Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 589-591.

Fishbein, Michael, "The Life of al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd in Some Early Arabic Historians," PhD Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988.

Fredriksen, Paula, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Christ*, 2nd ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Gilliot, Claude, "Le débat contemporain sur l'islam des origines," *Les débuts du monde musulman (VIIᵉ-Xᵉ siècle): De Muhammad aux dynasties autonomes*, ed. Thierry

Bianquis, Pierre Guichard and Mathieu Tillier, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012, pp. 355-371.

Goitein, Shelomo D., "On the Origin of the Term Vizier," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 81 (1961), pp. 425-426.

Haider, Najam, *Shīʿī Islam: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Halm, Heinz, *Shiʿa Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, Princeton: Marcus Wiener, 1997.

Hawting, Gerald R., "Al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd al-Thaḳafī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, Leiden: Brill, 1993, pp. 521-524.

Hawting, Gerald R., *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, London: Routledge, 2000.

Hoyland, Robert G., *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Hoyland, Robert G., *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1997.

Hylén, Torsten, "The Date of the Story of the Tawwābūn," *Studia Islamica* 112 (2017), pp. 175-205.

Hylén, Torsten, "Ḥusayn, the Mediator: A Structural Analysis of the Karbala Drama according to Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923)," PhD thesis, Uppsala University, 2007.

Hylén, Torsten, "Mukhtār and the *Mahdī*: A Critical Inquiry into the Sources," *DĪN: Tidsskrift for religion og kultur* (2018), pp. 138-157.

Hylén, Torsten, "Myth, Ritual, and the Early Development of Shiite Identity," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 6 (2018), pp. 300-331.

Ibn al-Nadīm, Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, *Kitâb al-Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel, Johannes Roediger and August Müller, Leipzig: Vogel, 1871-72.

Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, Ahmad, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, Haydarabad: Matbaat Majlis Dairat al-Maarif al-Uthmaniyah, 1972.

Ibn Saʿd, Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, ed. Eduard Sachau. vol. 5, Leiden: Brill, 1904-1908.

Izutsu, Toshihiko, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

Jafri, Syed Husain Mohammad, *The Origins and Early Development of Shiʿa Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Kohlberg, Etan, "Some Imāmī Views on the Ṣaḥāba," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), pp. 143-175.

Lindstedt, Ilkka, "Sources for the Biography of the Historian Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 254 (2017), pp. 299-309.

Meyer, Birgit, "Aesthetics of Persuasion: Global Christianity and Pentecostalism's Sensational Forms," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109 (2010), pp. 741-763.

Meyer, Birgit, "Mediating Absence—Effecting Spiritual Presence: Pictures and the Christian Imagination," *Social Research* 78 (2011), pp. 1029-1056.

Meyer, Birgit, "Religious Revelation, Secrecy and the Limits of Visual Representation," *Anthropological Theory* 6 (2006), pp. 431-453.

Meyer, Birgit, and Jojada Verrips, "Aesthetics," *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*, ed. David Morgan, New York, NY: Routledge, 2008, pp. 20-30.

Noth, Albrecht, and Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, Princeton, N.J.: Darwin, 1994.

Pellat, Charles, "ʿAbd Allāh b. Hammām al-Salūlī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 45. Leiden: Brill, 1960.

Qadi, Wadad, *Al-Kaysānīya fī-l-Tārīkh wa-l-Adab*, Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1974.

Qadi, Wadad, "The Development of the Term *Ghulāt* in Muslim Literature with Special Reference to the Kaysāniyya," *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft: Göttingen, 15. bis 22. August 1974*, ed. Albert Dietrich, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976, pp. 295-319.

Robinson, Chase F., *Abd al-Malik*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2005.

Robinson, Chase F., *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Rotter, Gernot, *Die Umayyaden und der zweite Bürgerkrieg (680-692)*, Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschchaft, 1982.

Rubin, Uri, "Prophets and Progenitors in the Early Shiʿa Tradition," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979), pp. 41-65.

Rubin, Uri, "Traditions in Transformation: The Ark of the Covenant and the Golden Calf in Biblical and Islamic Historiography," *Oriens* 36 (2001), pp. 196-214.

Sachedina, Abdulaziz, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of Mahdism in Twelver Shiʿism*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1981.

Schoeler, Gregor, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, London: Routledge, 2006.

Schubel, Vernon James, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shiʿi Devotional Rituals in South Asia*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993.

Sezgin, Ursula, *Abū Miḥnaf: Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umaiyadischen Zeit*, Leiden: Brill, 1971.

Shaked, Shaul, "From Iran to Islam: On Some Symbols of Royalty," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), pp. 75-91.

al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-ʾl-Mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, H. Thorbecke, S. Fraenkel and I. Guidi, Leiden: Brill, 1879-1901.

al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. XIX: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiyah*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990.

al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. XX: The Collapse of Sufyānid Authority and the Coming of the Marwānids* Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989.

al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. XXI: The Victory of the Marwānids*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990.

Urban, Elisabeth, "The Early Islamic Mawālī: A Window onto Processes of Identity Construction and Social Change," PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 2012.

Veccia Vaglieri, Laura. "Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, Leiden: Brill, 1971, pp. 607-615.

Watt, W. Montgomery, "Shiʿism under the Umayyads," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 92 (1960), pp. 158-172.

Webb, Peter, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Wellhausen, Julius, *Die religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam*, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1901.

Wensinck, Arent Jan, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition: Alphabetically Arranged*, Leiden: Brill, 1927.