GENDER DISCOURSE IN *KITAB AL-TABAQAT AL-KUBRA:* DECONSTRUCTING IBN SA’D’S PORTRAYAL OF THE MODEL MUSLIM WOMAN

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of

Arabic and Islamic Civilizations (ARIC)

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

By

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Under the supervision of Dr. Amina Elbendary

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DEDICATION

To my dad for being fair, compassionate, and logical. Always.

And to my mom who sees the beauty in daylight and the trees. Everyday.

This work is dedicated to such a delightful fusion; one I strive to uncover in Islam.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To

Hanny’s love

Elbendary’s perfectionism
Serag’s wisdom
Lutfi’s uniqueness
Mehrez’s “deconstructive” skills
ARIC’s existence
Marwa Sabri’s smile
Mary Assel’s spark
Mona Tolba’s belief
Yasmin Amin’s idea
Hoda el-Saadi’s help
Lila’s compassion
Sara’s reliability
Hana’s independence
Suní’s sisterhood

And

The Ladies of the Blue manuscript’s dreams

I THANK YOU
ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of Ibn Sa’d’s (d. 230/845) historical context on his portrayal of the women of the Prophetic household in Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra (KTK). The KTK stands as the oldest, extant version of a biographical dictionary of the early Muslim community and has been canonized as an authority on the lives of individuals who are perceived as the exemplary model (al-salaf al-saliḥ) for later Muslims generations. As critical historiography suggests a strong link between a historical narrative and the socio-political context in which it was created, the two hundred year gap between the time of authorship of the KTK and the period which it narrates could have had a significant impact on the author’s discourse. Especially that the work was authored during the vibrant ’Abbasid period of Harun al-Rashid and al-Ma’mun; a time that witnessed the production of the Sunni intellectual narratives of hadith collections, schools of jurisprudence (fiqh), as well as major historical annals. Gender representation is a particularly intriguing area of examination; therefore, this study identifies and analyzes main themes and topoi in Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of prominent women (the Prophet’s wives and daughters) in relation to the local traditions in Iraq and developing fiqh legislation. The themes are compared to Ibn Sa’d’s presentation of other “common” women as well as to prominent men and gauged against biographical works by other authors to assess how such women were presented differently. The findings echo the fusion of sira, hadith, and local regional traditions which, combined, present the tenets of a power discourse advancing the call of a patriarchal ’Abbasid Imperial project as the guardian of the Sunni doctrine of the time.
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NOTE ON STYLE

This study utilizes the latest IJMES transliterations guidelines with the modifications contained therein. Update mandates that diacritical marks should no longer be used on personal names, place names, or titles of books and articles.\(^1\) Additionally, Arabic words that are found in the Merriam-Webster dictionary (such as hadith, sunna, hajj, hijab) are considered part of the English lexicon and should not be italicized. Text translations are all mine unless otherwise stated, however the Yusuf ʽAli English translation is used for all Qur’anic references.\(^2\)

The organization and style of the thesis are in accordance with the published “AUC 2010 Thesis Preparation Guidelines.”\(^3\) Footnotes and bibliographical citations follow the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines.\(^4\)

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\(^2\) The Yusuf ʽAli English translation can be accessed online through www.quranexplorer.com.


Chapter One: Theory and Historical Background

Introduction:

This study aims to examine Ibn Sa’d’s gender portrayal in *Kitab al-Nisa‘* (volume eight of *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*) in order to assess the impact of his own time and place on the representation of the women of the Prohetic household who are the role models for all Muslim women and their portrayal vis-à-vis the common women presented in the text.¹

The study adopts the perspective of the post-modern “Deconstruction Theory,” which argues that the author, context, and raw data are all presented in the production of the final material. This approach challenges the long-dominant classical perspective on the *KTK*, often adopted by traditional Muslim scholars, which views it as a factual narration of the early period of Islam instead of viewing it as a “literary product” attempting to narrate the early days of Islam. Some scholars, such as Tarif Khalidi, argue that biographical dictionaries should not be looked at as a source of history, but rather as products of thought.² Such a change in perspective allows us to view the text as a work that reflects the author’s own biases with regards to sorting, filtering, organizing, and narrating the data at hand.

It is precisely such sorting and organizing that this study examines in order to identify the main themes Ibn Sa’d emphasizes in his presentation of women of the Prohetic household in early Islam. Ibn Sa’d also repeats certain topoi to reinforce his messages and add to credibility. These themes and topoi are studied in light of the socio-

¹ *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* will be referred to as the *KTK* from here on.
religious and political scene at the time of authoring the *KTK* to shed light on possible correlations between the two. To assess the presence and significance of Ibn Sa’d’s unique interpretation, a comparison is made with his portrayal of the prominent men of the *KTK*. Entries on non-prominent women within the *KTK* and prominent women in other biographical works are also consulted to assess salient differences.

The findings show that Ibn Sa’d’s presentation of the “model” women is quite reflective of his own context as many of the images correlate with legal rulings particular to his location. Furthermore, the study will show that Ibn Sa’d’s ambivalent portrayal of model Muslim women represented in their piety (which Ibn Sa’d portrays through concealment and *zuhd*) while at the same time displaying typical female ills of jealousy and weakness, legitimized the male dominant power discourse adopted by medieval Muslim scholars.

I. Theory and Historiography

A. Deconstruction Theory:

“History results not from the debate about past reality as such, but from competing narrative proposals about the nature and possible meanings of past events. Of course, once a narrative proposal has achieved a more or less universal acceptance (like ‘the Cold War’ or ‘the Industrial Revolution’), it becomes concretized as past reality. It is no longer a narrative proposal, but has become the past.”

The debate within the field of historiography ranges from promoters of a “Reconstructionist” approach in which the historical narrative is believed to accurately represent reality, to the post-modern approach known as the “Deconstructive” approach, a term coined by Jacques Derrida, in which the historical narrative is regarded as an on-going exchange between events, context, and historian. Reconstructive historians believe that the past can be retold if the historian took professional measures to ensure the reliability of the data provided. They believe that the knower can remain separate from

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that which is known and thus capable of achieving Leopold von Ranke’s nineteenth-century dictum *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, or knowing history as it actually happened.⁴

Proponents of the more recent deconstructionist approach believe that all historical understanding is relative.⁵ While empiricists argue that perspectives do not influence “Truth”, Deconstructionists argue that “Truth” as a simple, single-sided fact, does not exist in historical narration to begin with. Such Truth is impossible to attain because a historian cannot be completely isolated from his own context and therefore is incapable of producing such a simple transparent Truth. Social historians came up with a “Constructionist” approach to history in which they view past events through ‘concepts’ that aid in understanding the evidence. Concepts of race, gender, and class are among the models many historians use as a backdrop for explaining past events.⁶ Roger Chartier, a leading cultural historian, believes that all texts should be viewed as the outcome of a constructed production and reading by the historian: “As the historian consumes the evidence of the past, he/she also produces a meaning.”⁷

Similarly, Foucault argued that Man is not able to stand outside society and history to generate objective and truthful knowledge.⁸ History, therefore, can be written from different points of view to represent alternative realities. Deconstruction is thus an attempt to explore and analyze such different realities. Along with “Deconstruction” came “New Historicism” which literary critics used to focus on the relationship between texts and contexts. “New Historicism” attempts to relocate literary works within their historical context. Instead of viewing the discourses at work at a given time as a backdrop to an author’s text, New Historicists perceive both the discourses and the text as an inescapable part of a social construct. Foucault argues that power is attained through discourse; therefore the production of discourse is always part of a greater power

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⁴ Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 22.
⁵ Deconstruction is often viewed as the recognition of the relativism of meaning.
⁶ The *Annals* School developed the constructionist tradition of marrying inductive inference from factual evidence with deduction (deductive inference) based upon more general prior sociological generalizations about the socio-economic and politico-cultural structures of society. For its adherents, this development added greatly to the explanatory power of history. See more details in Munslow’s *Deconstructing History*, 24.
⁷ Ibid, 25.
⁸ Ibid, 12.
struggle. Modern approaches to historiography also raise concerns about inherent biases as the Islamicist Fred Donner argues that historical data retrieved from literary texts are loaded with embedded biases on the part of the authors.  

The best approach a modern historiographer can attempt, as per Catherine Belsey, is “to use the text as a basis for the reconstruction of an ideology.” This is precisely the direction this study takes. By examining Ibn Sa’d’s selections and repeated themes, as well as areas of omission, used to represent prominent women in the *KTK*, and through exploring those portrayals against the backdrop of ‘Abbasid Baghdad of the 3rd/9th C.E. & A.H., the study will shed light on Ibn Sa’d’s own discourse to better understand the social contribution to the work itself.

B. Gender Theory:

The study of gender history has come a long way from the first attempts in which information about women was gathered to create what historians called “her-story”; an effort to make women visible within the world of traditional history “his-story”. One of the problems of the early approach is that it led to isolation which, in turn, impedes a comprehensive understanding of true gender dynamics. A more fruitful study of women’s history must include an understanding of gender dynamics which forces a critical re-examination of the premises and standards of existing scholarly work. In dealing with the history of gender in particular, use of the deconstructionist method has been applauded. Leading scholar in feminist history Joan Scott states, “Feminist history then becomes not just an attempt to correct or supplement an incomplete record of the

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10 Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: the Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin, 1998). Donner differentiates between the “source-critical” approach as different than the “skeptical” approach which was pioneered by Patricia Crone.
past but a way of critically understanding how history operates as a site of the production of gender knowledge.”

One of the key problems with gender issues stems from the fact that women’s history is often represented exclusively through words written by men, a fact that prompts scholars such as Catherine McKinnon to argue that women are represented as objects while men are the subjects. Evans examines the means of interpreting female voices which proceed from male authors in her theory of “Ventriloquism” where she argues that the “recognition of the cultural meanings that are spoken through female voices can be a starting place for the exploration of forms of power and power relations. Scott believes that texts often use symbolic representations and argues that the study of biographies offer an ideal tool for such examinations.

Therefore, analyzing the KTK’s portrayal of prominent women as a social construction can offer insights into the gender dynamics and power struggles that were in place at the time of authorship. Such analysis will provide a better understanding of the subliminal meanings within the text and offer us a tool to assess the limitations of the data provided in such early works.

C. Muslim Historiography:

With the advent of Islam, believers were, naturally, more interested in Muhammad’s prophecy and message than they were in his childhood history or career. But with the progression of time and the expansion of Islamic territory, believers were faced with skeptics who demanded to know more about Muhammad as a means of establishing credentials. Chase Robinsons believes that it was this demand that prompted the desire for a written history. Muslims were thus faced with the challenge of drawing up a past relying on their memory, as well as the freedom to recreate one when necessary. Interest

14 Scott, Gender and the Politics, 10.
15 Catherine McKinnon, “Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory.” Signs 7 (Spring 1982), 531.
17 Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category,” 1067.
in Islamic history was influenced by many factors including the Qur’an with its many historical references, the interest in the *sira* of the Prophet and his battles and the mounting emphasis on hadith. Robinson believes that the objective of history in the early period, unlike today, was not to probe or explain, nor to provide a precise account of all events, but rather the objective was to teach and inspire by illustrating and exemplifying.\(^\text{18}\)

Islamic historiography witnessed its real beginning during the ’Abbasid Caliphate in Iraq.\(^\text{19}\) The period between (112/730-212/830) witnessed the ever-expanding corpus of *akhbar* which led to the gradual construction of a narrative framework. This move from oral to written history arose during a late eight-century boom in learning and knowledge production influenced by the ’Abbasids’ patronage which is exemplified in their decree for Greek and Persian sources to be translated into Arabic.\(^\text{20}\) This was followed by a phase which witnessed its peak during the reign of Caliph al-Ma’mun (198/813-218/833) in which famous historians, all in Iraq, such as al-Waqidi (d. 207/822), Ibn Hisham (d. 219/835), and Ibn Sa’d (d.230/845) flourished.\(^\text{21}\) The final stage of the formative period between (212/830-312/925) was marked by major works that replaced older titles and sent them into oblivion. History became less a product of many scattered individuals each telling their story, and more of an organized narrative telling others a much bigger story. Also during this period hadith was compiled by al-Bukhari (d. 256/870) and was later canonized as the leading expert in the field. Ibn Hisham’s version of Ibn Ishaq’s *Sira* became definitive, Ibn Sa’d’s encyclopedic *Tabaqāt* work was completed, and the culmination was in Abu Ja’far al-Tabari’s (d. 310/923) sixteen-volume *Ta’rikh al-Rusul wa’l-Muluk* (History of the Prophets and Kings) which became the preeminent example of the annalistic tradition.\(^\text{22}\) This period witnessed the peak of what scholars in retrospect


\(^{19}\) Robinson lists only two historians in the formative Medina period before 730 C.E., ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 712) and al-Zuhri (d. 742).


\(^{21}\) Others include al-Haytham b. ‘Udiyy (d. 822), al-Mada’ini (d.830-850), Khalifa b. Khaiyyat (d. 854).

\(^{22}\) Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 32.
dubbed the “‘Abbasid Imperial Project”, a massive project of rethinking history in which contesting versions of the past were integrated and harmonized according to an imperial ideology. The Imperial Project created what is known as a ‘logocentric community’, a society organized around the written word; words that were concentrated in the pens of those who generated texts. Within this perspective, unpleasant and controversial history was occasionally suppressed.  

Some scholars believe that the famous era of putting the religious texts into writing (‘asr al-tadwīn) was the beginning of the institutionalization of censorship, a process that may have started in the first half of the second century when Caliph al-Mansur (d. 158/775) gave ’Abbasid orders for such documentation to take place. 

One of the main problematic areas of Islamic historiography is the significant gap in time between the actual events and the time when they were recorded in history. Ibn Khaldun (d. 784/1382), was one of the pioneers who pointed to the dangers of such gap, “often, someone who has learned a good deal of past history remains unaware of the changes that conditions have undergone. Without a moment’s hesitation, he applies his knowledge [of the present] to historical information, and measures such information by the things he has observed with his own eyes, although the difference between the two is great. Consequently, he falls into an abyss of error.”

As Ibn Sa’d’s narrative is about two centuries removed from the period it is narrating, such a gap must be acknowledged and its impact assessed. Such has been the direction of the modern approach to historiography.

D. Historiography of Muslim Women:

The status of women in Arabia, pre and post Islam, is an issue that has been widely debated over time. This debate has not been settled due to three main factors; a

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23 For example in his annals al-Tabari, stationed in the ‘Abbasid capital Baghdad, does not mention any of the atrocities the ‘Abbasids committed in their acquisition of power while an 11th century anonymous work, outside the ‘Abbasid dominance in Spain, describes the violence in detail. See Robinson, Islamic Historiography, 40.  

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deficiency in the sources, the problem of who is interpreting the sources, and the methodology used in such interpretation.  

Nikki Keddie claims that the profound study of women’s history has been hindered by what she calls a “philosophically idealist bias” in which the only determinants of women’s position were the writings of the theologians and jurists and their interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna.  

Denise Spellberg agrees stating that through the processes of interpretation, selectivity, and embellishment, “the feminine is deprived by male authors from the female” resulting in what she coins “the problematic of idealized or exemplary women.”  

As we analyze the prominent women portrayed in the *KTK*, we will get a first hand understanding of what those scholars mean.

The problem of studying women under Muslim rule cannot, therefore, be resolved without revisiting medieval sources. Leila Ahmed advocates the study of the discourse of early Muslim women over time and calls for scholars to study the way gender is articulated socially, institutionally, and verbally within a society. Her own study of the ancient Mesopotamian times of the Hammurabi code and the Assyrian law (1752 and 1200 B.C.E, respectively) proves that the subordination of women was institutionalized with the growth of urban societies.  

Upon the Muslim conquest into the Iraq-Iran region, the mores of the incoming Muslims were fused with those of the incumbent Sassanian society whose official religion was Zoroastrianism. The Islamic expansion into greater territories brought wealth as well as social and gender stratification which, in

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29 Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam; Historical Roots of a Modern Debate (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 12. Ahmed reports that the use of the veil was elaborately established within the Assyrian law creating a system of differentiation between the classes where only the upper class women were allowed to veil. The law also used the veil to signify female- access, where “respectable” women were veiled while harlots and slaves (perceived as publically available) were forbidden to veil. For more information on this time period and the position of women see, A. L. Oppenheim, The Babylon Evidence of Achaemenian Rule in Mesopotamia. Vol. 2, chap. 10 in The Median and Achaemenian Periods - The Cambridge History of Iran, edited by Ilya Gershevitch (Cambridge University Press, 1985). For an analysis of the Hammurabi code and its affect on women see, Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy, Women and History series. (Oxford, Oxford University press, 1986).
turn, induced the development of domestic slavery, elite harems, as well as veiling and seclusion of women.\textsuperscript{30} It may be that those pre-Islamic customs were the backdrop upon which Islamic \textit{fiqh} was then developed; thus fusing tradition with legal rulings into what was later perceived as God’s ordained \textit{sharīʿa}. Therefore, re-visiting gender representation in medieval texts becomes a necessary endeavor for any scholar interested in furthering our understanding of the influences of the social norms and political conditions upon the output of the author.

II. Historical Background – The ’Abbasid Caliphate

A. ’Abbasid Discourse, Harun al-Rashid and al-Ma’mun:

The ’Abbasids succeeded in defeating the Umayyads in (132/750) and established a regime that lasted until (656/1258).\textsuperscript{31} The ’Abbasids’ presented themselves as the family of the Prophet and their discourse claimed that the Umayyad rulers had strayed off the path of true Islam and demanded that religious piety be the criterion upon which the ruler is selected.\textsuperscript{32} With such discourse, their accession to power portrays as a massive political and social “revolution” to purify and reform society according to the laws of Islam.\textsuperscript{33}

Unlike their Umayyad predecessors, the early ’Abbasid caliphs showed a lot of tolerance towards non-Arab Muslims and, initially, non-Muslim subjects as well.\textsuperscript{34} The promotion of such a sentiment of “belonging” to a wider community greatly contributed to the ’Abbasids’ state growth as well as economic power through growing commercial

\textsuperscript{30} Keddie, \textit{Women in the Middle East}, 15.
\textsuperscript{31} The name is derived from the ancestor al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hashim, who was the uncle of the Prophet.
\textsuperscript{32} Hugh Kennedy, \textit{The Early ’Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History} (Croom Helm, London, 1981), 198.
\textsuperscript{34} The number of different factions that existed at the time was remarkable: Hanbalites, proto-Hanbalites, the Abnā’, Khurasani loyalist fighters, vigilantes, ’Abbasids, Hashimites, Persian elements, ‘Alids, Shi’ites, Kharijites, Murji’ites, as well as Arabs and non-Arabs of recent and remote Khurasani ancestry. See Michael Cooperson, \textit{Classical Arabic Biography : The Heirs of the Prophets} (NY: Cambridge University Press), 36.
expansion. Baghdad acquired a cosmopolitan character and continued to expand, although the majority were Persians, their influence grew as more of them converted to Islam. 35 Through their central location in the capital, the caliphs were content to appoint viziers to manage the day-to-day affairs including the appointment of religious scholars. 36 Scholars coin the five centuries of the ’Abbasid Empire as “the epoch of classical Islamic civilization.” 37

One of the most prominent features of Baghdad was its patronage of learning; Greek works were translated, as well as works form Persia and India. The ’Abbasids’ violent ascent to power along with their many opponents were some of the reasons behind their need to establish cultural credentials and legitimize their claim to power through patronizing history and scholarship. As the economy flourished in Iraq, learning became a well paid profession. 38 Therefore, the religious state discourse was supplemented by state-intellectuals who also supported the administration’s objectives.

It was al-Mahdi (d. 169/785), who positioned himself as the “champion of Islam” and adopted a non-tolerant stand towards non-Muslims. 39 He granted himself the privilege of defining the “proper” Islamic doctrine and became known for the adoption of

35 Although al-Saffah (d. 136/754) was the first ’Abbasid caliph, it was his brother al-Mansur (d. 158/775) who is considered to be the real founder of the ’Abbasid caliphate and it was he who established Baghdad as the permanent capital of the empire. The success of the ’Abbasids’ new policy is measured by the fact that when they came to power in 750 C.E., only eight percent of the Iranians had converted to Islam. By the end of the century 40 percent of the population had converted. See Mahmood Ibrahim, "Religious inquisition as social policy: the persecution of the zanadiqa in the early ’Abbasid Caliphate." Arab Studies Quarterly, no. 16 (1994): 64.
36 Overall the ’Abbasids instituted a sophisticated bureaucracy that efficiently oversaw the various aspects of state affairs from assigning provincial governors to collecting tax and implementing policy. The viziers also appointed ’ulama’ (religious scholars) and qadis (judges), they also established systems related to banking and defense policies. David Gutelius ”’Abbasid Caliphate.” In Encyclopedia of World Trade From Ancient Times to the Present (NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2005).
37 During the second era 334/945 to 656/1258 the caliph’s role became symbolic as the real power was controlled by dynasties of non-Arab Turkish military officers. See B. Lewis, ”’Abbasids.” Encyclopedia of Islam. Second. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online, (2012).
38 Paper production was introduced at the time and thus lowered the cost of writing material and in turn accelerated the move towards a culture of learning. Some sources state that it was during that time that Ibn Ishaq (d. 151/767) was commissioned by the ’Abbasids to write his famous work on Prophetic Sira. See Chase Robinson, Islamic Historiography, 27. On the introduction of paper see Johannes Pedersen, The Arabic Book (Princeton University Press, 1984), 60.
39 Al-Mansur (d. 158/775) changed his heir from ’Issa b. Musa to his son Muhammad (al-Mahdi) who was groomed with very good ties with the Khurasāni soldiers. See Kennedy, The Early Abbasid Caliphate, 91.
religious orthodoxy. In doing so he persecuted those whom he believed were heretics and held a strict stance against non-Muslims. He drew the ’Alids nearer to the court in an attempt to cement religious authority and power. Harun (d. 193/809), al-Mahdi’s son, was heavily influenced as a young Caliph by his mother, al-Khayzuran. He stressed the religious character of the Caliphate continued his father’s efforts in adopting a strict stance against the dhimmis who were obliged to dress differently, and to ride different animals, than Muslims. It was also Harun who seems to have elevated the status of religious scholars (’ulama’) who became indispensable as the need for them to offer religious decrees supporting the caliph’s ideologies grew; a fact that solidified the connection between the ‘ulama’ and state power.

Overall, Harun was most renowned for his period of peace and court of wealth and generosity, and his emphasis on the cultural aspects. The production of knowledge in the form of scholarship became an important profession with many employed to collect, translate, copy, and comment on all types of literature. Despite his strict religious stance, Harun was very generous towards musicians and poets who, in turn, memorialized his name in works including the Arabian Nights and Kitab al-Aghani.

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42 Al-Mahdi offered the ’Alids special privileges and a regained elite status Kennedy, The Early Abbasid Caliphate, 101.
43 Harun became the fifth ’Abbasid caliph in (169/786) C.E / He was also heavily influenced by his Barmakid tutor and tutor Yahya b. Khalid as well. Yahya’s sons Fadl and Ja’far became responsible for Harun’s two sons al-Amin and al-Ma’mun respectively. Details about al-Khayzuran will be shared in the conclusion section of this study.
46 Historians show mixed reviews regarding Harun al-Rashid; some depicting him as a pious Muslim leader who defeated the Byzantines and improved the economy through trade with China and other countries, while other historians depict him as a dissolute ruler who was responsible for the civil factions and administrative disintegration of the ’Abbasid Empire.
47 It became fashionable in a way to become a scholar particularly since scholars received the blessings of the court; even viziers and associates of the caliphs supported scholars and literati in an attempt to follow the example of the caliphs. It became a great pastime for poets and scholars, and men of academia to gather about their patrons to discuss their readings. See Ruth Stellhorn Mackensen, "Four Great Libraries of Medieval Baghdad." The Library Quarterly 2, no. 3 (Jul. 1932): 279
48 According to Harun’s covenant of (186/802) al-Amin would control the west (Iraq onwards), al-Ma’mun would control the East (Khurasan eastwards), and the third son al-Qasim was to handle Syria to the North
Harun’s son al-Ma’mun (d. 218/833) was the first to give himself the title of *Imām*. The title was politically ambiguous and seemed to signal a return to al-Mahdi’s days of claiming a religious stronghold and, once again, aligning with the ’Alids. Some scholars argue that such efforts were part of the caliph’s political policy of grounding the ‘Abbasid legitimacy further by creating a blood tie with the ’Alids who were direct descendants of the Prophet’s daughter and thus had stronger claim on the title of *Ahl al-Bayt* than the ’Abbasids. Such a tie would then produce a future line of *imāms* who combined a joint ancestry.49

Al-Ma’mun was known to be an intellectual himself and offered patronage to the most prominent scholars of the time.50 Books became a valuable commodity to the point that personal libraries were often assigned as bequests (*waqf*) following the owner’s death. Al-Ma’mun built the first great library of Baghdad with an astronomical observatory which came to be known as *Bayt al-Hikma* (House of Wisdom).51 Ibn al-Nadim’s (d.385/955) famous work indexing Arabic books, *al-Fihrist*, is said to have utilized al-Ma’mun’s stamped collection of books as a main source of information.52 To confirm his religious stronghold, al-Ma’mun minted coins bearing the title “Al-Ma’mun, God’s Caliph” (*khalīfat Allah*).53 He also published an official letter in which he stated and succeed al-Ma’mun after he succeeds al-Amin. Some scholars believe that such a move caused the beginning of the disintegration of the ‘Abbasid caliphate. It took 21 months following Harun’s death for the brothers' hostilities to become public. By (196/812) most provinces had declared allegiance to Al-Ma’mun, and the governor of Hijaz prayed for the new caliph in Mecca and Medina. Baghdad, where al-Amin was, was the only main region left. Al-Ma’mun’s troops surrounded Baghdad and during the siege cut off aid to the inside of the city, the situation became so bad that al-Amin legitimized the plunder of private houses for supplies. Al-Amin’s troops were defeated. See Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 126-139.

49 Al-Ma’mun showed a lot of sympathy towards the ’Alids for the injustices they suffered. He even gave his own daughter in marriage to ’Ali al-Rida’s son. Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, 29.

50 It is said the famous mathematician al-Khawarizmi authored two of his famous works inside al-Ma’mun’s library. The famous al-Jahiz (d. 868) was another favored visitor of al-Ma’mun’s court, a scholar whose writings are said to celebrate the ‘Abbasid cause. See Pellat, Ch. ”al-Jahiz.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second Edition. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online.

51 It is said that he acquired such love of learning from his father. Harun is said to have had a library of his own. Harun’s records show that he employed copyists and various scholars. One of his top associates Fadl b. Sahl was himself the author of seven books and was trusted to translate many of Persian works. It was in the time of Harun that Euclid’s famous work *Elements* was translated as well. See Mackensen, *"Four Great Libraries,”* 282.

52 Mackensen, “Four Great Libraries,” 284.

53 Tayeb el-Hibri, ”Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age (Review).” *Biography* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2001):67.
that God made the mainstay of the religion and the ordering of the government (amr) of Muslims to reside in the caliphate.\textsuperscript{54} The above were all tactics that al-Ma’mun seems to have employed to ground his authority as both the religious and the political leader of the Muslim umma.

Al-Ma’mun’s attempt to gain a stronghold on both the religious and cultural aspects of life may have been part of his plan to achieve what has been coined as an “imperial-papal” status; a role which allowed him to become the ultimate authority on both secular and religious matters.\textsuperscript{55} Some scholars argue that al-mihna (218/833) was al-Ma’mun’s method of insuring recognition of his policies by the Sunni ‘ulama’ who had grown to represent a substantial force at the time, and al-Ma’mun needed to ensure that such force supported the power structure he desired.

B. The Growing Power of the ‘Ulama’:

Research suggests that the ‘ulama’, as a specialized group of people with religious knowledge, did not take concrete shape and structure except after the first two centuries of Islam. In the early times it was easier for the ‘ulama’ to have a consensus (ijmā’) to agree on general guidelines, however with the growth of the Islamic empire consensus proved more difficult. Goldziher has argued that real jurisprudence originated in Iraq with the bulk of the legal traditions compiled in the first half of the second century hijri, the time when the literary period started.\textsuperscript{56} With the expansions into new territories and gaining new converts to Islam, the role of religious scholars became very important as they offered guidelines on how to reconcile local tradition with Islamic values. Gradually, the ‘ulama’ as group gained strength as well as a more concrete structure

\textsuperscript{54} This was his appointment letter of designation of ’Ali al-Rida. See Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, \textit{God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam} (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986),135.


particularly when hadiths which elevated the status of scholars were circulated.\textsuperscript{57} Within the Sunni context, ‘ulama’ came to be regarded as the guardians, transmitters and interpreters of religious knowledge; their most prominent characteristic was their knowledge of hadith.\textsuperscript{58}

In the early years two parallel modes of Islamic discourse seemed to have developed, the first one relied on hadith, and its proponents became known as Ahl al-Hadith. The other group relied mostly on judgment and was thus referenced as Ahl al-Ra’y.\textsuperscript{59} Scholars such as Schacht believe that it was al-Shafi’i (d.204/820) who fully established the authority of Prophetic hadith as a principle source of law, stating that before his time the community gave just as much attention to reports by companions; a fact that may partially justify Ibn Sa’d’s compilation of the KTK.\textsuperscript{60} In order to assess the authenticity of a Prophetic tradition, al-Shafi’i established one main criterion; that it would be transmitted by reliable men. Once that was secured, the tradition would become binding and obligatory as a basis for jurisprudence.\textsuperscript{61} It was under this umbrella that some of the Tabaqāt works were compiled to help assess the reliability of hadith narrators. This time also witnessed the development of the four main schools of jurisprudence.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{57} Traditions were attributed to the Prophet which emphasized the precedence and pre-eminence of knowledge and of the ‘ulamā’, most of them probably dating from a period in which the influence and the prestige of the latter was not yet well established. One particular hadith which seems to have developed in the North, as it is not present in Malik’s Muatta’ states, “Scholars are the heirs of the prophets who have endowed them with knowledge as a legacy. He who has chosen knowledge has taken a generous share, and he who has taken a path towards the acquisition of knowledge, for him God will smooth a path to Paradise. See J.O Hunwick, J.O. "Ulamā." Encyclopaedia of Islam. Second Edition. Brill Online. Referenced hadith is from Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal, V, 196/xvi.

\textsuperscript{58} Hunwick, "Ulamā." \textit{EI²}.

\textsuperscript{59} Ahl al-Ra’y also utilized hadith but it handled it differently as they showed less concern for the precise intricacies of isnaḍ. Over time the term Ahl al-Ra’y came to acquire negative connotations implying that it referred to people’s mere opinions, although at its onset it seems to have implied sound judgment and not mere opinion; such negative connotations can be traced to the growth of subscribers to Ahl al-Hadith camp. See Christopher Melchert, “Traditionist-Jurisprudents and the Framing of Islamic Law.” \textit{Islamic Law and Society} 8, no. 3 (2001): 386.

\textsuperscript{60} Schacht, \textit{The Origins}, 3.

\textsuperscript{61} Schacht quotes al-Shafi’i as saying, “A tradition from the Prophet must be accepted as soon as it becomes known, even if it is not supported by any corresponding action of a Caliph.” Schacht, \textit{The Origins}, 59.

\textsuperscript{62} Nearing the end of the ninth century, the schools of Malik, Abu Hanifa, and al-Shafi’i’s had taken shape, and all adopted hadith as a basic tenet of Islamic jurisprudence. The science of hadith criticism was then
This vibrant period of religious debate may have witnessed harsh encounters between the ‘ulama’ on the one hand and the administration on the other, particularly with a caliph such as al-Ma’mun whose aspirations demanded religious authority as a means to completing the so-called “imperial-imāmi” project plans. However, the demand to separate religious and political authority was paramount and a confrontation over religious authority was imminent. No encounter between the ‘ulama’ and the administration is more famous than the one represented in al-Ma’mun’s mihna.

In 218/833 al-Ma’mun sent a letter to his deputy ordering the questioning of scholars regarding their belief in the createdness of the Qur’an. In the letter al-Ma’mun states that the caliphs are the heirs of the prophets and the possessors of knowledge (‘ilm). To ensure that the public (‘amma) are not led astray, it was therefore the caliph’s obligation to protect the world from misguided scholars who commit the grave error of claiming that the Qur’an was co-eternal with God. Ibn Sa’d was one of the first seven scholars summoned by the court and he confirmed his belief that the Qur’an was created and not eternal. Most of those questioned agreed with the court’s view although some later recanted their position.

The ‘ulama’s rise to power may have been the reason behind al-Ma’mun’s introduction of the mihna. J. A. Nawas argues that the religious scholars had gained a stronghold on forming doctrine and law which bestowed upon them great influence and popularity across the majority of the community. They were thus becoming “a formidable force to reckon with.” Al-Ma’mun believed their threat to be greater than

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64 While on campaign against the Byzantines in Syria in (218/833), al-Ma’mun sent a series of letters to Ishaq b. Ibrahim, his deputy in Baghdad, ordering him to question scholars as to their belief in the createdness of the Qur’an (khulq al-Qur’an). Al-Ma’mun ordered a number of scholars sent to him in al-Raqqa, and carried out their inquisition himself. See Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, 33.
65 The caliph believed that such people were guilty of anthropomorphism (tashbīh), since their stance meant that the Qur’an is co-eternal with God because it equates between God and what God has created.
66 Following al-Ma’mun’s death, his brother al-Mu’tasim, although not heavily involved in this intellectual controversy, followed his brother’s will and continued the mihna. It was under his rule that Ahmad b. Hanbal was persecuted. Ibn Hanbal was flogged for his rigid stance against the createdness of the Qur’an. It was not until the accession of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232/847-247/861) that the mihna was officially lifted. See Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, 34.
that of the Shiʿites and was concerned that the caliphal institution may be destabilized had the 'ulama’’s authority continued unchecked. 67 This may be a major reason why he attempted to reconcile with the 'Alids copying their imāmi discourse which presented the imām as the foundation of religious knowledge.

III. Ibn Saʿd and his Context

A. Muhammad Ibn Saʿd:

Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Saʿd b. Maniʿ al-Basri al-Hashimi, Katib al-Waqidi, was born in Basra, in 168/784 as a mawla of Banu Hashim. His family’s allegiance to the 'Abbasids began around the middle of the second century hijri when his grandfather became a freedman of Husayn b. ‘Abd Allah b. 'Ubayd Allah b. ' Abbas. Following his many travels in search of traditions Ibn Saʿd eventually settled in Baghdad where he remained until his death in (230/845).

There is no clear mention in the historical records of a specific occupation for Ibn Saʿd. He is known to have travelled in search of traditions and when he arrived to Baghdad began his tutelage under al-Waqidi (d. 207/822) and became his secretary and kātib and transmitter of his work. 68 Ibn Saʿd also studied genealogy under Hisham b. al-Kalbi (d. 204/819). 69 There is no evidence that Ibn Saʿd was himself a muhaddith as there are no records or works narrated on his behalf. 70 As stated earlier, Ibn Saʿd was one of the first scholars to agree with al-Maʿmun’s opinion of the createdness of the Qur’an during the mihna in (218/833). 71 Some scholars believe that such a position makes him a muʿtazili scholar, but there is no other evidence to support such a claim. However, such

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68 Along with his work on maghāzi and sirā, Ibn Saʿd also studied hurāf al-Qurʾan under al-Waqidi as well.
an early summons means that Ibn Sa’d must have already established himself as a reputable public scholar; which in turn means that he probably had authored the *KTK* by then.\(^2\)

Apart from his two works on ُتّابضت (kubra and sughra), some reports show that Ibn Sa’d authored a book titled *Kitab al-Hiyal* although that is no longer be extant. He is also said to have written books on *fiqh* and *gharib*.\(^3\) Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi ranks Ibn Sa’d as a highly credible source despite one comment by Yahya b. Ma’in accusing Ibn Sa’d of lying. Reports state that Ibn Sa’d used to send Ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855) two parts of hadith al-Waqidi to review every week, however, Ibn Hanbal later discredited al-Waqidi as a *muhaddith*.\(^4\) Al-‘Asqalani in *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* concurs with all the references in al-Baghdadi’s entry. Both confirm that Ibn Sa’d was a man known for justice, fairness, and knowledge, and that he paid close attention to details of the hadith he narrated to ensure accuracy.\(^5\)

In his study of the *KTK* Atassi admits that “Ibn Sa’d is a frustratingly elusive character. It is rather odd that the author of such a voluminous work as the *KTK*, if we admit that he is, is practically invisible in early Islamic writings.”\(^6\) It therefore becomes necessary to pay extra careful attention to the people who influenced Ibn Sa’d as a means to gain greater insights onto his own character.

**B. His Mentors and Patronage:**

Much more information seems to be available about Ibn Sa’d’s employer and mentor, al-Waqidi, than about Ibn Sa’d himself. Muhammad b. ‘Umar b. Waqid was a *mawla* born in (130/747-8). Originally from Medina, he travelled to Baghdad for reasons of debt. Al-Ma’mun then assigned him the post of judge (*qadi ‘askar al-Mahdi*) in which he remained until his death at age 78. He is known as a historian, expert in *fiqh*, traditionist,

\(^3\) Fück, “Ibn Sa’d,” *EI*.
\(^6\) Atassi, “A History,” 35.
and author, and is often quoted as the authority on early Islamic history (sira, maghāzi, ridda, futūḥ). In his Fihrist, Ibn al-Nadim states that al-Waqidi authored a work of Tabaqat. This work is no longer available but other references state that is was the basis upon which Ibn Sa’d later developed the KTK. However, al-Waqidi’s most famous extant work is his compilation of the battles of the Prophet in Kitab al-Maghāzi. He was often referred to as “The scholar of his Age”. He was also known for his extreme generosity. When al-Waqidi died in (207/822) al-Ma’mun paid for his shroud.

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi reports that al-Waqidi was extremely close to al-Ma’mun’s court and that the Caliph granted him 600,000 dirhams upon his arrival in Baghdad. Although the anecdote tells us how generous the administration was towards al-Waqidi, it fails to tell us what was expected of the scholar in return. The association of the court with scholars may have been a move to add prestige and legitimacy to the establishment. This prompts one to wonder whether his famous work of al-Maghāzi was in some way a form of paying homage to the court.

In comparing the famous maghāzi work of al-Waqidi to that of Ibn Ishaq’s, Fraizer points to al-Waqidi’s unique presentation of the work concluding that, “The changed, and sometimes more detailed, information that he introduces stems not from a desire to provide more accurate information, but largely from a stylistic impulse to use

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78 Atassi states that the majority of the traditions listed in the KTK are narrated on behalf of al-Waqidi. See Atassi, “A History,” 100.
81 Al-Waqidi was also known for his extreme generosity to the point that al-Ma’mun accused him of having two flaws; one of being too kind that he gave all his money away to the needy, and the second of being too shy to ask the caliph for help. Al-Ma’mun then informed al-Waqidi that God’s treasuries are full and at his disposal. See Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 3, 19.
83 He reports that al-Waqidi travelled to Baghdad, when he could not pay his debts in Medina, seeking to meet the vizier Yahya b. Khalid. For four nights Yahya would allow al-Waqidi to join him over dinner but not to kiss his head before departure, Yahya would also instruct his servants to send al-Waqidi off with 1000 dirhams every night. On the fourth night, Yahya finally allowed him to kiss his head explaining that only by then had al-Waqidi received enough grace to warrant such act. On that night al-Waqidi was given 200,000 dirhams; 100,000 to pay off his debts in Medina and the rest to make a living in Baghdad. Yahya gave instructions to provide al-Waqidi with housing and furniture and asked al-Waqidi to remain close to him. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 3, 10.
the data for his own purposes.” For example, Fraizer argues that al-Waqidi presented the Prophet’s relationship to the Jews in a unique manner that was intended to foreshadow the concept of jizya (a tax imposed on the non-Muslims of the community) which was officially instituted after the Prophet’s death. Although al-Khatib al-Baghdadi states that al-Waqidi was a scholar, he [al-Baghdadi] shares several incidents which, combined, seriously affect al-Waqidi’s credibility. Additionally, al-Assyuti lists al-Waqidi as one of the four main people who have forged hadith in the Islamic empire. Although this stance was very strong in the 3rd/9th century, later on — with the realization that al-Waqidi’s work as a historian was indispensable — scholars could no longer maintain such a condemnation and al-Waqidi’s name was eventually cleared.

The fact that Kitab al-Maghazi became an indispensable authority on Prophetic sira thus raises academic concern. Such a problem is compounded by the fact that al-Waqidi is one of the main sources of reports within the KTK which, in turn, became an authority on the exemplary lifestyle of the forbearers of Islam. If such wealth of information about the Prophet’s life and those of the early days of Islam is open to

84 Ibn Ishaq is said to have been requested to author a work on maghāzi by the ’Abbasid caliph al-Mansur. See Rizwi S. Faizer, “Muhammad and the Medinan Jews: A Comparison of the Texts of Ibn Ishaq’s Kitab Sirat RasulAllah with al-Waqidi’s Kitab al-Maghazi.” International Journal of Middle East Studies 28, no. 4 (Nov. 1996): 482.
85 Fraizer argues that Ibn Ishaq’s objective was to celebrate monotheism by showing Muhammad’s divine order in the history of prophethood and relating Qur’anic citations and miracles to support such argument. However, Fraizer believes that al-Waqidi’s objective was to establish a sira for the Prophet that sets precedent for later generations. See Faizer, “Muhammad and the Medinan Jews,” 466 & 469.
86 Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi reports that al-Waqidi claimed that he was the only man known to memorize more than he could write for he had visited all the battle locations personally, however he also states that al-Ma’mun did not memorize the Qur’an. When al-Ma’mun asked him to lead the Friday prayer, an honor that often reflects status, he could not do so because he did not have the “Friday prayer” sura memorized. The report states that al-Ma’mun himself tried to help al-Waqidi memorize the sura but failed. When al-Waqidi finally led the people in prayer he made a mistake in the recitation. See Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 3, 8.
89 Leder, “al-Wakidi,” EP.
90 Atassi argues that the KTK was not fully canonized until the 5th/11th century; a fact that may be related to the acquittal of al-Waqidi’s name.
question, then the use of such works as sources to re-construct the actual history of the early days of Islam must be re-visited. Although al-Waqidi’s credibility was challenged, scholars such as Ibn Hanbal rejected his work as a **muhaddith** but continued to accept his works on the Prophetic **sira** and **maghāzi**; a distinction which poses more questions than it provides answers.

In addition to al-Waqidi, Ibn Sa’d is known to have studied genealogy under Hisham b. al-Kalbi. Ibn Sa’d may have also been influenced by al-Kalbi’s sources which included translations and registers, as well as stories on the history of Persian and Arab tribes; a fact that may have allowed for greater fusion of Persian customs into Arabic historical narratives. Although al-Kalbi’s credibility does not pose a question in historical records, there are mentions of him confessing to selling a fabricated genealogy. Furthermore, Duri argues that political issues were reflected in his writings. This probably took place after al-Kalbi moved to Baghdad and came under al-Mahdi’s patronage. He died during al-Ma’mun’s reign and al-Khatib al-Baghdadi reports that he was greatly mourned by the caliph.

The strong connection between al-Kalbi — as well as al-Waqidi — and the court, and the seemingly relaxed attitude some scholars had with regards to the objective reporting of historical narratives, further fuels this study’s research objective.

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91 His full name is Hisham b.Muhammad b. al-Sa’ib al-Kalbi (120/737-204/819). His father Muhammad b. al-Kalbi (d. 146/763) was a known scholar of genealogy who was one of the first to collect genealogical data from poetry. See W.Atallah “al-Kalbi.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second Edition. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online.
93 Records state that powerful men often tried to buy genealogies to improve their status. This particular report states that Hisham b. al-Kalbi was generously rewarded when he told Kahlid b. ‘Abd Allah al-Qasri that he came from a splendid genealogical line instead of telling him the truth of his grandmother being a prostitute. See Mernissi, *The Veil and the male elite*, 47-48. Mernissi refers to al-Asbahani’s report about Ibn al-Kalbi’s *Kitab al-Asnam*.
94 Reports state that the ’Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi (d. 169/785) made use of Ibn al-Kalbi’s knowledge when countering the Umayyad attack in Spain. See Duri, *The Rise*, 147.
95 Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol. 14, 45.
C. Mawali and the Shu‘ubiyya Movement:

Mawali (clients) were non-Arab converts to Islam who were mostly descendants of captives.\textsuperscript{96} In the early Islamic society all non-Arabs who aspired to membership of Arab society had to procure a patron, the main role of the patron was to provide the mawla with access to the privileged society. Mawali played a crucial role in the formation of the Islamic faith and Islamic law, for example, Abu Hanifa (whose rulings are often indirectly reflected in Ibn Sa’d’s reports) was himself a mawla.\textsuperscript{97} However, their integration posed a challenge to the Ummayads. Al-Mansur was the first to fill the caliphal court with mawali and started appointing them to high positions due to their great loyalty and the expertise they brought.\textsuperscript{98} The mawali cultures infiltrated the Muslim world and altered the Arabs’ lifestyle in many ways, including changing habits of clothes, food, as well as song.\textsuperscript{99} At the same time eighth century ’Abbasid Baghdad witnessed a renewed interest in pre-Islamic poetry. Re-conjuring images of the past seems to have been part of a greater project of constructing an “Arab” ethnic identity amidst the power struggles at play during the time.\textsuperscript{100} The mawali’s Shu‘ubiyya movement may have been an informal response to such a struggle.

The Shu‘ubiyya movement started by a group of mawali in the 2nd/8th century and reached its peak in the 3rd/9th century. Discrimination towards non-Arabs on part of the ’Abbasids and Persian national pride are considered to be among the reasons for the emergence of the movement.\textsuperscript{101} The Shu‘ubiyya movement’s aim, contrary to what some may believe, was not to destroy the Islamic empire but to alter its social and political institutions in a matter that better served non-Arab interests. Adherents to this movement mostly were well educated individuals, such as poets and secretaries, who

\textsuperscript{98} Al-Mansur’s sons followed suit and so the mawāli filled the court and the army as well. See Crone and Wensinck “Mawla.” \textit{EI²}
\textsuperscript{99} Shawqi Dayf, \textit{Al-Shi’r wa-l-Ghina’ fi al-Madina wa Makka} (Cairo: Dar al-Ma’arif, 1979), 29.
\textsuperscript{101} Mahmood, “Religious inquisition,” 59.
generally benefited from the existence of a strong central administration.\textsuperscript{102} There has been no research that specifically links Ibn Sa’d with this movement, but seeing how it flourished around his time and was pioneered by his peers, it is important to include it as a possible influence in his life. The anecdotes Ibn Sa’d shares in the \textit{KTK} often reflect non-Arab cultural traditions as shall be noted in the following chapter; this may be part of the on-going movement of his time to preserve and fuse the local culture within an Islamic context.

\textbf{D. Popular and Court Culture:}

The storytelling phenomenon (\textit{qasas}) is one that is closely tied to the expansion of the Islamic empire. The expansion into new territories resulted in many new converts to Islam who needed to learn about the religion in an easy format. The \textit{qassās} played a religious role as someone who spoke to the masses (‘\textit{amma}) educating them on issues of religion such as Qur’an, interpretation, and hadith.\textsuperscript{103} A \textit{qassās} had to be very familiar with, not only religion, but also history and biographies; he also had to possess the proper language skills to qualify for the job. The \textit{qassās} utilized repetition as an important storytelling technique. Later on, the role took on the task of sharing with the public appropriate behavior patterns as well as customs which made the \textit{qassās} act more as a social preacher than a religious scholar. It was under the ‘Abbasids caliphate that \textit{qasas} became an official part of the government bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{104}

In reviewing the above data we note that much of the material covered by storytellers is similar to that shared by Ibn Sa’d in the \textit{KTK}. A review of the entries on

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\textsuperscript{103} The origins of the post are unclear but some scholars believe it was after the first fitna when Mu’awiyya instructed storytellers to praise the Umayyads and curse the ’Alids. It is because of this “instructive bias” that opinions of Muslim scholars began to differ regarding the appropriateness of the profession of \textit{qasas}; some condemning it for heresy while others condoning it as the only mean to educate the ‘\textit{amma} about religious issues. In telling their stories, storytellers were forbidden to use rhythmic prose (\textit{saj‘}) for it was seen as copying the predominant style of the Arab soothsayers (\textit{kuhhān al-‘Arab}), who had been part of the pagan rituals during the \textit{jahiliyya}. See Khalil Athamina, “The Qasas: its Emergence, Religious Origins and Socio-Political on Early Muslim Society.” \textit{Studia Islamica}, no. 76 (1992): 62.

\textsuperscript{104} In some cases the role was taken up by judges (\textit{qādīs}) as they were the best equipped to answer people’s questions and concerns. See Athamina, “The Qasas,” 63.
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women of the Prophetic household in the *KTK* shows how Ibn Sa’d interjected Qur’an, offered an interpretation of the verses, and often supported the anecdotes by sayings of the Prophet (hadith); those were also the three main areas of concentration of the *qassās*. He also used repetition techniques common to storytellers. Finally, Ibn Sa’d may have been influenced by the *qasas* phenomenon in his attempt to preach the “proper” mode of behavior through his stories about *al-salaf al-ṣalih*. Ibn Sa’d may have utilized the *KTK* as a tool to deliver the same religious discourse as the *qassās* but in a scholarly fashion to mitigate the negative connotations associated with the *qasas*. The written text not only commands academic credibility, but ensures that the information remains permanently static for future generations as well.

**IV. The Ṭabaqāt Genre**

**A. Origins:**

As discussed above, many scholars place the canonical origins of Muslim historical writing within the ʽAbbasid imperial establishment. The beginning of biographical dictionaries is mostly attributed, but not limited, to the development of hadith. Early biographical works coincided with the formation of the schools of jurisprudence which, in turn, relied heavily on the Prophet’s sunna as a basis for establishing legislation. Legislation was based primarily on the Qur’an, but in areas where the Qur’an was silent or vague, the Prophetic sunna was used instead; the words of the Prophet were carried on through various chains of narrators. Therefore, offering biographies of the various hadith narrators in an attempt to establish their veracity and credibility in the chain of narration (*isnad*) became a major step in the formation of jurisprudence. Most scholars include the Ṭabaqāt within this category. However, the earliest Ṭabaqāt works recorded

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105 Ibn Sa’d’s narrative style also reflects a move away from *saj*’ and poetry which were prohibited in *qasas* as well.

106 Jurisprudence bases its ruling on four main criteria in order of priority; Qur’an, sunna, *qiyyas*, and *ijma*’. For more details on each area see Wael Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
include listings of poets and theologians (fuqahāʾ) and other, non-hadith related, figures. The existence of such works prior to the KTK undermines the theory claiming that the genre developed for the sole purpose of hadith criticism.107

Some scholars attribute the primary cause for the rise of the Ṭabaqāt genre to the establishment of genealogy as a means of asserting kinship to the Prophet. This is not only for its strong influence on the assessment of power and authority within early classical Muslim society, but also because of its impact on the distribution of funds from Bayt al-Mal. Grunebaum argues that Muslims created their own system of social stratification despite the Qur’an’s utilitarian message of equality of all human beings.108

Kinship to the Prophet and the date of conversion, commonly referred to as sābiqa, decided the standing of the believer and, at times, affected his or her share in the distribution of the booty and the state pensions. Participation in battle was an important criterion as well. The KTK covers information pertaining to those two concepts (kinship and conversion date) in most of its entries on women in the KTK.

Other scholars, such as Nimrod Hurvitz, argue that biographical dictionaries were construed for the sake of conveying behavioral patterns.109 In a study of the genre, H.A.R. Gibb argued that entries do not reflect personality traits as much as they convey clichéd models of what the authors wished to reveal.110 Biographical dictionaries can therefore allow us to understand the ideologies authors had in mind at the time of writing. Yet as Cooperson elucidates, the lives of the same figures are portrayed differently in various works. He therefore concludes that: “Clearly the biographers' own preoccupations, whether spiritual, polemical, or aesthetic, had a decisive influence upon

107 Earliest known works in the genre include; Tabaqat al-Muhaddithin by al-Mu’afa b.‘Imran al-Musili (d.184/800); Tabaqat Ahl al-‘Ilm wo-l-Dajal by Wasil b. ‘Ata (d. 131/748) (subject matter unknown); Tabaqat al-Shu’arāʾ by al-Djumahi (d.232/846) (classification not related to religious merit); and finally al-Tabaqat al-kubra by Ibn Sa’d (d. 230/845). See Gilliot, “Tabakāt.” Encyclopaedia of Islam. Second Edition. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online.
108 He gives the example of ‘Umar, who while preserving the fundamental principle of Islam’s equality at birth, insisted that the Muslims were not equal in the matter of faith. Gustave E. von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 171.
their representations of the human subject.” Such mental images are not unique to the author alone, but represent a conglomeration of the social, political, and religious ideologies prevalent at the time as well. Critical examination of Ṭabaqāt works can thus open the door to new perspectives unto past social dynamics. This research thus attempts to examine the above claim to help identify how Ibn Sa’d’s own culture and political setting may have influenced his writing of the KTK.

B. Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra (The KTK):

A team of orientalists led by Eduard Sachau were the first to publish what is now known as ‘the Leiden edition’ of Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra. It became the first source of study for scholars of early Islamic history, as well as hadith scholars, in the West and across the Islamic world. It is divided into eight volumes composing the biographies of approximately 4250 individuals based on approximately 13,000 reports (akhbar) collected from about three hundred sources. Ibn Sa’d’s emphasis on listing the chain of isnad adds legitimacy to the reports.

Studies suggest that Ibn Sa’d authored two versions of al-Tabaqat. The book under study is titled Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra (in other references it is called Kitab al-

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112 Lutfi’s examination of the cultural practices of medieval Cairo in al-Sakhawi’s Kitab al-Nisa’ did just that and was able to offer new findings showing that women had greater mobility and economic power than had been previously thought. Huda Lutfi, “Al-Sakhawi Kitab al-Nisa as a Source for the Social, and Economic History of Muslim Women During the Fifteenth Century A.D.” The Muslim World LXXI (1981): 104.
113 This study utilized the Leiden edition. The first volume was published in 1904 and the full set became available by 1920. The work seems to have gone through several recensions before it reached its final version. Husayn b. Fahm (d.289/902) was the one who added Ibn Sa’d’s own entry onto the work. The recension by Harith b. Abi Usama (d.282/895) was the one used by al-Tabari for his annals, and there is also one by Ibn Abi Dunya. In the Leiden edition, Sachau gives the recension of Ibn Hayyawayh (d.381/991) which was also used by al-Dhahai and Ibn Hajar. Atassi, “A History,” 27.
115 The ten most frequent sources in the entire work account for more than 50% of the total number of reports. Atassi, “A History,” 129.
116 Although the original work appeared in the third century hijri, studies show that it was not fully canonized, as an authoritative text reflecting the early Medinean model, until the fifth century. Atassi, “A History,” 27.
Tabaqat al-Kabir) distinguishing it from another book also authored by Ibn Sa’d titled Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Sughra (Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Saghir). The shorter version has several differences, most prominent of which is that it does not include the same number of ranks (tabaqāt) presented in the longer version and does not include a volume on women. While some scholars argue that Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Sughra seems to be an abridged version of the original Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra, Atassi presents strong proof to support his theory that Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Sughra was authored first and then later expanded and elucidated into what became Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra.

The listing of the entries of the KTK is based on the notion of Ṭabaqāt which is generations, or levels, following one another. The term ṭabaqa is used in the Qur’an to denote the notion of stages or a hierarchy. This sense is also present within the work itself where the layers form what appears to be a ripple effect in which the Prophet is the nucleus. The ripple, in turn, resonates outwards and onto his immediate circle of family and companions (ṣahāba) until it reaches the outer layers of tabi’īn and tabi’i al-tabi’īn (followers and the followers’ followers). Such a hierarchy creates a sense of continuity between the “then” and the “now”, in a way similar to the actual method of narration of reports Ibn Sa’d adopts whereby a linked chain of isnad carries the report from one tabaqa to the other. The ṭabaqāt then expand geographically to cover the major urban centers of Islam beginning with Arabia and then Iran onto to other territories such as Egypt and Yemen.

Such layers of chronology and topography create repetitions which Khalidi believes imposes a sense of duality of classification; a duality in which the forbearers present the ideal model that is, in turn, followed by the rest of the Muslim umma. He states, “what may have been at issue is a kind of apostolic truth theory whereby the

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117 The Library of the Turkish Archaeological Museum in Istanbul had a manuscript (no. 435) titled “Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Saghir.” This manuscript is now in the Süleymaniye Library (Özel 216). Atassi, “A History”, 105.
118 Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Saghir is only available in manuscript form.
120 See Qur’an (67:3, 71:15) used in reference to the seven layers of the skies, and (84:19) denoting movement from one level to another.
121 Male descendants are listed till (230/844) but the women’s volume ends much sooner with the generation of the sahāba’s children and a few grandchildren.
Prophet’s companions and their descendants act as grantors of the true faith in the cities where they settled. As these generations radiate in time and space they are not only an unimpeachable chain of witnesses to the truth but also carry the certainty of the faith to the major cities of the umma. Here are the believers, arranged in ranks and with their women praying behind them."\(^{122}\)

Volume one of the *KTK* offers a historical summary of the beginning of time, from the creation of Adam to Muhammad. It begins with Adam and Eve and shares some of the stories of apostles and prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Moses and Jesus.\(^{123}\) Following the birth of Muhammad and his childhood, volume one then shares his life, covering the details of marriage to Khadija, signs of prophecy, and the prophecy itself until the migration to Medina.

Volume two is dedicated to the battles (*maghâzi*) of the Prophet including their occasions, dates, and the booty awarded in each battle. The Prophet’s death is covered in detail including burial and eulogies recited by many Muslims, including women.\(^{124}\) Volume two ends with a narrative on the collection and documentation of the Qur’an.

Volumes three through seven include the actual biographies of the men, in order of proximity to the Prophet’s family, clan, location (Medina), and expand outwards based on region. A section on *mawalî* is placed following Arab men and continues up till the time of Ibn Sa’d himself in the first half of the third century hijri.

Volume eight is dedicated entirely to women and covers a listing of over 640 biographies. The volume starts with a rendition of the women’s pledge of allegiance (*bay’a*) to the Prophet then goes on to list those associated with the Prophet’s family as will be discussed in the following chapter. The biographical listing of the women’s volume eight ends with a few of the *tâbiʿîn*, such as Umm Kulthum, the wife of ’Umar b.


\(^{123}\) Unlike the other prophets, Moses and Jesus do not receive separate headings and are thus not listed in the table of contents at the onset of the volume. It is not clear which recension or edition is responsible for such categorization or whether it was a distinction evident in the original manuscript.

\(^{124}\) The poetry recited by women includes names of women such as Arwa, ‘Atika, Safiyya bt. Abi Talib, Hind bt. al-Harith, Hind bt. Athatha,’Atika b. Zayd, and Umm Ayman, See Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol.2, 93-98.
al-Khattab’s grandson, and does not portray women of the second or third century as the male volumes do. 125

C. Existing KTK Research:

Traditional studies of the KTK in the Arab world have typically reviewed the work as part of the hadith-support scholarship. A recent dissertation by al-Azuri in the KSA adopts a “reconstructionist” historical perspective; an approach that assumes the KTK to be a unique reliable source providing the optimum rendition of the lives of al-salaf al-ṣālih (the pious precedent). The work reviews the chains of transmission and compares Ibn Sa’d’s chains of narrators to other scholars of his time. The 700 page study does not give any reason for the writing of the KTK other than as a tool for hadith criticism. It does not deal with the KTK’s volume eight on women. 126

On the other hand, Attasi’s dissertation offers the most in-depth critical study focusing entirely on Ibn Sa’d’s KTK. In his work, Atassi offers an analysis of the development of the KTK from authorship to canonization. He argues that the canonization of the KTK took place in the fifth century hijri after copies of the manuscript had travelled to Damascus and Cairo. Although the study sheds ample light on the development of the KTK, it gives little attention to the historical moment of authorship and its possible influence on the text. Atassi laments, however, the fact that the book has not received the analytical attention that it deserves. 127

One such analytical study concerned itself with Ibn Sa’d’s rendition of moral asceticism by reviewing his scant reports on the Prophet’s simple food intake. The study argues that Ibn Sa’d, and biographers of his time, may have retrojected the ethics of their day onto the pious model of the Prophet to establish a desired moral code: “By fusing their moral outlook with the Prophet’s behavior, they solidified their moral outlook and

125 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 340-342.
126 The study touches on the reasons behind the creation of the work, all of which are directly related to hadith transmission. Those include genealogy, credibility assessment, and ensuring that narrators coexisted in time and place with others. See Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Azuri “Manhaj Ibn Sa’d fi Naqd al-Ruwat fi Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kubra.” (Phd Dissertation. Umm al-Qura University, 2001).
transformed it into the predominant moral view in Islam.”

Although the work above presents a similar approach to the study at hand, it limits its research to the topic of moral asceticism in Muslim teachings only. On the other hand, such works may also be read as a critique of the decadence of the authors’ own times.

Examinations of women in Ibn Sa’d’s *KTK* are also available but do not cover the same topic this study explores. Gertrude Stern was the first to address women in biographical dictionaries in her 1939 study. The work sheds light on the institution of marriage in the early Islamic period. More recently, Ruth Roded reviewed biographical dictionaries beginning with Ibn Sa’d and pointed to the descending levels of representation of women across time. She writes, “Quantitative analysis of the biographical collections seem to confirm the prevalent notion that it was the Muslim scholars, particularly legists of the ‘Abbasid period, who from the third/ninth century downgraded the position of women in Islam.”

Although Roded offers a few examples of how Ibn Sa’d may have reflected biases in his presentation of women, such contextual analysis is not the focus of her work. Further studies include Afsaruddin’s brief examination of the changing conceptions of women’s roles in Muslim societies through the late medieval period. Her comparative work, similar to Roded’s findings, reflects how the active role of women in the medieval religious circles was carefully minimized over time.

The more recent dissertation by Pernilla Myrne shows how Ibn S’ad’s presentation of the Prophet’s wives portrayed them as passive and secluded versus other women who enjoyed greater participation in social life. Myrne’s study recommends

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128 Hurvitz, “Biographies and Mild Asceticism,” 64.
131 Roded also highlighted discrepancies between a few of Ibn Sa’d’s presentations compared to other texts, the brief example she provided of ’Aisha b. Talha prompted this study’s initial interest in pursuing a comparative line of analysis on a larger and more theoretical scale.
132 Her study selected a few female characters and compared their representation in three biographical works: Ibn Sa’d (d. 230/845), Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1070), and Ibn Hajar al-’Asqalani (d. 852/1449). See Asma Afsaruddin Afsaruddin, Asma. “Reconstituting Women's Lives: Gender and the Poetics of Narrative in Medieval Biographical Collections.” *The Muslim World* 92, no. 3 & 4 (2002): 461.
further investigation into what Ibn S'ad did not write as a tool to better understand his ideologies. Myrne’s work does not juxtapose the data against the socio-political context of the time and lacks a comparative perspective to other texts.

None of the above works have explored Ibn Sa’d’s discourse in the KTK’s portrayal of women. This study analyzes the data in the KTK contextualizing it with the historical moment in which it was authored to offer a better understanding of how the work may indeed be a product of the author’s own ideological stance.

Conclusion:

This chapter shed light on some of the current issues within the fields of Muslim historiography and gender studies. Two major obstacles within the field unfold; first is the fact that early Islamic history was recorded close to two centuries following the events themselves, and in a land that is far removed from the original territory. This temporal and spatial gap must be accounted for in our current understanding of those historical narratives as scholars move away from a naïve “reconstructive” reading of historical texts towards an in-depth analytical “deconstructive” understanding of the various elements that collaborate to produce the text. This critical analysis brings us to the second obstacle faced by scholars of women’s history and that is the fact that it is exclusively transposed through male authorship.

Any preliminary attempts to tackle the above obstacles must begin with a proper understanding of the context in which the historical narrative was created. That is why the chapter then reviewed the early ’Abbasid caliphate to shed light on the ’Abbasid imperial discourse and the intertwining struggle for the production of knowledge. On the cultural front, Harun and al-Ma’mun showed tremendous patronage of the arts and scholarship. Additionally, the caliphs claimed religious authority through declaring themselves as the official ‘protectors of the faith and the sponsorship of religious scholarship mostly through mawālī. The mixed cultural background of the mawālī and

the heavy influence of the local heritage in Baghdad created movements to incorporate cultural norms within the religion as evidenced by the Shuʿubiyya movement of the time. Additionally, the rising power of the religious scholars (ʿulamaʾ) and the struggle for religious power culminated in the mihna in which Ibn Saʿd sided with the state authority.

A review of Ibn Saʿd’s own life suggests a close association with the court. His tutelage under al-Waqidi and al-Kalbi support this notion although an examination of their history raises concerns regarding the credibility of their scholarly output. Additionally, Ibn Saʿd’s background as a mawla may have influenced him to imagine seventh century Arabian Medina through the lens of his own urban hierarchal culture. His work may also be influenced by the qasas phenomena in the time which aimed to promote “desired behavioral patterns” through recounting stories of past Islamic glories. Therefore, the history documented by patrons such as al-Waqidi and Ibn Saʿd may have reflected political objectives and personal biases, along with a recount of the past, all at once.

The chapter ended with a review of the current research regarding Ṭabaqāt. Although the origins of the Ṭabaqāt genre may be attributed to various reasons, mostly hadith science, one of the fascinating reasons to explore is that of model-setting. None of the available studies have attempted to use a deconstructive analysis of the KTK to assess how such “model-setting” may relate to the context of the author himself, and that is why the study at hand explored the historical context indepth.

Finally, it appears that the court’s effort to promote the intellects, arts, and religious scholars was part of a greater ʿAbbasid imperial project, although the contribution of the Umayyads to the Islamic civilization should not be underestimated. The ʿAbbasid patronage not only succeeded in creating history but in fact jumpstarted an entire civilization; one granting the ʿAbbasids their wish of holding a permanent, and

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spectacular, spot on the timeline of human civilization. Through their championing of the scientists, artists, and 'ulama', the likes of Harun and his son al-Ma’mun ensured the production of master works in various fields. Their official sponsorship of a massive library and promotion of storytelling ensured the dissemination of their “grand” message to all sectors of the society from the intellectual elite to the illiterate masses. Such works glorified the ’Abbasid’s as a power structure protecting the faith, bestowing the caliphate with a quasi-divine authority, while at the same time celebrating the achievements of Man. In other words, in order to secure their everlasting mark on history, the ’Abbasids took it upon themselves to write the history of the early days of Islam leading up to the legitimate rule of the ’Abbasids. It comes as no surprise that it was as this time that al-Tabari authored his famous sixteen-volume universal-history-of-mankind work titled *Tarikh al-Rusul wal Muluk* which started with Adam and Eve and ended with the ’Abbasids. Such works are in dire need of contemporary deconstructive-analysis that would shed light on the historical context’s influence on the text.

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135 Samer ‘Ali argues that the caliphs presented themselves as deities on earth, he argues that the ’Abbasid era witnessed two competing visions of Islam, one purely monotheistic promoted by pious men and another henotheistic tracing back to the region’s roots within the Hellenistic culture. Henotheism was a system which enabled the worship of one God, while tolerating the supplication of other deities as well. ‘Ali believes that the ’Abbasid caliphs did not promote Islamic monotheism but rather showed greater affinity to henotheism. In such case, he states, that it was the caliphs themselves who acted like deities. To support his argument ‘Ali studied three aspects of caliphs’ lives. First he searched through court records to show how the caliphs acted as kings expecting people to supplicate to them as well as compose great odes of poetry in their praise. The court, in turn, rewarded such loyalty with great generosity. ‘Ali then studied the grandeur of the caliphs’ dwellings and showed how they lived in grand palaces which were intricately designed and extremely ornate. Finally, ‘Ali reviewed the carnal pleasures enjoyed, and promoted, within the kings’ palaces. Song and dance along with wine drinking and young boy (ghulam) companionship were all part of the regular life inside the palace walls. See Samer M. ‘Ali “Early Islam—Monotheism or Henotheism? A View From the Court.” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39, no. 1 (Jan. 2008): 25.

Chapter Two: The “Model” Muslim Woman in the *KTK* - Themes and Topoi

Introduction:
This chapter analyzes the entries covering the daughters and wives of the Prophet in volume eight of the *KTK*. The study focuses on the main themes and topoi frequently repeated in the work to highlight the areas of emphasis in Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of those women. Correlations with the cultural, religious, and/or political contexts are also explored. The author’s discourse seems to present these women as models of desired norms more than as people whose biographies reflect individual characters. Ibn Sa’d’s listing of the Prophet’s daughters includes Fatima, Zaynab, Ruqaiyya, and Umm Kulthum. As for the Prophet’s wives, Ibn Sa’d lists the following: Khadija bt. Khuwaylid, Sawda bt. Zam’a, ‘Aisha bt. Abu Bakr, Hafsa bt. ‘Umar, Umm Salama bt. Abi Umayya, Umm Habiba bt. Abu Sulayman, Zaynab bt. Jahsh, Zaynab bt. Khuzayma, Juwayriya bt. al-Harith, Safiyya bt. Huyaiyy, Rayhana bt. Zayd, and Maymuna bt. al-Harith. The analysis will also examine Mariyya al-Qibtiyya who is listed as a concubine (*milk-yamīn*) but is the mother of the Prophet’s son. Therefore, the entries of the 17 women of the Prophet’s household (four daughters and 13 wives) will first be examined in this study.

The study deconstructs the above biographical entries to identify common themes and topoi. Themes are certain topic areas that recur throughout the entries; they will demonstrate what Ibn Sa’d regarded as areas of importance. Along with the themes there are embedded topoi within the text that highlight certain motifs. They are conventional

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137 Listing order follows the order of their listing in the *KTK*, vol. 8 (*Kitab al-Nisa’*).
138 There is a narrative section about the Prophet’s role as a husband which follows the biographical entries about the Prophet’s wives, Mariyya’s entry is listed after this middle narrative section and hence does not directly follow the rest of the wives’ entries.
building blocks of literary content that are more complex than a word or a figure of speech and are more suggestive of a concept. Writers associated in space and time often share similar topoi, a phenomenon which reflects the significance of context on the work. Therefore, when we discuss topoi it is important that we also address the issue of tradition; the tradition within which the topos is generated. In his study of topoi in medieval literature, Cherchi states, “the way of structuring a work is deeply rooted in a tradition…tradition can give the matria [body of collected knowledge] itself to the work, and that tradition is the common ground of beliefs and knowledge that is shared by the author and his audience and therefore makes possible communication between the two.”139 In other words, the author must speak to the audience in familiar terminology using references which they can relate to in order to understand the text.

It is my argument that Ibn Sa’d was influenced by the formulation of the Islamic empire as well as his own cultural context of a patriarchal ‘Abbasid Baghdad. His entries of the women of the Prophetic household in volume eight seem to reflect his own interest in setting a model which grounds the desired social norms managing gender relations. The everyday life of the Prophet and his wives in early Islamic Medina are the backdrop upon which the model is set. Ibn Sa’d seems to be presenting this early “ideal” through a lens that echoes the socio-political scene of his own cosmopolitan Baghdad.

To further establish the above theory, a comparison is made to other biographical dictionaries written by other authors under different contexts. The two works consulted are Al-Istí‘ab fī Ma‘rifat al-ʾAshab by the Cordoban scholar Muhammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1070), and Al-Isaba fī Tamyyiz al-Sahaba by Ibn Hajar Al-ʾAsqalani (d. 852/1449). The choice was made to represent diversity as the former lived close to Ibn Sa’d’s time but physically and culturally belonged to the Andalusian environment, while

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the latter—al-ʿAsqalani—was a product of the Mamluk era (648/1250-992/1517) and lived in Egypt.  

Volume eight’s entries on prominent women include themes that relate to marriage details such as bridal payment (mahr), guardianship (wali), and waiting period (ʿidda), female concealment and segregation, and funerary rituals. Other areas of emphasis that appear less related to legal rulings, yet still pertain to model-setting, include female beauty, jealously among wives, as well asceticism. The areas above are emphasized through exaggerated repetitions as well as through the use of dramatic literary tools such as the sudden switch to active voice and the use of topoi. Topoi repeated in the entries include the injunction of Qur’anic verses, the mentions of special tidings (barakat), and the presentation of dreams.

The Structure of KTK vol. 8 (Kitab al-Nisa’):

The structure by which Ibn Saʿd orders the biographical entries in volume eight mandates contemplation. Volume eight opens with a rendition of the women’s covenant (bay’a) to the Prophet in which the oath of accepting Islam is elucidated. Other historical records share information about more than one bay’a; the first one in ʿAqaba involved twelve individuals, all men, while the second in the following year inʿAqaba as well included 73 men and two women; both before hijra. There are also references to a separate female bay’a that took place in Medina after hijra. Although Ibn Saʿd mentions the names of the women involved in the bay’a, he makes no clear reference to the time and place of the bay’a he narrates in what may be a deliberate attempt to keep it vague so as to apply the details onto all the Muslim women accepting the faith at any historical moment. Such lack of precision may also indicate the style of Muslim historiography in such early days before it matured. This section gives a detailed example of what a pious Muslim woman should and should not do upon entering into the faith.

The first biographical entry following the *bay‘a* is reserved for Khadija bt. Khuwaylid. However, Khadija’s entry is not followed by the Prophet’s other wives, but rather by a listing of the Prophet’s daughters and then some paternal aunts and cousins.\textsuperscript{142} The remainder of the wives are listed following the Prophet’s biological family and begin with what appears to be a chronological order of marriage listing Sawda bt. Za‘ma then ’Aisha bt. Abu Bakr, both of whom he married in Mecca prior to the hijra. The rest of the wives’ biographies follow, although a few women’s status as official wives or concubines is left unclear. The Prophet’s relationship with Mariyya al-Qibtiyya is not part of the segment on wives (*ummahāt al-mu‘minīn*) but abruptly appears following an intermediate topical section.\textsuperscript{143} What follows is an intermediate “topic” segment relating to the Prophet’s marriages such as bridal gifts provided, homes inhabited, waiting periods, the Prophet’s dismay at wives, the saying that the Prophet was entitled to have “all the women as his wives”, along with references to accounts pertaining to the Prophet’s virility. The entry on Mariyya al-Qibtiyya follows all of the above and is then followed, until the end of the volume, by a general listing of brief biographies of Muslim women based on clan affiliations.

Ibn Sa‘d adopted a unique structure in the volume placing Khadija apart from all the other Prophet’s wives. This may be the case because the Prophet married Khadija in pre-Islamic times. Therefore their marriage may not have been a suitable example of legal rulings following Islam. Another interpretation, one which elevates Khadija’s status, is that she is perceived as the one “true” partner to the Prophet who was not only his first and strongest supporter, but also the mother of all his children who lived to adulthood. Leila Ahmed argues that when studying the history of Islam, it is ’Aisha rather than Khadija that should be counted as the first woman of Islam because Khadija was already indulged in *jahili* tradition by the time Islam was revealed when in her fifties, however ’Aisha was young in Medina and witnessed the unfolding of the early years

\textsuperscript{142} Such a distinction reflects the interest in establishing *nasab* which was important for inheritance purposes.
\textsuperscript{143} There is also a brief listing of the marriages of the Prophet that were dissolved before consummation and the listings of women who had gifted themselves to the Prophet. Women who gifted themselves to the Prophet and women whose marriage to the Prophet was dissolved are not considered part of the Prophet’s wives as in both cases the marriages were not consummated. These women are not part of this study.
following the hijra in their entirety.\textsuperscript{144} It is only through the adoption of this mental framework with regards to the organization that we can then explain the unique position of Khadija apart from blood-related family and apart from the other wives. This theory is further supported by examining the listed order of the daughters of the Prophet in which Ibn Sa’d begins with Fatima, although the oldest of the Prophet’s daughters is known to have been Zaynab. Fatima’s status is clearly signaled out in her entry which states that the Prophet said she was the “The leading lady of all the women of the world.”\textsuperscript{145} The length of the entries may be another indicator of status. With ‘Aisha presumed to be the Prophet’s favorite wife, it is no wonder that her biography holds the longest entry; comprised of 17 pages.\textsuperscript{146}

Finally, volume eight’s overall structure establishes a clear distinction between prominent women (Prophet’s family and wives) and ordinary Muslim women of the community. This distinction is enforced through the tactics of order (earlier placement), entry size, and interjection of a middle narrative separator section about the Prophet as a husband.\textsuperscript{147} Ibn Sa’d seems to be setting these women in a league of their own; an exemplary model for the rest of the Muslim women to aspire to. The section which includes the Prophet’s daughters and wives along with the narrative section on the Prophet’s marital customs and traditions takes up about half of the entire volume eight. As mentioned, ‘Aisha has the longest entry in the volume followed by Zaynab bt. Jahsh and the Prophet’s own daughter Fatima. As shall be noted, those three entries contain the most information pertaining to the main themes including marriage details of seclusion and funerary rituals.

The other two biographical dictionaries consulted do not follow the same order of listing as does Ibn Sa’d; both al-‘Asqalani and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr follow a straightforward alphabetical listing for all entries. Although women are also isolated in a private section in both works, the names of all women are listed in alphabetical order without regards to

\textsuperscript{145} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 17. Original version states “سيدة نساء العالمين”.
\textsuperscript{146} General women entries nearing the end of the entire volume take up two to three lines each.
\textsuperscript{147} The intermittent narrative section which separates the Prophet’s family from the rest of the Muslim women is 61 pages long, comprising 18% of volume eight.
their status, lineage, or relationship to the Prophet. This type of non-discriminative listing reveals the author’s own approach to the data provided; one which does not pre-establish superiority in the mind of the reader but leaves such judgement call up to the readers themselves to make. Furthermore, the straight-forward listing does not allow for the great variance in the type of data provided between prominent and common women’s entries as shall be noted in Ibn Sa’d. The other authors seem to have had one general outline upon which all female entries were built, although the entries do vary in size. On the other hand, Ibn Sa’d seems to have constructed two separate models that distinguish between prominent and common women. The first category lists details about specific themes, supported by explicit topoi, as shall be noted below, while the latter category includes basic genealogy and scattered data about various topics. Ibn Sa’d’s constructed effort reveals his own intention of setting the prominent women apart, and in turn placing them on a pedestal as a model to be followed by the common Muslim woman.
I. Themes

A. Marriage:

The institution of marriage was not very well defined in Arabia before Islam. Studies show that the marriage systems which existed in Arabia prior to Islam were more flexible and fluid with several types of approved marriages. A woman seems to have had the right to divorce her husband at any time, sometimes doing so by simply turning the
opening of her tent to the opposite direction.\textsuperscript{149} Most of the reports presented in Ibn Saʽd’s \textit{KTK} show that women entered consecutive marriages before the onset of Islam.\textsuperscript{150} Islam then brought great reform to the institution of marriage whereby only one type of marriage was deemed legal. The specific details of this “single-type marriage” were intricately developed by jurists over the next two centuries.\textsuperscript{151} Ibn Saʽd’s reports on the marriages of the Prophet reflect the influence of the jurists of his time and show his inclination to present the “single-type marriage” in a form that endorses the norms of his own day. This type of marriage allows the woman to be married to only one man at a time and gives the husband the financial responsibility and the upper hand in areas of divorce; the man is allowed to have up to four wives.

About half of \textit{KTK}'s \textit{Kitab al-Nisa’} is dedicated to addressing the institution of marriage. As per the above reference to structure, the first half of volume eight (with the exception of a few pages on the Prophet’s daughters, aunts and cousins) deals with the Prophet’s marriages and the details of the biographies of his wives. This emphasis on the institution of marriage exemplified through the Prophet and his wives includes specific elements that appear frequently in most of the entries. These elements include mention of bridal gifts (\textit{mahr}), marriage guardian (\textit{wali}, and waiting period (\textit{ʽidda}).\textsuperscript{152}

a. Bridal Gift (\textit{mahr}):

The \textit{mahr} or \textit{sadaq} is a marriage gift that is required under Islamic law to validate a marriage.\textsuperscript{153} Although it is a legal requirement, most legal schools did not set specific


\textsuperscript{150} It might have been such fluidity that prompted Hind bt. ‘Utba to question the notion that a free woman can commit adultery when she was pledging allegiance to the Prophet during the \textit{bay'a} after the conquest of Mecca. Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 4.

\textsuperscript{151} Hallaq, \textit{A History of Islamic Legal Theories}, 82.

\textsuperscript{152} Similar emphasis on those topics is not present in the other biographical dictionaries consulted such as Shihab al-Din Abi al-Fadl Ahmad Ibn Ali Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalani, \textit{Al-Isaba}, vol. 12 &13. And’Umar Yusuf b. ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad Ibn ’Abd al-Barr, \textit{Al-Isi’ab fi Ma’rifat al-Ashab}. Edited by A. M. Bijawi. Cairo: Nahdat Misr Publishing, 1959.

\textsuperscript{153} The study of matrimonial gifts in Muslim societies has focused on the pre-Islamic Arabian origins of Islamic law which established and distinguished between the \textit{mahr} which is a bride-price paid to the wife's family, and the \textit{sadaq}, which is a gift given directly to the bride. The comparison of legal practice and the legal literature show interaction between nascent Islamic law and local marriage practices. Such interaction
sums. However, Ibn Sa’d is keen on sharing the details of the value of the gift given in his entries on women of the Prophetic household. As Mahr is basically a bride-price paid by the husband to the woman and her family, it has been viewed by some scholars of gender studies as a tool that impacts power-relations in a marriage. Under such an interpretation the bride-price resembles a sales-transaction in which the husband presumably purchases the wife. Such a sale then empowers the husband to become the dominant partner in the relationship and places the woman in a subordinate role which, in turn, limits her decision making rights. By establishing the mahr as an important corner-stone in any marriage, Ibn Sa’d may indirectly be endorsing a male-dominant marital partnership.

In the case of ’Ali b Abi Talib’s marriage to the Prophet’s daughter Fatima, it is stated that ’Ali was concerned about not having a gift to offer. The Prophet instructed him to give Fatima a shield which the Prophet had previously given him, as a bridal gift. The entry goes on to state that ’Ali sold one of his camels and used the money of 480 (currency/denomination is not mentioned) to give as mahr: What is quite significant is the fact that in the middle of Fatima’s entry there is a statement noting that the mahr of the daughters of the Prophet was 500 dirhams, 12.5 awqiyya. It is important to note here that the Islamic currencies had not yet been minted during the Prophet’s lifetime.

The entry of the Prophet’s daughter Zaynab and her marriage to Abu-l-’ As before Islam is another example that reflects the significance of the mahr. Although she converted to Islam and migrated to Medina her husband remained an unbeliever (mushrik) and his clan was raided by the Muslims. Later Zaynab offered him protection influenced and transformed both the views of Muslim jurists and the actual marriage settlements. See Yossef Rapoport, “Matrimonial Gifts in Early Islamic Egypt.” Islamic Law and Society 7, no. 1 (2000): 1. 1-36.

154 Early Islamic society often used commodities in lieu of cash, so mahr can be paid in money or in kind as is noted in the entry of Fatima bt. Muhammad’s marriage to ’Ali b. Abi Talib. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 12. Another fact that is stated in all the wives’ entries along with the rendered gift is a food banquet (walima) offered to the guests in celebration of the wedding. This may be related to the mandate of publicly announcing the marriage.

and he was allowed into Medina where he was given money to pay off debts he owed in Mecca. Following Abul-l-ʼAs’ emigration from Mecca he became a Muslim and he and Zaynab were once again a married couple. Zaynab’s entry in the KTK reflects Ibn Sad’s utmost emphasis on addressing the debate of whether the couple’s reunion, after the husband’s conversion, constituted a new marriage and hence required a new mahr, or was simply a continuation of an old marriage (which was on hiatus while the husband was a mushrik) and hence did not entail a new mahr. The question of whether the reunion constituted a new marriage receives ample discussion with reports supporting both sides of the argument but shows no final verdict. What is obvious, however, is Ibn Sa’d’s persistence on delivering the more prevalent message that every new marriage requires a mahr.

As for the wives of the Prophet, all entries state the gift which the Prophet presented to the future bride. However, there is one particular sentence which Ibn Sa’d repeats verbatim in the entries of eight different wives; “The Prophet fed her 80 wasaq of dates and 20 of barley or wheat.” This sentence seems to act more as a standard formula rather than as a casual individual comment. The use of such a standard seems to support the concept of the fairness of the Prophet in dealing with his wives. However, use of the formula also supports the concept of setting a specific amount for the mahr.

In consulting other biographical dictionaries we find no mention of such details in the works of either al-ʻAsqalani or Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr. One must then question the reason why Ibn Sa’d would take such keen measures to include the same sentence in the entries pertaining to eight of the Prophet’s most important wives after the death of Khadija; particularly since no similar mention is included in Khadija’s entry. Since Islamic law states that a mahr is a mandatory part of a marriage but does not state any particular value for such a gift, it is worth investigating why Ibn Sa’d insisted on sharing the value

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156 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 12.
157 The phrase is repeated in the entries of Sawda, ʻAisha, Hafsa, Umm Salama, Zayanb b. Jahsh, Juwayriyya, Safiyya, and Maymuna The original version states: “at’amaha thamanin wasqan tamr wa bhrnh wasqan qmmh ʻaw sha ʻir.” Wasq is a specific unit of measure which Lisan al-ʻArab states to be equivalent to approx. five pounds. In the entries of Zaynab b. Khuzayma, and Rayhana b. Zayd the gift which the Prophet offered is stated as being 12 awqiyya, and there is no mention of a gift in the case of Mariyya al-Qibtiyya.
amount presented by the Prophet. One possible answer may lie in the different legal opinions regarding marriage that existed between the jurists of Medina and Baghdad. The issue of *mahr* spurred a debate among jurists of both provinces whereby those following the Medinian Mailiki school of jurisprudence stated no minimum or maximum amount, while in Baghdad it was Abu Hanifa himself who specified a minimum amount.\(^{158}\) As Ibn Sa’d resided in Baghdad and worked under the patronage of al-Ma’mun who favored the Hanafi legal opinion, the information shared on *mahr* may be reflective of what was common at the time of the authorship of the *KTK*.\(^{159}\)

The notion of the woman’s reliance on the financial support of a man is further resonated through reference to the wives demands to the Prophet as shall be discussed later in this chapter. Ibn Sa’d makes no reference to the women of the Prophetic household earning money on their own except in the case of Khadija who was known to be a business owner in the pre-Islamic *Jahili* days. Through the association of the only independent woman with the *Jahili* era, Ibn Sa’d enforces the notion of female dependency as the exemplary model of the proper Muslim household. Another reason behind establishing the *mahr* amount may be found in the concept of *kafā’a* which will be addressed in the following section on guardianship.

b. Marriage Guardian (*waļī*):

The guardian (*waļī*) is a male who is assigned to accept or reject the marriage proposal of a potential suitor on behalf of his female ward. The guardian is usually the father of the bride or another male family member. Guardianship is another concept often referred to in Ibn Sa’d’s entries on prominent women.\(^{160}\) The concept of the *waļī* is another example of male dominance as it strips the woman’s right of making her own decision.

In the case of the Prophet’s marriage to Sawda bt. Zam’a, his first wife after Khadija’s death, Ibn Sa’d states that Sawda asked the Prophet himself to be her guardian.

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\(^{159}\) Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, 53.

\(^{160}\) The root word of term *waļī* means being close to something, however the noun *wilāya* connotes supervision. *Lisan al-‘Arab*, [http://www.baheth.com](http://www.baheth.com).
in concluding the marriage but the Prophet declined and asked Sawda to assign another
guardian.\textsuperscript{161} When the Prophet wanted to marry Umm Salama he spoke to her nephew
and to her son who was just a young boy at the time. Umm Salama had concerns about
the marriage and the entry states that she relayed them through her \textit{wali}.\textsuperscript{162} In the case of
Umm Habiba, Ibn Sa’d states that the Prophet sent a message to the king of Abyssinia
asking to marry her. Al-Najashi (the king of Abyssinia) in turn asked Umm Habiba to
assign a \textit{wakil} for herself.\textsuperscript{163}

In the case of captured enemies who become slaves (\textit{milīk yamīn}) it is stated the
Prophet freed them prior to marriage. Such is the case with Juwayriya bt. al-Harith,
Safiyya bt. Huyayy, and Rayhana bt. Zayd. In these examples there is no mention of a
guardian. It may be so because at the time slaves were considered to be property of the
owner. It may have also been difficult for the bride to assign a \textit{wali} as family relations
were probably severed as a result of the war. The fact that no \textit{wali} was needed for a man
to marry a slave woman could have also presented an additional convenience at the time
of Ibn Sa’d’s ’Abbasid Baghdad where the number of slaves was much greater than that
of the earlier Medinian period.

It is important to note that Islamic marriage law developed differently in Medina
than it did in Baghdad due to the different nature of the communities and milieu in each
province. A key area of difference relating to marriage laws is the doctrine of equal
status (\textit{kafā’a}) by which the husband-to-be must be of equal status to the bride-to-be’s
family in order for her guardian to agree to the marriage.\textsuperscript{164} The doctrine of \textit{kafā’a}
evolved out of the distinct nature of life in Baghdad which was cosmopolitan and much

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{161}{She chose Hatib b. ’Amr b. ’Abd Shams. Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 36.}
\footnote{162}{Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 60.}
\footnote{163}{Umm Habiba assigned Khalid b. Sa’yd b. al-’As as her \textit{wakil} and he, in turn, announced publicly that he
had wed Umm Habiba to the Prophet. Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 69. As for ’Aisha bt. Abu Bakr and Hafsa bt.
’Umar b. al-Khattab, it was their respective fathers who were their guardians. In the case of Maymuna bt.
al-Harith, Ibn Sa’d states that it was her brother-in-law al-’Abbas b. ’Abd al-Muttalib who was her \textit{wālī}.
As for the Prophet’s marriage to his first wife Khadija, although it was she who sent a secret messenger
asking the Prophet to marry her, Ibn Sa’d reports that when he agreed she assigned her uncle ’Amr b. Asad
b. ’Abd al-’Uzayy b. Qusayy to wed her. Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 9.}
\footnote{164}{It was in Baghdad that the doctrine of \textit{kafā’a} (equality in marriage) was established by Abu Hanifa (d.
150/767) and later through his student Abu Yusuf (d. 182/798) by means of his role as Chief judge
(Qadi al-Qudāh). It was the Hanafi legal views which became dominant under the ’Abbasid Empire.}
\end{footnotes}
more socially complex than Medina. The social stratification present in Baghdad and the
presence of mawālī (non Arab converts to Islam) posed conditions which often required
the law to be more practical than that articulated by the jurists of other schools such as
Malik (d. 93/712) in Medina. In his Muwatta’, Malik makes no reference to the issue
of kafa’ā and it is said that he allowed marriage between Arabs and non-Arabs and was
of the view that the lineage (hasab) and honor (sharaf) of the woman should not stand in
the way of whomever she wished to marry. However, through the doctrine of kafa’ā,
social compatibility became a prominent measure in any marriage.

The concept of mahr is also a significant indicator of both wealth and status, and
thus the setting of a minimum value may prove helpful in ensuring social compatibility
between the two families. Although the presence of the wālī was not mandated by
Abu Hanifa who established the concept of kafā’a, the social structure of Baghdad gave
the male guardian the agency of approving or even dissolving the marriage of his female
ward to a man of unequal status. Therefore, by stressing the necessity of the role of the
wālī and specifying the amount of an equal mahr paid in his entries on the Prophet’s
marriages, Ibn Sa’d is in effect conforming to the patriarchal legal standards of his very
own time and place and not necessarily those of the early days of Islam.

From a gender-studies perspective, the concept of a guardian strips the agency of
the woman and places it with the man. The woman is not empowered to make decisions
regarding her own future as the decision is solely placed into the hands of the male
guardian. The guardian can be the father, brother, son or another man close to the family.
In other words being “male” is the main criteria for being a guardian as we have not
encountered any occasion in which a female was assigned guardianship status. This
concept therefore establishes both the superiority and dominance of male over female as

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165 Anas b. Malik was the founder of the first legal school and allegedly one of the Prophet’s longest living
companions. For more information see G. H. A. Juynboll, “Anas b. Malik” Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE. Brill online.
166 Gideon M. Kressel, “Bride-Price Reconsidered.” Current Anthropology 18, no. 3 (Sep. 1977), 449.
167 Farhat J. Ziadeh, “Equality (Kafa’ah) in the Muslim Law of Marriage.” The American Journal of
Comparative Law 6, no. 4 (Autumn 1957): 507. For information on Abu Hanifa see Hiroyuki Yanagihashi,
“Abu Hanifa,” Encyclopaedia of Islam. THREE. Edited by Fleet et al. Brill Oline. For information on Abu
Online.
the male gender is being presented as the one better equipped to make significant life-impacting decisions.

The premise that such important decisions in a woman’s life must be made by a man imply that women may not possess the mental austerity necessary to make such important decisions. Such concept of female weakness is further supported by a hadith that was propagated at the time in which the Prophet reportedly said that women are lesser than men in both mind and religion.\textsuperscript{168} Although the hadith has a second part in which the Prophet qualified his statement by limiting it to the women’s capacity as a legal witness and her abstinence from performing rituals during menstruation, it is the first part of the hadith that is usually quoted. The first part of this hadith is often quoted to this day as a support tool to justify female subordination. In the chapter on common women in the \textit{KTK} we shall note several cases in which the women rejected their father’s choice of suitor and made their own decisions and had the Prophet’s blessing in doing so; such examples are not found in the section on prominent women related to the Prophet however.

The concept of a \textit{wāli} also ensures that the women’s voices remain passive and unheard as they speak to the outside world through the voice of an intermediate male; not only to officially accept or decline a marriage proposal but to communicate questions and concerns as well. The “passive female” is an issue that fits well with another of Ibn Sa’d’s themes; that of female privacy and concealment which is discussed later on in this chapter.

c. Waiting Period (\textit{ʻidda}):

The third prominent factor in most of Ibn Sa’d’s entries about the women of the Prophetic household’s marriages is their waiting period (\textit{ʻidda}). \textit{ʻIdda} refers to the amount of time and the number of menstrual cycles a prospected bride waits between marriages. The many examples referencing the waiting period and its duration is another

\textsuperscript{168} The hadith is narrated on various accounts through Abu Hurraya and ‘Abd Allah b. 'Umar but its classification ranges from being considered \textit{sahih} (sound) to \textit{Jaiyyid} (good). \textit{Al-Dorar al-Suniyya}, "Sahih Muslim # 79", www.dorar.net, accessed August 5, 2012.
marriage detail Ibn Sa’d is keen on sharing. One reason may be to establish the Qur’anic ruling on the subject. However, a deeper understanding of the difference in length of the time period waited by different wives is warranted.

Examples of ’idda mentions include Sawda’s waiting period following the death of her husband Sakran b. ’Amr in which she is said to have hillat (waited to become rightly available) prior to marrying the Prophet. In the case of Umm Salama, the entry states that her husband died when there were eight days left till the end of Jamāda al-Ula of year four A.H.; she finished her ’idda ten days before the end of Shawwal and that the Prophet then married her (this makes her ’idda period approx. four months). Safiyya bt. Huyayy’s entry states that her husband was killed in the battle of Khaybar and she was awarded to the Prophet who waited until the end of her first menstrual cycle before he took her on the back of his camel and travelled.

Similar to the setting of the mahr amount and mandating the presence of a walī, the concept of ’idda was also debated among jurists of Ibn Sa’d’s time. Along with varying opinions on those violating ’idda restrictions, jurists also debated the length of the waiting period of a free woman compared to a slave woman. Some jurists stated that a slave woman’s waiting period should be limited to one menstrual cycle while the free women should wait three cycles. Although the legal status of Safiyya bt. Huyayy and

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169 The Qur’an deals with the concept of ’idda on several occasions including (65:1.4) and (2:226-232, 234). For more details on ’idda see Haral Motzki, “Waiting Period.” Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an. Edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe. Brill Online.

170 Ibn Sa’d states that while Zaynab bt. Jahsh was still married to Zayd b. Haritha, he had abstained from approaching her because he knew that the Prophet liked her. However the entry states that the Qur’anic verse instructing the Prophet to marry Zaynab was only revealed after her official divorce and waiting period were over. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 72.

171 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 86. As for the case of Rayhana bt. Zayd, the entry states that she was a married woman who was captured in battle, she was then awarded to the Prophet who freed her and married her. Later on, the entry states that the Prophet had sent Rayhana to Salma bt. Qays’s house to wait until one menstrual cycle was finished; it was after her purification from the first cycle that the Prophet then offered to marry her. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 94. In the case of Umm Habiba, who was widowed in Abyssinia, Ibn Sa’d reports on her authority that her ’idda had just ended when the messenger of al-Najashi (king of Abyssinia) arrived informing her of the Prophet’s desire to marry her. See Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 68.

172 According to the Hanafi School, any marriage that violated the ’idda restrictions would immediately be considered invalid (fāsid) and the couple must willingly separate; if they do not then the marriage must be annulled by a judge. Y. Linant de Bellefonds, “’Idda.” Encyclopaedia of Islam. Second Edition. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online.

Rayhana bt. Zayd as wives or concubines is ambivalent in Ibn Sa’d’s text, the fact that their ‘idda is explicitly stated as one menstrual cycle may be his way of propagating an implicit verdict. As the number of slaves was much greater in third century Baghdad than in first century Medina, establishing clear rulings regarding marriage to slave women must have fulfilled a practical need.¹⁷⁴ The fact that some schools diminished the slave woman’s ‘idda to only one month also serves the patriarchal ideology and ensures that men do not have to wait too long to gain access to their newly purchased slaves.¹⁷⁵ The mere presence of such dispute also re-enforced the social distinction of classes by ensuring that slave women remained viewed as of lesser status and value than free women.

The extent to which Ibn Sa’d was influenced by the above legal debates is open to speculation and difficult to assess through this study; however, the fact that such issues comprised key themes within his entries on prominent women implies their significance. Ibn Sa’d’s insistence on placing a value amount to the bridal gift, the concept of the wali, as well as stating a specific waiting period, all resonate a cultural affiliation mirroring issues of greater concern to jurists in Baghdad than in Medina. By linking those concepts to the Prophet himself, Ibn Sa’d grounds rulings into Prophetic sunna. Ibn Sa’d thus presents what he portrays as the “ideal” Muslim marriage rituals while infusing them with the cultural needs and norms of his own time and place.

Finally, if we compare the entries listed above to the same women’s entries in the other biographical dictionaries consulted we shall note an absence of data with regards to marital details discussed above. Other authors suffice by stating who the woman married and sometimes mention the date.¹⁷⁶ The fact that other biographers often referenced Ibn Sa’d or al-Waqidi as a source of information shows that they probably had access to the above data and may imply the insignificance of the topic in later periods. That maybe

¹⁷⁴ Keddie, Women in the Middle East, 15.
¹⁷⁵ For more details on the dispute among jurists over the waiting period of free vs. slave women see Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujahid, vol. 3, 115.
¹⁷⁶ Even the data in which Ibn Sa’d and al-Waqidi are referenced as the source of information – within al-Isti’âb or al-Isaba – lacks mention of the details emphasized in the KTK. It is therefore assumed that such data was either not available or was not viewed as important to be shared by the other authors.
partly because such debates had already been settled with the development of the schools of jurisprudence when the other biographical dictionaries were compiled.

B. Female Segregation and Concealment:

The entries of women of the Prophetic house in *Kitab al-Nisa*’ reflect a great deal of attention paid to the notion of the female private sphere. In general, those prominent women are portrayed inside their homes with minimal outside social interaction. Apart from their domestic location, the physical covering of their bodies also receives ample discussion. Ibn Sa’d goes as far as emphasizing the fact that men and women should not even shake hands, as will be portrayed through an examination of the female pledge (*bay’a*) later in this study. The concept of shunning the women into a passive existence with regards to the greater community is a salient feature of patriarchal discourses and will be addressed following the examples below.

a. Space Segregation (Staying Inside the Home):

Ibn Sa’d conveys what seems to be the ideal of staying at home through a portrayal of the way the Prophet’s wives of prominent status such as ʽAisha, Sawda, and Zaynab b. Jahsh behaved. Ibn Sa’d states that the Prophet married ʽAisha when she was six years old and consummated the marriage three years later when she was nine. Ibn Sa’d brings ʽAisha to life in the entry, and gives her a rare voice, when she says, “I was playing outside with my friends when my mother came and took me in and locked me inside the house; it was only then that I realized that I got married.”178 This story is repeated several times in the entry.

Although Ibn Sa’d makes no clear mention of the Battle of the Camel (in which ʽAisha led an army against ʽAli b. Abi Talib but ultimately lost), he makes several references to her general state of regret in her older age. So much so that many references state that she had wished she had never been born. We hear ʽAisha lamenting:

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177 The wives of the Prophet are prime examples of Ibn Sa’d’s emphasis on setting the women’s place inside the home. It is interesting to note that the daughters’ entries exemplify rituals of marriage and funeral practice while the wives’ seem to focus more on segregation.

178 Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 40.
“I wish I were a tree or a piece of earth or a rock and had never existed.”¹⁷⁹ There is no mention of the reason of the regret in the entry as it is left up to the reader to comprehend independently. In another example, it is stated that ’Aisha would cry profusely when she heard the Qur’anic verse referring to the Prophets’ wives staying home (33:33).¹⁸⁰ ’Aisha’s entry also shares a statement in which she says that “a woman’s jihad is the hajj.”¹⁸¹ This example assures that women should not go to the battlefield especially that Ibn Sa’d does not mention battle participation in the case of any of the prominent women, whether during the Prophet’s life or after, despite its presence in other biographical works as shall be shared later.¹⁸² Limiting a woman’s public participation to the hajj, which is the only ritual that dictates women to be outside their homes, is an important message promoting the isolation of the Prophet’s wives. However, in the section of the book dedicated to common women Ibn Sa’d does include women’s presence in battle as will be presented in chapter four.

Ibn Sa’d states that Sawda bt. Zam’a went on pilgrimage with the Prophet in his final hajj. The following year, after the Prophet’s death, some women wanted to go to perform the lesser pilgrimage (’umra) and asked Sawda to go along with them but she replied saying: “Nothing can move me after the Messenger of God, not even a camel.”¹⁸³ One other reference shows Sawda answering the same hajj request by stating: “I have performed hajj and ’umra and now I shall stay in my home and follow the word of God.”

¹⁷⁹ Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 51.
¹⁸⁰ Qur’an (33:33) “And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey Allah and His Messenger. And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless.”
¹⁸¹ Jihad is usually referred to as “holy war”. For information on jihad see Ella Landau-Tasseron, “Jihad.” Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an. Edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe. Brill online.
¹⁸³ The word used in Arabic is not camel but dābah which is defined in Lisan al-‘Arab as any animal that produced a sound while walking. See Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 37. This may be an implicit reference to ’Aisha’s role in the Battle of the Camel, a role in which she clearly trespassed the boundaries of proper Muslim woman behavior when viewed in relation to Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of how an “ideal” Muslim woman should remain home.
She then recites part of the Qur’anic verse (33:33) about staying at home. None of the above statements are included in these women’s entries in al-’Asqalani or Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr’s respective dictionaries.

Another important observation in the examples above is the active voice in which Sawda and ’Aisha make their statements. While most of the entries present prominent women through a passive narrative, Ibn Sa’d is keen on making these women suddenly come to life and speak in the active first person on certain issues only. Speaking in the first person is much more dramatic and vivid and is thus a powerful and effective communication tool which adds credibility and memorability to any text. Including the Qur’anic reference adds divine authority to the message and delivers it as an ultimately binding rule. In reading these statements above the reader is left with the clear conviction that the Prophet’s wives stayed at home and remained away from the public sphere. This model does not fit with the many references in other works that show wives such as ’Aisha and Umm Salama having an active public life following their marriage to the Prophet as shall be highlighted near the end of this chapter. The fact that Ibn Sa’d chose to dwell intensely upon the issue of staying inside the home and completely failed to mention their public role is a clear message to Muslim women about what he perceives to be the ideal Muslim woman behavior. By limiting the “good” woman’s role to the walls of the house, the author is attempting to establish a clear power-structure within society; one in which the man presents the only means of access a woman has to the outside world. He thus ensures that the woman remains in a constant state of dependance.

The fact that Ibn Sa’d seems to deliberately dwell so much on this issue must raise a flag pointing to the notion that what he was calling for may not have been the predominant behavior of the women of his time; or else he would not need to stress the issue in such a flagrant manner. His clear insistence on emphasizing the “ideal” of

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184 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 38. See verse (33:33) in footnote 206.
185 For more details on the wives of the Prophet lacking an active voice in the KTK see Myrne, “Ibn Sa’d and the Women.”
staying at home appears to be an attempt to give instructions to women in his society
prompting them to act in a manner similar to that of ummahāt al-muʿminīn.

From the earlier chapter in this study we have noted how vibrant life in Baghdad was
at Ibn Saʿd’s time. Not only did women of the palace often enjoy great power as in the
case of al-Khayzuran, but common women such as female musicians were very popular
at the time as well. Research also shows that common women often had to work and
were not living in harems as is often believed. Leslie Pierce’s work has shown that even
women within the later Ottoman harems were not as segregated and secluded as usually
propagated. This leads us to believe that Ibn Saʿd may have been attempting to
condemn certain aspects of female liberty present in his day and instead attempted to
promote a patriarchal dogma that would better serve the ’Abbasid imperial aspirations of
the time.

b. Physical Concealment:
Another aspect of female seclusion in the KTK shows that the Prophet’s wives and
daughters were not physically seen when in a setting that involved foreign men. The
concept of concealment is made clear through Ibn Saʿd’s mention of the types of clothes
worn or the emphasis on covering up when men were present. Ibn Saʿd mentions several
types of clothing in his entries which include khimār, niqāb, izār, and dirʿ. The definition
of each of those terms is somewhat fluid and may rely significantly on what was
commonly referred to at the time. The term hijab however is used more as a verb (hajab-
to conceal) by which the woman is simply concealed from the view of others, sometimes
through the means of a curtain. As the entries of ’Aisha, Zaynab bt. Jahsh, and
Safiyya are amongst the longest entries within the KTK, it is no surprise that Ibn Saʿd

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187 Foreign men, or strangers, are defined here as adult males who are outside the woman’s immediate family circle.
188 Lisan al-ʿArab defines the terms as follows: khimār stems from the “khamara” root; to cover, and usually refers to a head cover used by a woman or a man. Niqāb stems from the root word of creating a hole “nuqūb” and refers to either a cover around the face, or a face cover with holes for the eyes. Izār stems from the root word to engulf and refers to any type of dress that engulfs the body. Dirʿ refers to a woman’s shirt or a shield of iron or a loose outer garment. Hijab stems from the root word to conceal and refers to anything that serves such purpose. See Lisan al-ʿArab. http://www.baheth.info.
uses the biographies of these women in particular to reflect his emphasis on the fact that they observed the highest degrees of concealment.

The case of Safiyya bt. Huyayy is a good example reflecting Ibn Sa’d’s concern for the issue.\textsuperscript{189} As the Prophet took Safiyya on the back of his camel, while departing after their marriage in Khaybar, Ibn Sa’d reports that the Prophet used his own clothes to conceal her.\textsuperscript{190} Throughout the ride the entry states that Safiyya was very concerned about being exposed in case the camel tripped. Oddly enough Ibn Sa’d states that the camel did indeed trip and both the Prophet and Safiyya fell off but the Prophet was quick to cover her up immediately. In another reference, the entry states that Abu Talha ran to help and as he approached Safiyya he used his clothes to cover his own face (so as not to see Safiyya), before he proceeded to cover her up. Another report within the same entry states that Safiyya was on a mule trying to help ʽUthman but a man hit the face of her mule causing the mule to sway, Safiyya then said, “Take me back lest I get exposed.”\textsuperscript{191} It is important to note here that Ibn Sa’d does not give any details about ʽUthman’s seige or the way in which Safiyya was trying to help. Instead, the statement merely focuses on sharing the fact that Safiyya did not want to be exposed.

In comparison to the above emphasis on Safiyya’s concealment, we note that both al-ʽAsqalani and Ibn ʽAbd al-Barr do not emphasize the same details. For example al-ʽAsqalani only shares the mention of Safiyya falling off the camel as an introduction to the fact that her camel was lost into Zaynab bt. Jahsh’s heard and to note that Zaynab refused to give Safiyya one of her camels instead.\textsuperscript{192} Furthermore, he does not mention any efforts to cover Safiyya up upon falling. On the other hand, Ibn ʽAbd al-Barr does not mention the fall at all, instead he offers a brief biography which shares details of Safiyya’s previous marriages, her elevated status among her people, and how the Prophet

\textsuperscript{189} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 85.

\textsuperscript{190} The battle of Khaybar took place in 628 C.E. when Muhammad marched with over 1500 men and more than a 100 horses to surprise the Jews of Khaybar. See L. Vecchia Vaglieri, L. “Khaybar.” \textit{Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition}. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online.


\textsuperscript{192} Al-ʽAsqalani, \textit{al-Isaba}, vol. 13, 14.
supported her against the jealousy of the other wives.  

Both biographers, unlike Ibn Sa’d, clearly mention that Safiyya was known to be a pious and intelligent woman. Both authors end their entry with the date of Safiyya’s death and al-’Asqalani lists the name of six men who later narrated hadith on her authority. What we gather from the comparative readings is the fact that Safiyya was perceived as a wise woman who genuinely cared for the Prophet and for the community. Her entry in Ibn Sa’d reflects her love for the Prophet but undermines her wisdom and piety at the cost of sharing her strict concern for concealment. Therefore, we note that al-’Asqalani and Ibn ʽAbd al-Barr leave the reader with the impression that a “good” woman is a woman who is wise and pious while Ibn Sa’d’s gives the impression that a “good” woman is one that is covered.

Ibn Sa’d’s narrations, shared above, are loaded with explicit and implicit messages about prominent women’s concealment mandate. The subtle details which mention the Prophet’s efforts on two occasions to cover Safiyya up, then the foreign man hiding his own face before approaching her show a deliberate effort to share what may otherwise appear to be trivial information when discussing a biographical entry rendering the life of a person. It is also worth noting Safiyya’s earlier worry about a possible fall; the entry then explains that the worry stems from her fear of being exposed. In other words, Safiyya is not concerned about getting physically hurt in case of falling off a camel, but rather she is worried about other people seeing her exposed. This statement sets a hierarchal priority placing greater concern on the cultural shame of being exposed than on the woman’s own physical well-being. The statement about Safiyya’s worry about a possible fall also acts as a literary device that foreshadows events to come; when the camel actually does fall, the reader is left with a dramatic effect of her realizing her own fears — a tragedy that seems to compete only with the graveness of the fall itself.

The fact that Safiyya’s entry dwells on such an issue but fails to share information about the woman’s own character sheds light on how Ibn Sa’d viewed the objective of a biographical entry. Ibn Sa’d shows a Safiyya whose main concern is to remain concealed from the eyes of foreign men. The fact that he does not share details of the

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193 Ibn ʽAbd al-Barr, al-ʼIstī’ab, vol. 4, 1871.
'Uthman encounter shows that the story is used as a mere backdrop for the main idea of sharing her fear of exposure, hence stressing her obligation to conceal herself in public. In other words, the actual fact that Safiyya was taking an active stand by trying to help 'Uthman, a Caliph in distress, seems trivial when compared to what appears to be Ibn Sa’d’s main objective.

Such ultimate fear of exposure is equally resonated in 'Aisha’s entry through her use of preventative measures such as donning of a niqāb or khimār. In her entry 'Aisha is reported circumambulating around the Ka’ba in a niqāb. In another instance she is reported to be mending her niqāb. Later on, in her old age, she is reported to cry in regret with her tears soaking her khimār. Overall, Ibn Sa’d shares more than 26 reports about 'Aisha’s attire, from type of garment worn to its color. The impression that the reader might be left with is that 'Aisha not only adhered to the highest standards of concealment, but advised the other wives to do the same. Ibn Sa’d reports that she once saw Hafsa bt. 'Umar, wearing a light translucent khimār so she pulled it off and gave her a heavier one. Another narration shows' Aisha scolding Hafsa and asking her if she [Hafsa] was not aware of what God had ordained in Surat al-Nur.

The fact that 'Aisha, who is reported to be the Prophet’s favorite wife and has the longest entry in the volume, takes such extreme care to remain concealed and urges other prominent women to do the same reflects Ibn Sa’d’s own obsession with the issue. He, effectively, makes a direct link between the status of a woman in Islam and her effort to conceal herself from the public eye.

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194 Ibn sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 39.
195 Even within Safiyya’s entry Ibn Sa’d reports that when the Prophet arrived with her to Medina, they were greeted by a large crowd, among those people the Prophet recognized 'Aisha who was covered in a niqāb. The Prophet knew it was 'Aisha because he could recognize her eyes. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 85
196 Although Ibn Sa’d does not specify which verse in Surat al-Nur 'Aisha is referring to, it is likely that the verse in question is verse 31. Qur’an (24:31) “And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards Allah that ye may attain Bliss.”
197 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 39.
The concept of concealment, according to Ibn Sa’d’s reports, was ordained by God. It was the occasion of Zaynab bt. Jahsh’s wedding to the Prophet which triggered the revelation of the famous Qur’anic verse about concealing the Prophet’s wives. As the guests lingered on in the Prophet’s house after the wedding, the Prophet was becoming impatient wishing to be left alone with his new wife. He started walking around and visited all the other wives and came back only to find some guests still there but he was too embarrassed to ask them to leave. The famous hijab verse (33:53) was then revealed instructing the Prophet to place a barrier between his wives and the people.¹⁹⁸

The term used for the Prophet placing a curtain to conceal his wives from the visitors inside his house is “hajabaha” or “darab ’alayha al-hijab”. In some biographical dictionaries the term is used synonymously to indicate that a certain woman became the Prophet’s wife. Both al-‘Asqalani and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr use the term (hajabaha) to indicate marriage to the Prophet but do not share any other references to the women staying indoors or covering themselves in public.¹⁹⁹ For example, al-‘Asqalani shares a debate in Rayhana’s entry about whether she was the Prophet’s wife or milk yamîn, he states that some people narrated that the Prophet married her and farad ’alayha al-hijab (concealed her), while other reports state that she preferred to remain as a milk yamîn and that the Prophet courted her in such capacity with no mention of hijab.²⁰⁰ In Juwayriya’s entry, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr states that the Prophet freed her following one of the battles and concealed her and included her in his divisions (hajabaha wa qussam laha). He also goes on to state though that she narrated hadith on the Prophet’s behalf.²⁰¹ Therefore, the term hajaba seems to indicate that a particular

¹⁹⁸ Qur’an (33:53) “O ye who believe! enter not the Prophet's houses— until leave is given— you for a meal (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter; and when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when ye ask (his ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you that ye should annoy Allah's Messenger, or that ye should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is in Allah's sight an enormity.”
¹⁹⁹ The Prophet’s wives in the two mentioned works appear much more active in public life than Ibn Sa’d makes them appear. More references will be shared in the conclusion of this study.
²⁰⁰ Al-‘Asqalani, al-Isaba, vol. 12, 267.
woman became the Prophet’s wife but does not indicate total isolation from the community.

Ibn Sa’d states that following their divorce, the Prophet sent Zayd b. Haritha to deliver a message to Zaynab bt. Jahsh, the entry then states that Zayd spoke to Zaynab while giving her his back. Ibn ’Abd al-Barr shares the same story but shows Zayd speaking directly to Zaynab with no mention of him turning his back. Al-’Asqalani, on the other hand, merely narrates the fact that the Prophet sent someone to inform Zaynab of his desire to marry her but shares no details of the encounter. In other words, it is only Ibn Sa’d who deems it necessary to show that men and women do not openly interact through providing such details of the encounter between Zayd and Zaynab. Additionally, Ibn Sa’d takes it upon himself to expand the notion of concealment (hijab) to promote the fact that good Muslim women remain inside their homes, and in case they must be in public, they do so completely covered. It is important to note however that it the Prophet is reported to have married ’Aisha before Zaynab bt Jahsh, thus before the verse on hijab was revealed, however, ’Aisha’s entry shares the most examples of concealment and segregation provided in volume eight.

**Segregation in the bay’a:**

No mention of male/female segregation would be complete without reference to the women’s pledge (bay’a) in the opening part of volume eight. The rendition of the bay’a is a prime example of the perceived “ideal” relationship of the female and the foreign man, even when the man is the Prophet himself. The details of the bay’a share the names of the women who proceeded to give their oath of allegiance to the Prophet. The section does not mention the details of the time and place it took place but shares great details of the meeting itself. One prominent feature is the fact that the Prophet refused to shake hands with the women.

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202 Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 72.
203 Ibn ’Abd al-Barr, *al-Isti’ab*, vol. 4, 1851.
204 Al-’Asqalani, *al-Isaba*, vol. 12, 275.
The opening sentence of volume eight (Kitab al-Nisa’) states, “we were told by [a list of narrators] who said ‘the Prophet accepted the women’s pledge with a cover on his hand’.”205 The bay’a section then goes on to refer to the fact that the Prophet did not touch the women’s hands 21 times.206 This tremendous emphasis on the physical separation of man and woman can, by no means, be purely coincidental. The entry goes on to give different reports relating to the topic; some state that the Prophet refused to shake hands, others show him covering his hand while shaking, while some show him dipping his hand in a bucket of water which is then followed by the women’s hand signaling a bay’a. Regardless of the model used in all cases the message is the same: a foreign man should never touch a woman, not even by shaking her hand. Abbott states, “Not even a casual reader can escape the conviction that the strained effort to credit Mohammed with the determination not to touch the hands of the women reflects the spirit not of the first but of the third century of Islam.”207 Abbott adds that ‘Umar, who was asked to act on the Prophet’s behalf in accepting the women’s oath shortly after his arrival in Medina and who was known to be less liberal than Muhammad, did shake the hands of women when he administered the oath.

What could be the reasons behind Ibn Sa’d’s emphasis on promoting such concepts as prominent women staying at home, covering-up, and not shaking hands with men? Was the patriarchal cultural context of Baghdad conducive to such a call? Many scholars agree that women seem to have enjoyed more freedom in early Islamic Arabia than what is presented through the fiqh literature of medieval times.208 Amira Sonbol

206 The bay’a section is composed of seven pages.
argues that the rise of 'ulama' allowed them to produce fiqh material that reflected their own patriarchal tendencies more than it did the actual lives of women of the early days. She adds that the upper class elite of Mesopotamia had practiced veiling before the onset of Islam and found a way to do so afterwards. In reference to the period of early Islam, Sonbol thus believes that medieval discourse “must be seen as the efforts of fiqaha’ to establish a moral code rather than as a representation of the actual life that women of that period lived.”

The expansion of Muslims into the greater territories beyond Mecca and Medina witnessed a great change in social structure. Captive women of varying race and class ended up in a variety of situations, some were in the Caliph’s harem, others trained to be singers, and yet others found themselves auctioned in slave markets. Abbott states that such a situation resulted in a “definite class distinction between the free Arab woman of noble race and lineage, haughty but generally virtuous, and the foreign slave woman, singer or concubine, with pride of beauty and talent but easygoing and of comparatively loose morals.”

Since Ibn Sa’d was a scholar so close to the court of al-Ma’mun who claimed to be the imām and protector of the faith, it may have been his religious zeal that prompted him to counter the eroding morals of the time in such a prominent manner. The fact that Ibn Sa’d does not allude to poetry or female poets or singers in his Kitab al-Nisa’, despite the prominence of poetry and music within the Arab and ’Abbasid society, is another strong indicator of his role as the guardian of ultra-conservative religious mores. Referring to the changing social order, stated above, between Medina and Baghdad, Abbott concludes, “It was they [the new social conditions] rather than any really religious or political factors that gradually but steadily forced the veil and seclusion on more and more of the aristocratic and the free Arab women.” Therefore, it seems that Ibn Sa’d

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211 Attassi argues that only those who agreed with the Caliph’s opinion were considered to be the true believers who could be trusted in aiding the court’s mission of protecting the religion. See Atassi, “A History,” 60.
212 Abbott, “Women and the State,” 368. In another example of segregation as a sign of the elite we note that following the customs of the Sassanina kings, the first ’Abbasid caliph al-Saffah (r.750-754) drew a curtain separator to keep the nadīm (a male boon-companion) at a distance. In al-Mahdi’s time the separator was removed and the nadīm was encouraged to mingle freely with the caliph. See Anwar G.
may have been making a deliberate effort to adjust what he viewed as flaws in the society by imposing a religious standard to the behavior he wished to promote. If the patriarchal values were to be propagated, then what better means of instilling them in the society than through making them appear as divinely ordained and practiced by the Prophet. Ibn Sa’d’s emphasis on female concealment transcends the subject’s life and appears to continue through death and burial rituals as shall be examined in the following section.

C. Funeral Rituals:

Just as all prominent women entries begin with lineage, they all end with the death and funeral of their subjects. In some cases Ibn Sa’d shares great details about the rituals after death, as in the examples of the Prophet’s daughters Fatima and Zaynab. As will become apparent, the emphasis is not on the circumstances which led to the death as may be expected in reading a persons’ biography, but rather on the rituals practiced in relation to the death. After reading the entries of prominent women, we are left with a vivid picture of how the death and burial rituals were supposedly carried out during this period along with clear condemnation of what is deemed prohibited. Once again Ibn Sa’d utilizes the occasion of a common social phenomena to instill values promoting the isolation of the sexes while subduing women’s attempt at self-expression in a public setting. By emphasizing the fact that women’s bodies were not to be seen even after death, and that a woman’s wailing voice should never be heard, Ibn Sa’d endorses a patriarchal ideology that suppresses the woman’s presence/activity in the public domain as shall be reviewed below.

The entry on Fatima bt. Muhammad shows her preparing for her own death, but does not share the cause of death.213 She bathed and lay in bed facing the qibla and told those around her that no one should wash her after death, or even reveal a shoulder of hers after that moment. Ibn Sa’d then states that ’Ali buried her as she was, but another

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213 Ibn Sa’d states that Fatima felt that she was dying but offers no details as to the illness or circumstances that triggered such premonition.
reference states that ’Ali washed her after death and performed the prayer.214 In the case of the Prophet’s daughter Zaynab, who died in the Prophet’s lifetime, the entry goes into great detail to show how the washing of the corpse was performed.215 Ibn Sa’d does not mention the cause of Zaynab’s death although Ibn ’Abd al-Barr states that she died of hemorrhage after two men had pushed her onto a rock.216

The fact that Ibn Sa’d allocated so much space in the entries to discuss the fine details of burial preparation without mention of the occasion or cause of death divulges his own definition of the objective of biographical dictionaries; in this case it seems to be more about establishing a precedent for rituals rather than learning about the person themselves. The occasion of death is an individual circumstance but rituals are repetitive phenomena which affect many; ones that can be condoned, condemned, or promoted. By emphasizing certain rituals the entries imply the “do’s” vs. the “don’ts” of the model Muslim society.

Concealing the woman’s corpse from the eyes of foreign men is an area of emphasis to which Ibn Sa’d dedicates much space. A large portion of Zaynab bt. Jahsh’s entry is dedicated to sharing different reports about ’Umar b. al-Khattab asking if he could descend into Zaynab’s grave. The Prophet’s wives said that he was not allowed down as he was not one of the men who were allowed to see Zaynab when she was alive, therefore he could not see her in her death.217 The same entry states that ’Umar typically only allowed family members to come to women’s funerals to prevent foreign men from seeing the dead woman, however Asma’ bt. ‘Umayt told him about a cover (shroud) she had seen people in Abyssinia use to cover their dead.218 When Asma’ showed ’Umar the

214 Ibn Sa’d then dedicates almost an entire page to the notion that Fatima was buried at night. Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 19.
215 Details of number of washing times and scent added to the body in the final wash make up about a quarter of Zaynab’s entry.
216 Ibn ’Abd al-Barr states that a man named Habar b. Aswad and another man pushed Zaynab and she fell on a rock and bled profusely and remained ill until she died. See Ibn ’Abd-al-Barr, *Al-Isti’ab*, 1853.
217 On another occasion it is ’Umar himself who announces that foreign men are not to descend into women’s graves.
218 Asma’ bt. ’Umayt (d. 39/659-60) was a contemporary of the Prophet. She immigrated to Abyssinia with her husband Ja’far b. Abi Talib and that was where she first saw shrouds used. She is one of the *muḥadithāt*. Some scholars (Ya’qubi) claim that she authored a book on hadith which may have been
shroud he was very pleased and exclaimed in active voice, “how wonderful it is, how concealing it is” and he then invited everyone to attend.\(^{219}\) Once again we note the dramatic effect of active speech in the middle of a long narrative full of repetition, such tactic makes the information stand-out as well as adds credibility. Umm Kulthum’s entry states that Asma’ bt. ’Umays requested damp palm leaves to hide the deceased Umm Kulthum.\(^{220}\)

In consulting the other biographical dictionaries we fail to identify a similar emphasis on segregation with regards to burial and funeral details. For example, in the entry of Zaynab bt. Jahsh, al-’Asqalani gives no mention of ’Umar’s concern for Zaynab’s concealment from the eyes of strange men. As a matter of fact, the entry does delve into details of Zaynab’s death but only to share anecdotes of her extreme generosity and kind-heartedness. Al-’Asqalani states that Zaynab said that she already had a shroud (\textit{kafan}) and gave instructions that if ’Umar were to send another one upon her death, then one of the two should be donated to the poor othe community. She also added that they should donate her own clothes to the needy as well.\(^{221}\) The entry goes on to state that ’Umar did indeed send very fine material for Zaynab to be buried in and so her sister then donated the one that Zaynab had initially prepared. No where in al-’Asqalani’s entry on Zaynba bt. Jahsh is there mention of the concept of male/female concealment at the time of burial. The fact that al-’Asqalani did in fact go into some depth about Zaynab’s burial but emphasized her generosity and kindness while Ibn Sa’d focused on the community’s concern for segregation offers a clear indicator of how each biographer wished to represent the women of the Prophetic household. In most other examples, both al-’Asqalani and Ibn ’Abd al-Barr suffice to mention the year in which the woman died and hardly mention the burial location, let alone the details of the washing or the concealment.

\textsuperscript{219} Arabic original states “ما احسن هذا، ما استر هذا,” \textit{Ibn Sa’d, KTK}, vol. 8, 71.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 25. Many entries list the names of the men who descended into the grave; as most of the wives had no children, it was their nephews or brothers who usually went down.
\textsuperscript{221} Al-’Asqalani, \textit{al-Isaba}, vol. 12, 277.
One habit which Ibn Sa’d strongly condemns is that of women wailing over the dead. When the Prophet’s daughter Ruqaiyya died, Ibn Sa’d reports that the Prophet was distraught and wished that he would be the one to follow her; the entry then reports that the women were crying. This is an important signal to reflect the fact that the Prophet was indeed present and that he was distraught over the loss of his daughter. When ʽUmar saw the women crying he was angry and started beating them with a whip to forbid them from crying. The Prophet then reprimanded ʽUmar and informed him that it was alright for the women to cry, adding that it was the wailing that was from the devil. The Prophet went on to explain that whatever came from the heart and the eye was coming from God, as a reflection of his mercy, but whatever came from the hands and tongue was from the devil. In this report we see the female tongue associated with evil, a backdrop that promotes silencing the female voice which is a concept that will be addressed later in this study.

Research shows that women in pre and early Islamic Arabia used to take pride in their wailing rituals for which they would improvise complex poetry lamenting their loss. Women would also inflict physical pain upon themselves by tearing at their hair, drawing blood, scratching their cheeks, or tearing the front of their clothes exposing the area between their breasts. In another reference, Ibn Sa’d takes us to when the Prophet’s son Ibrahim was sick. Ibrahim’s mother, Mariyya al-Qibtiyya, and her sister were crying and the Prophet did not stop them, however he stopped them when the boy died and they started screaming. The above examples of the wailing women are presented in a very dramatic manner, possibly as a means to live up to the drama of the death itself. Not only is it the Prophet speaking, which gives utmost credibility to the statements, but he also renders wailing as an act of evil coming from the devil himself. This very strong verdict by the Prophet himself reflects the severity of the sin that is taking place and leaves no

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222 Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 24.
223 It is interesting to note a similar account in which ʽUmar is reported to have whipped the women for wailing which appears in *musumaf* ʿAbd al-Razzaq, however, that report is situated with reference to the death of Khalid b. al-Walid. Leor Halevi, “Wailing for the Dead: The Role of Women in Early Islamic Funerals.” *Past & Present Society* 183 (May 2004): 1.
225 Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 155.
question in any woman’s mind as to how she should (or should not) behave in a similar situation.

**Wailing prohibition in the bay’a:**

It is important here to go back to volume eight’s opening section about the women’s oath of allegiance to the Prophet (bay’a) for it is laden with similar references prohibiting wailing and self-beating at funerals. However, here it is not only the Prophet who forbids such practice, but the message is attributed to God himself through an interpretation of the Qur’an.226 The unique interpretation of the bay’a verse (60:12) was one of the tactics used by scholars to support their campaign against wailing.227 Loosely translated, the Qur’anic verse states that women who pledge allegiance should not associate any other deity with Allah, should not steal, commit adultery, nor slander, nor murder their children. Finally, they should not disobey the Prophet in what he deems to be good (ma’ruf). Nowhere in the verse is wailing specifically mentioned, however in a study about the topic, Leor Halevi reports that Qur’anic exegetes from Mesopotamia stated that “disobeying the Prophet” referred to “wailing” in particular. He argues that “Iraqi jurisprudents in general were stringent in their opposition to wailing, and rather reluctant to allow women to congregate, with or without wailing.”228 Ibn Sa’d’s opening section of volume eight narrates the details of the bay’a by sharing the same interpretation as the Iraqi exegetes do.229 How jurists can thus take such a general Qur’anic reference and limit its meaning to the act of wailing seems like an implausible reduction. Halevi argues

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226 Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 1. 227 Qur’an (60:12) “O Prophet! When believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee that they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allah, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery (or fornication), that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter then do thou receive their fealty and pray to Allah for the forgiveness (of their sins): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” 228 Examples of such exegetes include al-Tabari and al-Tusi. See Halevi, “Wailing for the Dead,” 19. 229 Al-Tabari (d. 310/923), who lived in Baghdad shortly after Ibn Sa’d’s time, provides the same verse interpretation as does Ibn Sa’d. However, other Qur’anic exegeses by later scholars, who differed in their schools of thought and lived in other cities, reflect different interpretations. For example al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144), a mu’atili scholar living in Kharzam, interprets the same verse to mean that women should follow all that is good and avoid what is bad in the general sense of the words, there is no reference to wailing in his text. See Abu Ja’far b. Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami’ al-Bayan ‘an Tā’wil Ay al-Qur’an; Tafsir al-Tabari*. Edited by Bakri et al. (Cairo: Dar al-Salam, 2009), vol. 10, 8005. And Abu Qaiyym al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshaf*. Edited by A. al-Mahdi. (Beirut: Dar Ihiya’ al-Turath al-’Arabi, 2008), vol. 4, 519.
that jurists were interested in establishing ritual order as well as controlling the role of women in society and thus adopted the campaign against wailing.\footnote{To prove this point Halevi followed the narration chains of traditions condemning wailing and found that they were mostly narrated by people from Iraq, in particularly from Kufa. He believes this reflects anti-Shi’ite sentiments where practices, such as ‘ashūra, included flagellation and wailing. Halevi also states that Kufa was a garrison town from which many rebel attempts started; forbidding the gathering of women at funerals through traditions could have been an attempt to reduce the number of people who frequented the area and thus minimized the risks coming from congregations. See Halevi, “Wailing for the Dead,” 25.} Halevi states that Iraqi jurists such as Abu Hanifa and Ibn Hanbal share much harsher traditions with regards to wailing when compared to the lax attitude Medinian jurists such as Malik adopted.\footnote{Halevi, “Wailing for the Dead,” 27.} What is very telling is the fact that in the “common women” section of the volume eight \textit{KTK}, in Hind bt. ‘Utba’s entry, the term (\textit{ma’rūf}) in the \textit{bay’a} is explained as to mean obedience to God (\textit{ta’at Allah}).\footnote{Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, Vol. 8, 172.} This discrepancy between the interpretation Ibn Sa’d presents in the opening \textit{bay’a} section and the casual mention inside shows his deliberate effort to promote the leading jurist interpretation of the time. Although we do not know for certain why Iraqi scholars seemed more concerned about the issue of wailing, and despite attempts by some scholars to view it as a means to distinguish Islam within the pluralist context of the time, one cannot overlook the minimizing impact it has on the female agency.

As wailing is a public performance led by the woman’s vocal powers, it presents a setting in which women become the center of authority and attention. In a patriarchal society such a setting can be both intimidating and threatening. Furthermore, as wailing is an act mastered by and reserved only for women, as it is deemed unmanly for men to cry, there is no means for men to command power in such a situation other than by silencing the women. Forbidding wailing through religious legislation, and by offering unique Qur’anic interpretations to condemn it, thus presents a strong patriarchal device to bring wailing to a stop and thus strip a significant component of female agency. It also promotes the fact that women should not attend funerals as we have seen that the prayer is performed by a male and those who descend into the grave are all men. In other words,
such prohibition ensures that women remain indoors as it brings to an end one of the major social rituals of the time; one which mandated the women’s presence in public.

However, Ibn Sa’d insistence on driving the anti-wailing message tells us how deeply embedded such a tradition must have been. Knowing that wailing is still common practice in some parts of the world today shows how women across the centuries have fought back to freely express themselves with little regard to the patriarchal attempts to silence them. Wailing presents an ultimate mode of freedom of expression due to its loud and un-controllable characteristics; as a matter of fact, the more extreme the woman’s mourning becomes the more genuine her emotions are believed to appear. Such an intense mode of emotional release reflects how, despite Ibn Sa’d’s and other male-authoritarian efforts to abolish wailing, women will continue to indulge in self-expression with little regards to patriarchal social conditioning attempts.

In reviewing some of the examples Ibn Sa’d shared about death and funerary rituals we realize the great magnitude of detailed information he provided, while at the same time we noted how other biographers such as al-’Asqalani and Ibn ’Abd al-Barr shared no similar emphasis on the topic. Most of Ibn Sa’d’s details however, do not pertain specifically to the individual as much as they seem to establish desired modes of behavior and this might partially explain why the other authors did not share similar reports. The type of details shared by Ibn Sa’d can easily make one forget the fact that we are reading a person’s biography and leave us with the impression that we are flipping through the pages of a manual on legislation.

D. Physical Beauty:

Feminine beauty is a concept that is often stressed in Ibn Sa’d’s entries of the Prophet’s wives, but not present in the biographies of the Prophet’s daughters. A typical entry usually states the fact that the woman was beautiful without defining what the term means exactly. We do know however, that the beauty referred to is of the physical kind related to how the woman looks because there are references to other women hearing of this beauty and wanting to go “see” the woman in person. The Prophet’s wives’ entries explicitly state that the following women were beautiful: Umm Salama (jamīla), Zaynab
bt. Jahsh (jamīla, ayyim), Juwayriya bt. al-Harith (ḥulwa), Safiyya bt. Huyayy (jamīla), Rayhana bt. Zayd (dhat jamāl, wasīma), and Mariyya al-Qibtiyya (baydā’, jamīla, ja’dā’). It is only in the case of Mariyya that the entry shares a few details describing her beauty; she was a pretty woman with fair skin and beautiful curly hair. This may suggest that she was seen in public prior to her becoming part of the Prophet’s household. With the mixing of cultures and the expansion of the system of slavery in Ibn Sa’d’s patriarchal cosmopolitan Baghdad, the concept of female beauty may have taken on new dimensions as well as become a tool in establishing female leverage and superiority, not to mention “market price”.

Umm Salama is reported to have been a very pretty woman, so much so that ‘Aisha went to visit her just to assess her beauty for herself and later told Hafsa that Umm Salama was even prettier than she had thought. Safiyya bt. Huyaïyy was another beautiful wife according to her entry in the KTK; when she was captured following the battle of Khaybar, she was originally given to Dahya al-Kalabi, but then people went to the Prophet and told him about her extreme beauty (beauty like no other woman they had seen) and about her noble lineage which made her fit only for the Prophet, so the Prophet took her for himself. Upon their return to Medina, the women of the Anṣar and Muhajirrūn heard of Safiyya’s beauty and went to look at her.

The story of Safiyya includes a clue that may help us understand the prominence of beauty as a main theme in the entries of the Prophet’s wives; that is the correlation between “beauty” and the “status” of a woman. As Muslims venerated the Prophet and perceived him to be the best of all men, it is thus reasonable that he would be partnered with the best of all women. Ibn Sa’d reports in Safiyya’s entry that her beauty was unlike that of any other woman (imra’a ma ra’ayna darbaha). Her beauty, coupled with her

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234 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 154 & 93.
235 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 85. Safiyya was of Jewish descent, the daughter of one of leaders of the Banu Qurayza clan who lived in Khaybar. The battle of Khaybar took place in 628 C.E.. For details see Veccia Vaglieri, “Khaybar,” EF.
236 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 88.
family prestige, made those around the Prophet believe that she was only suitable for the Prophet himself. Beauty may be a criterion that defines a woman’s superiority then. Abu Hurayra reports a hadith in which the Prophet himself said that a man should marry a woman for one of four reasons; her wealth, her beauty, her status, or her religion. Beauty, therefore, is a key criterion in qualifying a woman for marriage which means that a beautiful woman is considered superior to other women.

Juwayriya bt. al-Harith was also captured in battle. Ibn Sa’d reports that when ’Aisha saw how beautiful Juwyriyya was she hoped that the Prophet did not see her stating that: “no one could see her [Juwayriyya] without being moved”. When the Prophet saw Juwayriya he, indeed, offered to marry her and then set her free. Juwayriya accepted the offer, much to ’Aisha’s dismay. The same anecdote is mentioned by al-’Asqalani and Ibn ’Abd al-Barr, although Ibn ’Abd al-Barr does not mention “beauty” as a trait for any of the other wives of the Prophet. Al-’Asqalani also includes reference to the beauty of Umm Salama, Rayhana, Zaynab bt. Jahsh, Safiyya, and Mariyya by utilizing words such as ḥulwa and jamīla, however he does not elaborate on the topic as does Ibn Sa’d in some cases.

Adding “beauty” as a trait of these prominent women almost seems to reflect a divine will for them to present the “perfect model” as ummahāt al-mu’mīnīn. This concept is forwarded by Muslim scholars in a hadith stating that ‘Umar had a daughter

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237 The entry states that the Prophet paid Dahya al-Kalabi a satisfactory amount to take Safiyya for himself. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 88.
239 The entry states that she was initially given to Thabit b. Qays who asked her for nine awqiyyas to set her free so she went to the Prophet seeking help. A waqiyya is a particular unit of measure used in Arabia which is equivalent to approx. 40 dirhams. Source: Lisan al-‘Arab. See Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 83.
240 (lā yakād yarāha aḥadan illa akhadhat bi-nafsih), Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 83.
241 Ibn Sa’d’s entry on Zaynab bt. Jahsh states that she was a very pretty woman (jamīla). After her marriage to Zayd, Ibn Sa’d narrates that the Prophet went to visit Zayd but sensed an awkward feeling inside his heart when Zaynab opened the door. The Prophet then refused to proceed into the house and left murmuring that God controls what the heart feels. Although the entry does not elaborate on what that “feeling” was, readers are led to believe that it is some form of love attraction. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 71. It was ancient philosophers who also defined beauty as “something that causes pleasure”Ruth Lorand, “Beauty and Ugliness.” New Directory of the History of Ideas. Vol. 1. Edited by M. C. Horowitz. Gale Virtual Reference Library, 2005.
whose name was “ʽAsiya” (Sinful), but that the Prophet then changed her name to “Jamila” (Beautiful). In other words, beauty is established here to be the opposite of sin and confirms the direct link between beauty and piety. Additionally, by focusing on details of marriage in cases such as Juwayriya and other war captives, Ibn Sa’d laid the grounds for Islamic precedence and legislation for slave marriages. This presented a great opportunity to establish patriarchal ideologies at a time when the Islamic empire was expanding and the number of slaves, compared to the older days of Medina, was multiplying.

In ʽAisha’s entry, Ibn Sa’d narrates that a woman asked her about the use of henna and the practice of hair removal, ʽAisha’s reply to the woman stated: “if you could remove your eyes and improve them to look better, for your husband, then do so.” A woman is thus urged, by – arguably – the most prominent of all Muslim women, to sustain and endure any amount of suffering or pain in order to achieve the ultimate reward of being beautiful in her husband’s eye. Such reports place marriage as the woman’s ultimate goal and prompts women to aspire to be the best they can be in order to be selected. What we note here is an ideology that establishes the woman’s body as an object of male desire. Such focus on beauty as the main criteria for female superiority without mention of other traits devalues other personal characteristics such as the woman’s personality and limits the female essence solely to her physical being. Such notion also promotes the patriarchal agenda by indirectly giving license for men to pursue beautiful women in cases where their existing wives are not perceived as beautiful in their eyes.

243 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 48.
244 It is also interesting, although beyond the scope of this study, to note how some later Qur’anic exegesis (tafsîr) limited the concept of the husband wishing to abandon his wife to two main reasons; because the wife is either ugly or old. Muhammad ‘Ali al-Sabuni, Safwat al-Tafsîr (Cairo: Dar al-Sabuni, 1976), vol. 1, 208.
E. Jealousy:

Along with beauty Ibn Sa’d often focuses on the theme of jealousy among the Prophet’s wives. He presents jealousy as an uncontrollable female trait, one which may lead good, pious, and pleasant wives such as ummahāt al-mu’mīnīn to resort to conniving tricks and schemes. Although Ibn Sa’d clearly presents this trait as a flaw, it must be considered that jealousy has often been used by women across time as tool through which power is obtained as shall be noted below.

Safiyya bt. Huyaiyy’s beauty and Jewish origin made her the subject of much jealousy. When the Prophet returned to Medina following his marriage to Safiyya he asked ’Aisha what she thought of her and ’Aisha replied in a demeaning manner that she had found her to be “a Jew like any other Jew.” Another report tells the story of one of Safiyya’s camels wandering into Zaynab bt. Jash’s herd, the Prophet then asked Zaynab if she would give Safiyya any one of her own camels. Zaynab replied with arrogance “Me give to that Jewish girl?” In both cases Ibn Sa’d reports that the Prophet was upset with his wives’ hostile reaction to Safiyya; he scolded ’Aisha telling her that Safiyya was a good Muslim and suspended his visits to Zaynab for over two months. Once while on travels, the Prophet was supposed to retreat at Umm Salama for the night but mistakenly approached Safiyya’s hawdaj (palanquin atop a camel) and then lingered talking to her for a while. When the Prophet finally reached Umm Salama he found her very upset and she accused him of unfairness for talking to the “Jewish man’s daughter” on her night. However, the theme of jealousy is not particular to Safiyya only.

245 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 90.
246 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 90. The Prophet then withdrew from visiting Zaynab bt. Jahsh for a period of two to three months.
247 Ibn Sa’d states that Umm Salama regretted what she had said to the Prophet later and asked for his forgiveness.
248 When the Prophet became ill, Safiyya was quite distraught and told the Prophet that she wished it was her who was sick instead. The Prophet then saw the other wives wink at each other and murmur in disbelief so he informed them that Safiyya was indeed genuine about her concern for him. The many references to tales of jealousy surrounding Safiyya may at first be attributed to her status as an “outsider” or as a Jew. As Ibn Sa’d shares the negative connotations of being “Jewish” among the pious Muslim women, he is also quick to reflect the Prophet’s firm stance against such attitude. These anecdotes may be reflective of the ambivalent relationship the ‘Abbasid administration itself had with the dhimmis in Baghdad. With Caliphs such as Harun and al-Ma’mun raising the flag of orthodoxy, stricter obligations
Ibn Sa’d states that the Prophet used to like drinking a special kind of honey which Zaynab bt. Jahsh used to serve him in the afternoons. 249 ‘Aisha was very jealous and devised a plan to stop the Prophet from visiting Zaynab for the honey. Knowing how keen the Prophet was on always smelling good and his repulsion of bad odors, ’Aisha conspired with Hafsa to claim — together — that the honey left the Prophet with a bad breath. When both wives complained to the Prophet of the bad odor, he said that he will not drink from that honey anymore. The entry then states that it was on that occasion that God revealed the Qur’anic verse (66:1-3) telling the Prophet not to prohibit that which God has not prohibited; “O Prophet! why holdest thou to be forbidden that which Allah has made lawful to thee?, Thou seekest to please thy consorts? But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” 250

The same “honey” encounter is mentioned in Hafsa’s entry but with different characters. In this reference it is Hafsa who serves the Prophet a special honey. 251 The story goes on to state that when the Prophet frequented Hafsa for the honey, ’Aisha conspired with Sawda and Safiyya to complain to the Prophet of bad odor. The Prophet said that he would no longer eat from that honey, however in this entry there is no reference to the revelation of the Qur’anic verse above. The confusion apparent in those two stories is an example of several similar anecdotes in which incidents are replicated but with different characters. The similarity of the minute details of the story make it hard to imagine that both situations could be true, however such an argument is beyond

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249 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 71
250 Qur’an (66:1-3) “O Prophet! why holdest thou to be forbidden that which Allah has made lawful to thee?, Thou seekest to please thy consorts? But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (1) Allah has already ordained for you, (O men) the dissolution of your oaths (in some cases): and Allah is your Protector, and He is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom. (2) When the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence to one of his consorts, and she then divulged it (to another) and Allah made it known to him, he confirmed part thereof and repudiated a part. Then when he told her thereof, she said “Who told thee this?” He said “He told me who knows and is well-acquainted (with all things).”
251 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 59.
What is important to this study is noting the fact that the incident itself seems to take precedence over the people involved in it. From the above two stories we gather that the Prophet’s wives were very jealous and that they conspired against each other to gain his time and attention, but which of the wives did what exactly may remain vague. It may be precisely this conclusion that Ibn Sa’d wishes to deliver; a conclusion that makes us aware that the wives all fought for the Prophet’s attention. We must note though that ’Aisha is incriminated in both situations; a very telling fact knowing that ’Aisha is portrayed as one of the most prominent women of early Islam.

How such an, otherwise “model”, woman is capable of such mischief points to Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of jealousy as an uncontrollable female trait. The use of Qur’anic injunctions and direct speech add authority and credibility to the situations rendered.

Adding to the earlier inconsistency of the honey incident, we find that the occasion of revelation of the above Qur’anic verse (66:1-3) is stated in a different entry in the KTK itself to have been for a completely different reason. This situation involves Mariyya al-Qibtiyya’s entry within a setting that has nothing to do with honey yet is all about jealousy. The report states that the Prophet had a conjugal encounter with Mariyya while she was in Hafsa’s house. When the Prophet was leaving the house he found Hafsa sitting angrily at the doorstep, and she criticized him for approaching another woman on her day and in her own house. In reply the Prophet vowed that he would not approach Mariyya from that day onwards. Ibn Sa’d’s entry then states that is was on that occasion that God revealed the Qur’anic verses (66:1-3) prohibiting the Prophet from prohibiting what God has made legal and allowing the Prophet to go back on his oath. In another report, ’Aisha states that she was never jealous of anyone as much as she was jealous of Mariyya.

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252 This type of repeated, but different, occasions is a mark of early Arabic Historiography.
253 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 154.
254 In many cases jealousy is associated with beautiful women as in the examples of Safiyya, Zaynab, Mariyya and Juwayriyya. One possible association between beauty and female rivalry is the concept of envy (hasad). The link between beauty and envy is one that has been addressed by various medieval poets. In Sawda’s entry Ibn Sa’d narrates a report in which ’Aisha says, “There is no other woman who I’d rather be than Sawda, except that she has hasad (envy).” Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 37.
The above mischievous, and often conniving, behavior may appear unsuitable for “model” Muslim women such as ummahāt al-muʾminīn. How can women who adhere to the highest standards of piety, as reviewed in the sections above, reflect such sub-standard thoughts and behavior when it comes to envy and jealousy? Ibn Saʿd offers some reconciliation when he narrates that “jealousy” is an innate characteristic that can only be removed by the grace of God as in the case of Umm Salama. Umm Salama’s entry states that she initially rejected the Prophet’s marriage proposal claiming, amongst other things, that she was a jealous woman; the Prophet’s reply was that he would pray to God to remove the jealousy from her heart. Ibn Saʿd, KTK, vol. 8, 60.

This anecdote shows the reader that jealousy and envy are natural female ailments that can only be resolved through divine intervention; an idea that presents women as being irrational and uncontrollable. With such discrepancy Ibn Saʿd in effect dyes the most prominent Muslim women with the common ills of being female. In other words, Ibn Saʿd is stating that even the most pious of all women cannot escape the innate weakness of their own gender. If that is the case, how then can “common” women be expected to behave? This concern thus justifies the community’s need to impose strict guidelines and traditions to keep women constantly in check. This concept of “innate ailment” also alleviates the pressure off men involved in polygamous relationships as it switches the burden of guilt from the man — who is simultaneously involved with several women — and places it on the “natural flaw” innate in women that makes them unable to handle it properly. Ibn Saʿd echoes this concept in his entry on Abu Bakr al-Siddiq in volume three of the KTK on men. In this report the Prophet was in his final illness and told ʿAisha to ask Abu Bakr to lead the prayer but ʿAisha argued that he should choose someone else for her father had too low of a voice. When the Prophet insisted, ʿAisha asked Hafsa to convince the Prophet to assign someone else. At that point the Prophet scolded them both saying that they were like “the women of Joseph”, and insisted on having Abu Bakr lead the prayer. Ibn Saʿd includes such a report in Abu Bakr’s entry may reflect his own inclinations as an author, particularly after reviewing his emphasis on envy and jealousy in the female entries.

255 Ibn Saʿd, KTK, vol. 8, 60.
256 This concept of “innate female ailment” was also propagated in Ibn Saʿd’s time through cultural productions such as the famous stories of Alf Layla wa Layla (Thousand and One Nights). Although the schemes of jealousy in kitab al-Nisa’ may conjure up Scheherazade -like images, unlike Scheherazade the prominent women Ibn Saʿd portrays do not possess the same eloquent speech capacity that was such an integral part of her make-up. It also bears resemblance to Surat Yusuf, Qur’an (12:23-34), where the wife of Joseph’s master tried to seduce him to commit sin, and although Joseph rejected her, his encounter with her and the “women of the city” eventually led to his imprisonment. Ibn Saʿd echoes this concept in his entry on Abu Bakr al-Siddiq in volume three of the KTK on men. In this report the Prophet was in his final illness and told ʿAisha to ask Abu Bakr to lead the prayer but ʿAisha argued that he should choose someone else for her father had too low of a voice. When the Prophet insisted, ʿAisha asked Hafsa to convince the Prophet to assign someone else. At that point the Prophet scolded them both saying that they were like “the women of Joseph”, and insisted on having Abu Bakr lead the prayer. Such a reference to the women of Joseph’s story shows the underlying perception that was perpetuated at the time. The fact that Ibn Saʿd included such a report in Abu Bakr’s entry may reflect his own inclinations as an author, particularly after reviewing his emphasis on envy and jealousy in the female entries.
her own feelings, than as an “external” problem which entails a change in the surrounding circumstances in order to be resolved.

Such reflections seem to confirm the attitudes about the “nature” of women which were prevalent in Ibn Sa’d’s own patriarchal society; an attitude that is, in turn, prominently featured in his *KTK*. However, viewed from another perspective, jealousy can be seen as a potent feminine tool which is successfully used to subvert male authority. Even in Ibn Sa’d’s own example we can detect the potency of female jealousy when the Prophet, in reaction to Hafsa’s rage over his encounter with Mariyya, vowed that he would never approach Mariyya again. This is also seen when he promised not to consume the honey. Since there are so many examples of jealousy amongst the Prophet’s wives, it reflects how the women attempted to gain agency in a subtle manner. In patriarchal societies where women suffer various levels of repression, utilizing schemes of jealousy maybe a powerful means of mitigating male dominance. Recent scholarship has defined jealousy as a powerful “control mechanism” in which the jealous party attempts to control the actions of the other person.\(^{257}\) In some cases jealousy may even be viewed as a repressive technique in which the jealous party aims to oppress certain behavior through showing signs of discontent, withdrawal, and anger. The examples in the entries reflect all those types of behaviors and in fact prove how potent a tool jealousy can be; one that provides female agency within the boundaries of a patriarchal society.

Other biographical dictionaries consulted do not show this side of the female character in their entries. For example, both al-’Asqalani and Ibn ’Abd al-Barr have no mention of the honey incident, nor the Mariyya encounter, in their entries on Hafsa bt. ’Umar. She is portrayed, in both works, as a pious woman who often fasted and was known for her good deeds. Furthermore, Ibn ’Abd al-Barr provides a detailed listing of her role in the chain of hadith narration, while al-’Asqalani shares her role in fulfilling ’Umar’s will following his death. When we compare those entries with Hafsa’s account in the *KTK* we note how Ibn Sa’d addition of information pertaining to jealousy is unique.

and warrants investigation. Even in their recounts of ’Aisha, other authors do not portray her as a jealous wife but rather present her as an icon of wisdom and knowledge as shall be shared in this chapter’s conclusion.

Ibn Sa’d restricts his emphasis on beauty and jealousy to the Prophet’s wives and does not share either trait in his discussion of the Prophet’s daughters. Although the Prophet’s daughters were all married, hence wives in their own right, the focus of their entries was not on their husbands but on situations that involved the Prophet, and thus set legitimate precedent as exemplified in funeral rituals. Ibn Sa’d’s organization of the *KTK* appears to revolve around the Prophet as its nucleus. From this perspective the work then depicts the various prominent women through their relationship to the Prophet, as daughters and wives, and not as individual “women” of their own accord.

F. Asceticism:

Although the Prophet’s wives portrayed serious signs of selfish jealousy, their entries show that they did not aspire to worldly gains. Minor, but consistent, mentions of how the women shunned the material world reflect Ibn Sa’d’s keenness on portraying an ascetic side to their personalities.

The emphasis Ibn Sa’d places on the concept of *zuhd* may have been influenced by his own context which witnessed the rise of *Sufism*. Although sufis trace their origins to early Medinean ascetics, historical records place the formative period of *Sufism* in ninth century Baghdad. It was at that time that the articulation of the Sufi ideas and doctrines first took place. The movement grew partly in reaction to the lavish lifestyle some Muslims came to adopt in first/second centuries A.H. Studies of the courts of Harun al-Rashid and al-Ma’mun confirm the tremendous wealth the administration

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258 The term is generally referred to in Arabic as *zuhd*.
displayed. This prompted a pious ascetic movement which was partly influenced by other religions and ancient mystic traditions in the Middle East.

In a study dedicated to moral asceticism, Nimrod Hurvitz analyzes Ibn Sa’d reports on the Prophet’s food intake and shows how it was portrayed as the “poor man’s food”. Hurvitz argues that the information reflected the attitude of the ‘ulama’ of the day; one that shunned the luxurious lifestyle of the time. He believes that Ibn Sa’d attempted to normalize such behavior as the moral code of Islam by retrojecting the model onto the Prophet himself. This same theory may find credibility in the way Ibn Sa’d chose to portray the non-worldly inclinations of the Prophet’s family.

The entry of the Prophet’s daughter Fatima shows how her life with ‘Ali was very harsh. He had nothing to give her as dowry before the marriage and they could not afford any help. The entry states that Fatima was the only one who served ‘Ali as she single-handedly managed all the chores. Even the cover they had on the bed was too short that they had to choose between covering their heads or their feet. Despite such harsh conditions, Fatima was too shy to ask her father for help. The details of their hard life are given emphasis in Fatima’s entry and reflect the humble attitude they had towards property and ownership.

When the Prophet himself wanted to marry ‘Aisha he was too shy to tell her father that he could not afford the ṣadāq. When Abu Bakr found out he gave the Prophet the money for his own daughter’s ṣadāq. Despite the wealth her father enjoyed, ‘Aisha

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261 Kennedy, The Early Abbassid Caliphate, 115. One study describes the marriage of Harun’s son al-Ma’mun to the daughter of the governor stating that is was “marked by a party at which ambergris candles lit the palace, the couple sat on a golden mat studded with sapphires, and everyone of distinction received, as a going-home present, a ball of musk in which was tucked the deed to a valuable piece of land or to a slave.” Jason Goodwin, “The Glory That Was Baghdad.” The Wilson Quarterly 27, no. 2 (Sep. 2003): 25.
263 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 11.
264 It is interesting that this same topos is used in death rituals whereby mention of a cover that can fit only the head or the foot is also used in books of fiqh with reference to covering the corpse of a dead body. See Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 1, 245-6.
265 When the situation became too harsh, she convinced ‘Ali to go join her in seeking her father’s assistance.
266 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 39.
is portrayed as having lived a life of true zuhd. Ibn Sa’d reports, in what appears to be in the later time of ʿUmar, that ʿAisha was granted two bags of 100,000 dirhams. The entry states that ʿAisha kept dividing the money and distributing it onto the poor until there was no money left for her. ʿAisha was fasting on that day and her help inquired as to why she did not keep any of the money to buy food, ʿAisha’s reply was that she had forgotten. In another reference it is said that someone saw ʿAisha give away 70,000 dirhams. The entry states that she was often fasting and did not like to buy new clothes. When seen mending an old niqâb, she stated that no garment that could be mended should be replaced. On a similar occasion ʿAisha said that the Prophet had once told her that if she wanted to follow him to heaven than she should take from the world only what was enough for a traveler, he also instructed her not to mix with rich people nor buy a new garment when an old one could be mended. The Prophet’s words send a clear signal of dismay towards the lavish life some Muslims were living at Ibn Sa’d’s time.

The entry of Zaynab bt. Jahsh is full of similar references and shows how she had always shunned wealth. Ibn Sa’d states that Zaynab was very concerned when ʿUmar sent her 12,000 dirhams and she gave all the money away. She then prayed that it would be the last time she lived to witness ʿUmar send her so much money. When ʿUmar heard of what she had done, he visited her and gave her another one thousand dirhams. The entry states that Zaynab then gave the new amount away as well. In another reference Ibn Sa’d reports that ʿUmar sent Zaynab the ‘atā’ but she thought it was for charity. When told that it was all for her she placed it under some material and asked her servant to take out a handful at a time and give to various families of kin and orphans. When her help told Zaynab that some of that money was rightly theirs, Zaynab instructed her to take the 85 dirhams that were left.

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267 This money appears to have been the ‘atā’ paid to ʿAisha at the time. ʿAtā’ refers to a pension paid to the Muslims which was established with the creation of the diwān during the time of ʿUmar b. al-Khattab. See Cl. Cahen, “ʿAtāʾ.” Encyclopaedia of Islam. Second Edition. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online.
268 The theme of giving money away to the poor is a strong topos within the theme of zuhd. When ʿUmar b. al-Khattab, as Caliph, sent Sawda bt. Zamʿa money, Ibn Sa’d also states that she gave it away. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 35.
269 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 71.
270 When ʿUmar heard of what she had done, he visited her and gave her another one thousand dirhams. The entry states that Zaynab then gave the new amount away as well. In another reference Ibn Sa’d reports that ʿUmar sent Zaynab the ‘atā’ but she thought it was for charity. When told that it was all for her she placed it under some material and asked her servant to take out a handful at a time and give to various families of kin and orphans. When her help told Zaynab that some of that money was rightly theirs, Zaynab instructed her to take the 85 dirhams that were left.
reflected in God’s answer to her prayers and seizing her soul before having to go through another year of ‘atā’.  

Although the above model of asceticism is a recurring theme in the entries, Ibn Sa’d dedicates a section of Kitab al-Nisa’ to an encounter of a very different kind, but this is a separate section that is not part of the individual biographies. In this encounter the wives seem to have had too many demands which overloaded the Prophet who then gave them the option of continuing a harsh life with him or being repudiated. This issue is placed within the middle “topical” section referred to in the order of volume eight; a section that it is located as a separator between the entries of the women of the Prophetic house and the rest of the women who adopted Islam of Muhajirīn and Ansār. The section is titled “The occasion on which the Prophet hajar (abandoned in bed) his wives and asked them to choose.” In this section Ibn Sa’d reports that one day the Prophet did not go out to lead the prayer. Many people were concerned for his absence and gathered at his door, however Ibn Sa’d reports that the Prophet did not go out or give the people permission to enter. When the crowds dispersed, the entry states that ‘Umar b. al-Khattab remained behind and the Prophet eventually allowed him in. Ibn Sa’d reports that ‘Umar found the Prophet looking depressed with his hand on his cheek. Upon inquiry the Prophet referred to his wives stating that “they are asking for more than I have.” Ibn Sa’d then recounts ‘Umar’s reply stating that his own [‘Umar’s] wife, Jamila bt. Thabit, made a similar request so he slapped her so hard that her cheeks almost touched the floor. Abu Bakr then arrived and heard the news so he and ‘Umar went to their respective daughters and the rest of the wives instructing them to seek Abu Bakr and ‘Umar’s help if they needed anything in the future. What is interesting here is Ibn Sa’d’s report about how Umm Salama handled their interference. She reprimanded Abu Bakr

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271 Even the Prophet’s wife Maymuna bt. al-Harith, whom Ibn Sa’d lists as the last of the Prophet’s legal wives, is reported to have picked up a pomegranate seed off the floor stating that “God does not like waste.” The original term used is fasād. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 94.

272 Ibn Sa’d does not share the nature of the demands.

273 The entry on Mariyya al-Qibtiyya is the only one of the wives’ entries that is placed after the “topic” section as mentioned earlier.

274 “Dhikr ma hajar fih rasūl Allah nisā‘ih wa takhiyyirih iahun”. Original Arabic states “ذكر ما هجر فيه رسول الله نسائه و تخييره إياهن” Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 129.

275 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 129.
and 'Umar telling them that what went on between the Prophet and his wives was only the concern of the Prophet and his wives, adding that no one interfered with either man if they had issues at their own homes. Furthermore, Umm Salama added that the Prophet is the one most aware of his wives’ situations and that if he wanted to reprimand them he would have done so himself, finally she added “if we can’t ask the Prophet, then who do we ask?”

The entry states that Abu Bakr and 'Umar then left and the rest of the wives came to Umm Salama and congratulated her for saying what they all wanted to say but could not. This image of Umm Salama as an assertive woman who is outspoken and defiant is very different than the image Ibn Sa’d portrays of her, as a timid woman who speaks through her wali, in her own individual entry in the same volume. A more in-depth comparison is provided at the end of this chapter.

It is important to note how Ibn Sa’d shows both Abu Bakr and 'Umar interacting with the Prophet’s wives, beyond their own respective daughters; a seeming contradiction to the concept of segregation which the individual entries of the women promote.

The topical section then goes on to show how the Qur’anic verses (33:28-29) were revealed; “O Prophet! say to thy Consorts: "If it be that ye desire the life of this world, and its glitter— then come! I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner.” (28) But if ye seek Allah and His Messenger, and the Home of the Hereafter verily Allah has prepared for the well-doers amongst you a great reward. (29)." The verse instructed the Prophet to give his wives the choice between a rough life with him, with a promise of deferred gratification in heaven, or a comfortable worldly life without him. All the wives chose to remain with the Prophet. Ibn Sa’d does not share what the actual requests were, nor does he account for the seeming contradiction between his portrayals of the wives as ascetics in their own biographical entries, and them being too demanding in the topical section. How is it that the individual entries show many of the wives giving away all their money and shunning wealth, while the topical section shows them overwhelming the Prophet with requests

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276 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 129.
277 For details on Umm Salama’s integral role in the history of early Islam see Yasmin Amin, “Umm Salama and Her Hadith” (MA thesis, American University Cairo, 2011).
278 Qur’an (33:28-29).
that are beyond his means? The fact that the Prophet was so tormented to the point of missing the public prayer, and having a Qur’anic verse revealed just for the situation, shows how persistent and continuous their demands must have been. One explanation may be that the problem referred to may have occurred early on in the days when Muslims still lived in poverty. Later on after the death of the Prophet, as Muslim expansion brought on much wealth, particularly to early converts (ṣabiqa) which included the women of the Prophetic household, the Prophet’s wives may have by then been accustomed to the harsh life and thus denounced lavishness. In other words, they were morally reformed by the Prophet and thus changed their ways.

This section also enforces the notion that a woman is economically dependent on her male partner and reflects the value of how good women should not over burden their partners with demands. By reflecting the financial dependency of the wives (even the wealthy one such as ’Aisha) on their husbands, Ibn Sa’d is endorsing the patriarchal structure of legitimizing male authority through financial power. The same concept was discussed in the above section on mahr in which male dominance was established through payment of bride-money. The message delivered by Ibn Sa’d appears to be pro-husbands in all cases; first by establishing male-dominance through the female’s financial dependence on the husband, and second by promoting a non-demanding attitude towards the husband. Both situations reflect the patriarchal ideologies propagated through the text.279

279 Another possible explanation may be that Ibn Sa’d designed the individual entries as a prototype of how he perceived “model” Muslim women should be. However the topical section shifts the focus to the Prophet himself and shares his role as “ideal” husband who is both patient and kind. The above narrative magnifies the contradiction between ’Umar’s harsh attitude and that of the kind-hearted Prophet. Ibn Sa’d shows the Prophet sulking with his hand to his head unable to lead the community in prayer because of the rift between him and his wives. While on the other hand, we see ’Umar’s ferocious attitude in responding to his own wife’s demands by slamming her to the floor. This section leaves the reader with an impression of how kind and thoughtful the Prophet was to his wives and thus gives us, in turn, a version of the “model” Muslim male. In other words, the topic section seems to venerate the Prophet as a “model” husband, while the individual wives’ entries act to glorify the women as “model” wives. The information contained in each section seems to serve the purpose for which the section was originally created. The fact that both examples reflect a sort of contradiction seems to be beyond Ibn Sa’d’s concern.
II. Topoi

The themes reviewed in the above section are supported by several key topoi which Ibn Saʼd skillfully interjects into the entries. Ibn Saʼdʼs topoi add credibility to the report, sometimes by supporting it through a seeming meta-physical force; they also act to magnify the drama of the event making it more formidable and memorable. Topoi are usually not unique to individual authors, but often reflect a style of a certain time or context. Since many of the topoi have been included in their respective theme analysis above, we will suffice here by sharing a few examples to highlight their functions in the text.

A. Qur'anic Interjections:

Quoting Qur'anic verses within the entries adds authority and omniscience to the text giving it not only credibility but utmost authority as well. How the injunction of those verses affects the eventual interpretation and exegesis and becomes a basis for further jurisprudence is an area that warrants in-depth study. In his study of al-Waqidiʼs Maghāzi work, Fraizer states that this phenomenon is characteristic of sira-maghāzi works in general. He adds: “each compiler sought out the Qur'anic citations which best suited the interpretation or bias he desired to impose on various events in the life of the Prophet.”

Records show that the KTK relied heavily on al-Waqidiʼs work and therefore it may be academically more accurate to perceive such references as tools that allow us to understand Ibn Saʼdʼs discourse than as data which re-create actual historical events.

Sawda’s entry includes reference to a Qur’anic verse which sets a clear precedent for future cases. The entry states that the Prophet married Sawda when she was an older woman who had little interest in men. Fearing that the Prophet would leave her because of this “deficiency”, Ibn Saʼd states that Sawda offered to grant her assigned day

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281 Ibn Saʼd, KTK, vol. 8, 36.
and night with the Prophet to the much younger ʿAisha as she knew how much the Prophet enjoyed being with ʿAisha. The entry goes on to state that the Qur’anic verse (128) of Surat al-Nisāʼ was revealed on this occasion; “If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband’s part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if ye do good and practise self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.”

In reviewing al-Nisaburi’s (d.468/1076) canonical book on reasons of revelations (Ashāb al-Nuzūl) it is interesting to note that he narrates a totally different occasion for the revelation of the same verse. Although the characters of the people involved in al-Nisaburi’s occasion do not involve the Prophet or any of his wives, the circumstance of revelation is shown to be similar to that of Sawda’s situation; one in which the wife is not capable of fully performing her sexual obligations towards her husband and fears his abandonment.

The KTK entry gives several renditions reporting the Prophet’s desire to divorce Sawda and changing his mind after her many pleas of wanting to be sent on the Day of Judgment as one of the Prophet’s wives. This report shows that the Prophet’s wives have a privileged status on the Day of Judgment. The notion of the Prophet’s wives going to heaven is also found in the entries of ʿAisha and Hafsa. If the Prophet’s wives have privileged access to heaven, then it would make sense for Ibn Sa’d to portray them in what he believed to be the most exemplary model known to him at the time. In this particular situation a model wife has to fulfill her husband’s needs or grant him the freedom to be with another woman. Note here how the burden of maintaining a happy marriage is placed upon the woman and not the man. The use of Qur’anic verse implicitly supports this notion.

The choices Ibn Sa’d made in his use of Qur’anic references reflect his own inclinations towards what was believed to be important. The reference to Sawda’s potential divorce and granting her night to another wife reflects the patriarchal ideology that places the man at the center of attention. In the interpretations that some scholars of

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282 Qur’an (4:128).
the time offered, we note how the emotions of the female are being marginalized while the satisfaction of the man took paramount importance. Such interpretation allows the husband to seek pleasure with another wife in the case of one wife’s old age or lack of beauty. In both cases the female is being penalized for “flaws” that she has no control over. In fact, such interpretation seems to go against the basic fairness value which is one of the main tenets of the Qur’an. Therefore, an aging woman is left to suffer the anguish of old age and is expected to handle the pain of being abandoned by her husband as well. The man on the other hand is given a license to leave his old wife behind and pursue his own satisfaction with another woman. What we note here are multiple layers of patriarchal propaganda; first through the scholars’ subjective interpretation of the Qur’anic text and then by authors such as Ibn Sa’d selecting such interpretation and reproducing it in his work coupled with an occasion that involves the Prophet himself. What in effect is a human interpretation is thus presented as a divinely ordained creed dictated by God and followed in practice by the Prophet. Several scholars such as Asma Barlas and Barbara Stowasser argue that the patriarchal message associated with Islam is not inherent in the Qur’an but in the interpretations, such as in *tafsīr* and hadith. In fact, reading the different interpretations of the Qur’an and other sources can ultimately lead to what Barlas calls “fundamentally different Islams.”

Qur’anic references are also present in the entry of Zaynab bt. Jahsh who, according to Ibn Sa’d, was the reason behind three different verse revelations; one pertaining to the Prophet hiding how he felt inside, another mandating that the Prophet proceed to marry Zaynab, and the third reflecting the famous hijab verse which, Ibn Sa’d reports, was revealed on the night of Zaynab’s wedding to the Prophet.

Other examples include the references noted in the jealousy theme above regarding the “honey” instance in which the wives conspired to stop the Prophet from frequenting a particular wife for the honey she served them. Note also how a completely different occasion, that of the Prophet’s approach to Mariyya in Hafsa’s house, is stated by Ibn Sa’d as being the

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285 Qur’an (33:37 and 57, respectively), for details on each occasion see Zaynab bt. Jash’s entry in Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 71.
cause of the same revelation referred to in the “honey” incident. Although such contradictions can severely affect the credibility of the reports, Ibn Sa’d does not address them.

In other cases, Ibn Sa’d often inserts a Qur’anic injunction without sharing the details of the incident itself. For example, he awards ʽAisha with being the reason behind the revelation of the verse allowing Muslims to use sand for ablution if no water was available, however he does not share the details of the ifk incident in which ʽAisha was in the desert which was the backdrop of the reference, as is known from other sources. A case such as this reflects Ibn Sa’d’s clear objective of utilizing the prominent women to act as models to set precedent and divulges his lack of interest in sharing the actual details of their biographies as individuals. His failure to go into the details of the ifk incident, although it occurred in the lifetime of the Prophet and caused a major stir in his relationship with ʽAisha, shows Ibn Sa’d’s own biases in presenting only what he perceives to be ʽAisha’s positive contribution to her fulfilling the role of a “model” Muslim woman.

The same can be noted about how Ibn Sa’d steers away from narrating ʽAisha’s role in the battle of the Camel.

As no Muslim can dispute the power and authority of the Qur’an, interjecting Qur’anic verses to support a particular situation immediately turns what may otherwise appear as an opinion or recommendation into divine regulation. Ibn Sa’d lived at the time in which the formation of usūl al-fiqh and jurisprudence was taking place. As jurists agreed that the first step to law formation would be reference to a Qur’anic text, assisting a rule by finding support in the Qur’an made it absolutely binding.

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286 The ifk (lie) incident (6/628) is about an occasion in which the Muslim troops mistakenly left ʽAisha behind, as she was searching for a lost necklace, on the way back from a raid on Banu Mustaliq. A young man named Safwan b. al-Mu’attal escorted her on his camel all the way back to Medina. ʽAisha’s return to Medina alone in the company of a young man generated scandalous accusations. As a result, her relationship with the Prophet became strained until her name was cleared through Qur’anic verses revealed to Muḥammad (Q 24:11–7). The verses reprimanded those who had spread lies. See Asma Afsaruddin, “ʽAisha bt. Abu Bakr.” Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition. Edited by Fleet et al. Brill Online.

287 It must be noted that within ʽAisha’s entry, Ibn Sa’d narrates on her behalf the reasons that make her believe she is the Prophet’s favorite wife; among the ten reasons she reports, ʽAisha lists the fact that “God revealed her innocence.” However, Ibn Sa’d does not offer any elaboration. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 52.

288 For details on jurisprudence see Hallaq, A History of Islamic Legal Theories.
reporting Qur’anic references shows how keen he was on presenting the biographies of women in a formal light that, in turn, allows them to legitimately establish precedent.

Through studies such as the one at hand, a better understanding of the author’s discourse can help provide a more in-depth understanding of the role of scholarship of the time in which it was created. A detailed investigation of which Qur’anic verses were inserted in the text and what type of value they were presented to support can offer immense insight as to the ideologies being perpetrated during such an important period in the history of Islam. Because it is this particular period that laid the groundwork for later works of jurisprudence, the impact of understanding the discourse behind the works produced at the time can help today’s scholars better comprehend the framework of Islamic legal thought during that time.

B. Barakāt:

Many of the entries share stories about dreams or good tidings related to the events. These dreams not only add drama and thrill to the act of story-telling, but also add to the mystical credibility of the person possessing them. Barakāt are blessings from above; in his attempt to describe barakāt Colin states that it is a “beneficent force, of divine origin, which causes superabundance in the physical sphere and prosperity and happiness in the psychic order”. In other words, they are unexplained tidings and events that seem to reflect a special relationship with the divine. Associating prominent women with such barakāt sets them apart as “chosen” women who appear divinely ordained to hold such privileged status, this in-turn adds to their credibility as role-models.

The concept of portraying the Prophet as having baraka and being blessed does not need explanation due to the mere fact of him being a Prophet and receiving revelation from God. However, in certain cases such baraka seems to extend beyond the Prophet himself and onto those surrounding him. Such is the case with the Prophet’s daughter Fatima and her husband ʿAli b. Abi Talib. When Fatima and ʿAli got married, the Prophet asked ʿAli to go to him before he consummated the marriage with Fatima. When

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'Ali did, the Prophet poured the water of his own [Prophet’s] ablution on ‘Ali and prayed to God to barik (bless) them and their offspring. In another report Ibn Sa’d states that the Prophet rinsed water in his mouth and returned it to the pot and then sprinkled onto the couple while stroking them. After the marriage, Ibn Sa’d reports that the Prophet visited the couple during a quarrel. He sat in the middle between Fatima and ‘Ali and then placed the hand of each onto his stomach. When they made up the Prophet left the house, his face gleaming with happiness. When asked about the reason behind the Prophet’s joy, Ibn Sa’d reports him saying that he was happy because he made amends between the two closest people to his heart. 290 These special encounters between the Prophet and Fatima continue throughout the entry and seem to transcend to her as when Ibn Sa’d reports that she predicted her own death as stated in the funeral ritual theme above. All these reports, coupled with Ibn Sa’d’s placement of Fatima’s entry at the onset on the section of his daughters, defying the chronological order of birth, show how keen he was to reflect Fatima, and her family, in a special light. The reasons behind this “special” light can be manifold. It may be due to Ibn Sa’d’s Sunni inclination in which all the four rightly-guided caliphs are revered. However, the reason may be due to subtle ’Alid inclinations which the author discretely presents through meta-physical, and not rational, explanations. It is important to reference here al-Ma’mun’s own benevolent attitude towards the ’Alids whereby he hoped to form a strong alliance between the ‘Abbasids and the ’Alids as a means of expanding the circle of ahl al-bayt to endorse the ‘Abbasids’ credibility and legitimacy; the fact that the KTK was authored under such sentiment may have contributed significantly to Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of ‘Ali and Fatima and how he presented the divine bond between them. 291 We must also entertain the idea of the KTK text being tampered with following Ibn Sa’d’s death and the information being altered or added by people who produced later recensions of the work. 292 Finally, the mention of special barakāt is known to be used as a prophylactic for off-setting envy; in this case

290 Original states أحب الناس لي Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 17.
291 More details about the political situation are shared in chapter two on the ’Abbasid establishment and in chapter four on prominent men.
warding the evil eye away from the Prophet’s family and lineage may explain the many mentions of special blessings in Fatima’s entry. 293

In Mariyya’s entry Ibn Sa’d reports that the Prophet had doubts about his paternity of Mariyya’s son, Ibrahim, because some rumors had spread questioning her fidelity. Later, Gabriel visited the Prophet and greeted him by the title of “the father of Ibrahim”, only then was the Prophet assured that the boy was indeed his own son. 294 The frequent visitations of Gabriel to help guide the Prophet to the right path are an important component of the good tidings presented by Ibn Sa’d in his work. Although those visits were not supported by a text of the Qur’an as in the references stated earlier, the presence of Gabriel giving the Prophet advice is an extremely powerful tool, a tactic that leaves the reader assured that the Prophet’s marriages to those women were indeed divinely ordained and that these women were indeed destined to become ummahāt al-mu‘minīn. 295

Another major event that reflects the divine intervention is presented in the case of the Prophet’s marriage ceremony to Zaynab bt. Jash. 296 Although Ibn Sa’d reports that the marriage itself was ordained through the Qur’an, even their wedding banquet appears to be blessed. Ibn Sa’d reports on behalf of Malik that he accompanied the Prophet for 10 years and the oddest thing he ever saw was the banquet of Zaynab’s wedding. The entry states that in celebration, someone sent the Prophet a dish of cooked dates so the Prophet asked Malik to call his companions (ṣaḥāba) to join. After they ate, the Prophet asked him to call everyone in the mosque to eat from that same dish. Later, all the people on the street came to share the same dish. The entry states that every time the Prophet placed his fingers into the dish the food would multiply until it fed seventy people. Ibn Sa’d portrays Zaynab bt. Jahsh as a blessed woman in all respects and one who is strongly connected with verse revelation as well. The number seventy further

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293 The term tabarakAllāh is used by some cultures to ward of the evil eye. The phrase “tabarākAllāh” is present in the Qur’an (7:54, 23:14, and 40:64). Colin, G.S. “Baraka,” EI².

294 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 133.

295 Hafsa’s entry states that the Prophet attempted to divorce her due to unfulfillment but does not explain further details. Hafsa did not stop crying and her uncles visited the Prophet to ask him to change his mind, it was then that Gabriel gave the Prophet instructions to maintain Hafsa as a wife. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 56.

296 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 71.
pronounces the mysticism of the event as the number seven is one of the highly revered numbers in the science of numerology. Ibn Sa’d also elevates the status of some of the prominent women through including them in special prayers which the Prophet delivers particularly for them.

The fact that Ibn Sa’d repeatedly reports occasions of such special tidings and *barakāt* reflect his own discourse in portraying those women as very prominent and special women in Islam. The entries show that most of the wives were associated with mystifying happenings that can only be understood through the concept of them being blessed by the Prophet through God. This paranormal status thus endows these special women with a credibility that no other “ordinary” woman has; a credibility that places them high up in a leadership status, similar to how Muhammad as a man is for the men. Such leadership status thus presents a “model” to be reckoned by good Muslims.

**C. Dreams:**

Dreams represent another topos which Ibn Sa’d frequently employs. The dreams in the text often act as a means of foreshadowing future events. The people who experience such dreams, much like *barakāt*, appear to be blessed with a special gift which allows

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297 Some studies suggest that the number “Seven” sometimes served to demonstrate the hand of God at work in the carefully ordered world He had created, such as the seven skies. It thus became common to enhance the religious credentials of eminent persons by expressing events in which these individuals participated in terms of such numbers. Lawrence I. Conrad, “Seven and the Tasbi’: On the Implications of Numerical Symbolism for the Study of Medieval Islamic History.” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31, no. 1 (1988): 44.

298 When Umm Salama’s first husband died she was quite distraught, the entry then shares a special prayer which the Prophet instructed Umm Salama to recite in order for God to send her something better that what she had lost. Ibn Sa’d often adopts this tactic of foreshadowing future events as part of the *barakāt* signs. Upon following the Prophet’s advice, Umm Salama was eventually rewarded with marriage to the Prophet himself. Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 60. Another “special” encounter is mentioned in the case of Rayhana bt. Zayd. When Rayhana was captured the Prophet gave her the choice of marriage and Islam but she rejected his offer stating that she did not want to adopt Islam and that saddened the Prophet tremendously. Ibn Sa’d reports that at a later date the Prophet was sitting with someone and heard approaching footsteps. Without prior knowledge, the Prophet announced that those footsteps were bringing him the news of Rayhana’s acceptance of his offer. His intuition was true and Ibn Sa’d states that the Prophet was so pleased that he decided to hang on to Rayhana until his death. From our readings of the various entries we know that a woman who dies as a wife of the Prophet gets a special privilege on the Day of Judgment securing her access to heaven. Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 92.
them such unexplained sense of the upcoming future.\(^{299}\) Once again, such blessed people are in-turn revered by society which perceives them as the role-model for the rest of the community.

Ibn Sa’d shares two dreams in Sawda’s entry, dreams which she had that foreshadowed her future marriage to the Prophet.\(^{300}\) In the first dream Sawda had a vision of the moon falling from the sky. When she told her husband about her dream he predicted that he would die and Sawda would then remarry. In the second dream she saw the Prophet walking towards her and bending towards her neck. Once again her husband explained that she would remarry in the future, however this time he told her that she would be married to the Prophet himself. The dream referring to the Prophet as the “moon falling from the sky” shows the magnificence associated with the Prophet, the fact that such an event pertained to a particular woman, by default, implies her own radiance as well. The fact that the entry shows her husband analyzing her dream correctly adds to the mystery of the encounter and leaves the reader believing that Sawda was pre-ordained to be one of ummahat al-mu’minīn.

Dreams seem to have been taken quite seriously in the early days, so much so that Ibn Sa’d reports that Safiyya bt. Huyayy was physically beaten up because of dreams she had before marrying the Prophet. This encounter shows that Safiyya too was pre-ordained and “chosen” to be part of the Prophet’s household even before her capture. Such predestination may also act as a rebuttal to the previously mentioned prejudice against her as a Jew.\(^{301}\)

\(^{299}\) The belief that dreams could have predictive value was a universal concept in ancient and medieval cultures in the Mediterranean. See Huda Lutfi, “The Construction of Gender Symbolism in Ibn Sirin’s and Ibn Shahin’s Medieval Arabic Dream Texts.” \textit{Mamluk Studies Review} 9, no. 1 (2005): 127.

\(^{300}\) Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 35.

\(^{301}\) In one report Safiyya dreamt that she had received dates coming from Yathrib. However, in the other dream Safiyya had a vision of the moon landing in her lap. A third version states that Safiyya had a dream of the “so called” messenger (as she had not seen him herself) approaching her with an angel. Ibn Sa’d reports that Safiyya had a vision of the angel covering her with his wings. When Safiyya shared her dreams with her Jewish family, she was met with great rejection and accusations of longing to be with the new Prophet. Ibn Sa’d reports that Safiyya’s husband was so angry that he beat her up to the point that when the Prophet first saw her he noticed that she had a bruised eye. Once again we note the Prophet’s
The above examples give us a clear idea of how Ibn Sa’d employed visions and dreams, much like barakāt, to bestow a sense of mystical phenomena associated with the women and place them in a very special light. The entries reflect the social and cultural fascination with dreams that existed at the time. Islamic literature is rich with works on dreams and their interpretation. Interestingly, the most celebrated work on dreams in the Arabic literature was authored by Ibn Sirin and was written in eighth century Iraq. This shows how prevalent the culture of interpretation of dreams must have been by the time Ibn Sa’d authored the *KTK*. Dream literature was so popular that biographical dictionaries were developed particularly for the field in what became known as *Tabaqat al-Mu’abbirin*. Much like the *KTK*, the order of generations (tabaqāt) corresponds to a similar order starting with the Prophets from the beginning of time through the companions of Prophet Muhammad, followed by their followers.

Research suggests that dream interpretations were a popular ploy used by many in the early Islamic days, most significantly to support arguments related to theological and political conflicts. The two cases shown above may, or may not, involve an element of such theological support. The case of Safiyya shows the Prophet marrying a Jewish woman, an act that seems to have been looked down upon from our review of the remarks of his other wives shared above in the theme of jealousy. Reporting that Safiyya had several dreams, in this case visions of the Prophet marrying her, reflect a seemingly destined divine ordainment which vindicates the Prophet’s act of marrying a Jewish girl. An act which, in turn, sets precedent to encourage Muslim men to marry good Muslim convert and legitimize inter-marriage between Arab and Jewish tribes. A similar stance may be noted with respect to Sawda as she was the first wife the Prophet married after the death of his beloved Khadija. Since Khadija was the strongest supporter and ally Muhammad had had, the notion of his remarriage at an older age may have been later met

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with skepticism. Sawda’s dreams in this case shows how her marriage to the Prophet seemed to be part of a greater celestial plan.

III. The Alternate Images of Umm Salama and ‘Aisha:
Some of the examples shared above show how prominent women were portrayed differently by different authors. Cooperson claims that a major problem with Muslim historiography is the fact that the life of the same person is often reported differently in different works and attributes that to the different ideologies of the authors themselves.  

The section below will share more details about the distorted representation of the biographies of Umm Salama and ‘Aisha amongst the various texts. The objective is not to assess which rendition represents a more accurate description of the woman’s life, but to simply appreciate how one person’s life can be rendered so differently across works depending on how the authors construct the character and what information they choose to highlight or subdue.

Earlier in this chapter we’ve shared Umm Salama’s brief outburst against Abu Bakr and ’Umar presented in the middle “topical” section of Kitab al-Nisa’ on the Prophet abandoning his wives. Note how her character appeared very different than that presented, also by Ibn Sa’d, but in her own individual entry. Umm Salama’s individual entry shows a pious wife who displays the typical signs of female jealousy. Ibn Sa’d shows her laboring hard for hours to create a meal to feed the Prophet’s household when they got married. The entry goes on to list typical information which Ibn Sa’d seems to share in all wives’ entries such as details on lineage, occasion of marriage, dowry, division of time between wives, jealousy among wives, and death and burial details. When she had an issue regarding her marriage to the Prophet the entry clearly states that she relayed her concerns through the intermediate service of a wali. In another instance Umm Salama was upset because the Prophet spent much time talking to Safiyya when it was her [Umm Salama’s] night, so she accused the Prophet of unfairness. Ibn Sa’d is

quick to report that Umm Salama later felt very guilty about what she had said and repented to God praying for forgiveness. The reader completes her biography feeling that Umm Salama was an older yet beautiful, pious, wife who displayed the typical signs of jealousy and seclusion the rest did, as there is no reference to any special characteristics in her entry.

On the other hand, when we read about Umm Salama’s encounter with Abu Bakr and ‘Umar in the above topical section, we see a whole new Umm Salama come to life. We meet a woman who is not only wise and eloquent, but one who is courageous and to a certain degree defiant as well. She is not afraid to speak her mind and stand up against the two closest companions of the Prophet. The change of Umm Salama’s character, and thus image, between how Ibn Sa’d presents her in her own biography versus her role in a general section is very telling. It shows us how much Ibn Sa’d strove to create a “typical” model in contrast to the woman’s actual character and personality as detected in other parts of his own narrative.

When works by other biographers are consulted, Umm Salama appears as a strong powerful woman; a side that is completely marginalized in Ibn Sa’d’s biography of her. Al-‘Asqalani, for example, refers to an incident in which Umm Salama publicly intervened to offer the Prophet advice regarding the treaty of Ḥudaybiyya; advice which the Prophet accepted and put to use for the wisdom it reflected. Additionally, Ibn ʿAbd al- Barr reports that Umm Salama witnessed the battle of Khaybar relaying that she was so close to the battlefield that she could hear the sound of the sword hitting a person’s teeth. Umm Salama’s history, presented through al-ʿAsqalani, shows how in her earlier years she had escaped her capturers and attempted to ride a camel alone

306 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 67.
307 The Ḥudaybiyya treaty took place in year 6 A.H. when the Prophet along with 1400 followers went to perform ‘Umra and met the Meccans in an outskirt area called Ḥudaybiyya. The Muslims were not allowed to proceed into Mecca but a treaty was negotiated between both parties which allowed the Muslims to return the following year to perform the ‘Umra. Umm Salama’s wisdom was reflected in how she convinced the Prophet of the merits of the treaty. For more details on the treaty see Montgomery Watt, “al-Ḥudaybiyya.” Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online. As referenced earlier, for in depth information about Umm Salama and her pivotal role in early Islamic history see Amin, “Umm Salama and Her Hadith.”
308 Ibn ʿAbd-al-Barr, Al-Istiʿab, 1939. In 628 C.E. Muhammad marched with over 1500 men and over a 100 horses to surprise the Jews of Khaybar. Vaglieri, “Khaybar.” EI².
through the desert to find her first husband; later on a stranger accompanied her through the journey and delivered her to her final destination. Although the man was not a Muslim, al-’Asqalani reports on how Umm Salama raved about how he was the best man she ever encountered.\textsuperscript{309} The stories we read about Umm Salama that are presented by other authors seem to match more the Umm Salama Ibn Sa’d inadvertently presents in the topical section. This anecdote in itself is very telling, as Umm Salama’s strength and empowerment are only shared by Ibn Sa’d in a section in which he shares the Prophet’s problem with his wives; a highly condemning context for any woman to play a major role in. In conclusion, if the reader were to suffice to learn about Umm Salama from her own biographical entry as composed by Ibn Sa’d, one would leave with an impression of a biography that, to say the least, is very much hazy if not severely distorted. An affect that may, unfortunately, be representative of the majority of Ibn Sa’d’s entries on women of the Prophetic household.

When comparing Ibn Sa’d’s rendition of ’Aisha’s biography to her portrayal in the other two biographical works mentioned, we face a similarly distorted representation. While Ibn Sa’d utilized ’Aisha’s entry (the longest one in volume eight) to forcefully endorse notions of female segregation and female rivalry, the other authors share anecdotes about ’Aisha as a scholar and a hadith narrator. What is even more telling is the fact that both al-’Asqalani and Ibn ’Abd al-Barr do not even make reference to ’Aisha’s continual attempts to conceal herself that are found in Ibn Sa’d, nor to her bouts of jealousy and her tricks to keep the Prophet away from the other wives. While Ibn Sa’d portrays ’Aisha as a divinely ordained wife who, through the various mentions, appears to be obsessed with condemning the mixing of the sexes, he fails to highlight her prominent public role in the community. On the other hand, other authors mainly emphasize her public role and make no reference to her concern for gender segregation. For example, Ibn ’Abd al-Barr does not share information about ’Aisha’s clothes, isolation, or regret in old age as in the KTK, however he does references the ifk incident and shares information about the Qur’an acquitting ’Aisha of the accusations posed against her. In this manner, Ibn ’Abd al-Barr also reveres ’Aisha as a pious and very

\textsuperscript{309} Al-’Asqalani, Al-Isaba, vol. 13, 221.
special wife of the Prophet but does not shy away from sharing well-known data about parts of her life that affect Islamic history. As a matter of fact, Ibn ’abd al-Barr mostly focuses on ʿAisha’s public role stating that the council of the most revered sahāba used to seek her advice on religious issues following the Prophet’s death. He goes on to share a narration by ʿAtaʾ b. Abi Rabah who said “ʿAisha was the most revered person in issues of fiqh, she was the most knowledgable of all people, and was known to have the best opinion in public.”\(^\text{310}\) In another narration Hisham b. ʿUrwa is quoted to having said that he had never seen anyone who was as knowledgable in issues of fiqh, medicine, or poetry as ʿAisha was. This type of information is completely marginalized and mostly non present in Ibn Saʿd’s rendition of ʿAisha. Finally, while Ibn Saʿd makes no mention of ʿAisha’s role in the battle of the Camel, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr shares a report narrated on behalf of the Prophet in which he forshadowed ʿAisha’s participation in a battle involving a camel; the report goes on to state that in such battle many around her would be killed but that she would be rescued. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr comments on this particular hadith stating that it was later perceived to be on of the Prophetic signs of Muhammad (aʾlām nubuwattuhu).

If we look at ʿAisha’s representation in al-ʿAsqalani’s work, we shall find that she is much closer to the ʿAisha we find in ʿAbd al-Barr and quite different than the image we encounter through Ibn Saʿd. Although al-ʿAsqalani too does not mention the battle of the Camel, he shares narrations about ʿAisha’s knowledge mentioned above in Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr; he also adds one report stating that when the men faced a problem they could not solve they would seek ʿAisha’s help because she always had the answer. He also adds a narration in which ʿAisha was revered to be the best poet stating that she was so talented that she could instantly compose poetry out of any situation.\(^\text{311}\) Al-ʿAsqalani ends ʿAisha’s biography by listing more than 30 names of people who narrated hadith on her behalf.

What we note above when comparing Ibn Saʿd, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, and al-ʿAsqalani is that all three presented ʿAisha as a beloved wife who was probably the most

\(^{310}\) Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Al-Istiʿab, vol. 4, 1883.

\(^{311}\) Al-ʿAsqalani, Al-Isaba, vol. 13, 40.
revered of all *ummahāt al-muʾminīn* by sharing similar information about her ordained early marriage to the Prophet, mentions of her being the Prophet’s wife in heaven, and being privileged by having Qur’ān revealed in her presence and the Prophet dying and being buried in her home. So all three authors establish ’Aisha as the highest female authority in Islam, however how they choose to show the behavior of this model to later generations is extremely different. Ibn Sa’d utilized ’Aisha’s authority to reflect a patriarchal ’Abbasid imperial rendition of what the “ideal” woman represents; in this case she is one who conforms to the highest level of gender segregation and falls prey to the innate female ills of jealousy but is never a demanding wife. Most importantly, she finds comfort in the private setting of her home and stays far away from the public domain.

On the other hand, both Ibn ’Abd al-Barr and al-’Asqalani use ’Aisha’s revered authority to endorse an image of a highly talented woman whose mental capacity, innate poetic talents, and learned medicinal skills set her high above many men in the community. She is a public figure living in a community who does not shy away from seeking knowledge wherever it is lies, even if it is at the hands of a woman. Both authors had access to Ibn Sa’d’s information as they often reference the *KTK* in their own entries, this proves that they had the choice of selecting what they believed was relevant to the entries they formulated. An in-depth analysis of the society and context in which Ibn ’Abd al-Barr and al-’Asqalani each lived could offer insights that may help explain the great distortion between their portrayals of the likes of ’Aisha and Umm Salama and those rendered by Ibn Sa’d many years earlier.

Based on the above analysis, Ibn Sa’d’s rendition of the lives of the women of the Prophetic household appears to be highly influenced by his own perception of what is deemed important and relevant, just as the other authors appear to have made their own decisions about what they chose to use from Ibn Sa’d’s data and what they may have deemed trivial or incorrect. One should thus wonder what the women’s entries in *Kitab al-Nisa’* would have been like had they been authored by women, we may conceive of themes that are drastically different than those Ibn Sa’d, and even other male biographers, chose to share; ones that do not place the male as the focal point of the woman’s biography. For example, one would imagine that a significant portion of the entry would
revolve around domestic life. Details of managing the household from the steps involved in preparing a meal to the dilemmas of managing the help and all the problems that can arise in between. Another section of the entry would probably be dedicated to the notion of motherhood and taking care of children’s needs and issues. Another section may be related to issues involving health such as illnesses and cures along with accidents and possibly the circumstances of death. The woman’s skills, hobbies, or talents would definitely be addressed. There would probably be a mention of interaction with other women and aspects of social life that include customs and traditions at times of feasts and celebrations as well as mourning. A fact that would, in turn, shed light on the cultural aspects of life including music, poetry, and other forms of entertainment. Finally, there maybe a section on public life, the welfare of the community, her opinion on leadership, and points of view regarding adherence of the administration to the religious doctrine. If ’Aisha was politically involved to the point of going to war against ‘Ali, then her interaction in public life would have probably been a major part of her own autobiography. All of the above elements are missing in Ibn Sa’d’s rendition of the lives of the women examined. Such details would allow the reader to review the woman’s own perspective on her life as opposed to the “model” image the author wishes to present; in this case the model of the ideal Muslim woman as situated in the male-dominated 9th century Baghdad.\textsuperscript{312}

Conclusion:

Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of the prominent women in \textit{Kitab al-Nisa}’ reflects a presentation which appears to be built around a set model of what Ibn Sa’d wanted to project as a good, pious, Muslim woman. Although a large portion of the book is dedicated to the biographies of those prominent women, their portrayals appear uniform and static. The entries mainly revolve around a few major themes that are supported by powerful topoi. Topoi such as Qur’anic references place particular women at the heart of the reason for

\textsuperscript{312} Apart from the heavy influence of Ibn Sa’d’s own context on the text, another limitation of reading the work could have been Ibn Sa’d’s own limited access to information, as the information was mostly reported to him through other men.
revelation and thus elevate their status in Islam as well as give conclusive proof of judgment pertaining to certain issues. Such divine intervention coupled with the overall emphasis on metaphysical mentions of dreams and *barakat* place the prominent women in a unique and special light and changes their entries from regular personal biographies into ordained models to be emulated.

The discourse applied reflects a strong male-dominant perspective as evidenced by the fact that most of the female entries share themes that involve men. The themes of marriage, gender segregation, funerary rituals, as well as beauty and jealousy are all issues that revolve around men. For example, the wife is married to a man through the authority of another man (*walli*); the women are concealed so as not to be seen by foreign men, the funeral procedures are administered by men who pray and male relatives who descend into the grave; and finally beauty is perceived by the male future-groom who, at the same time, is the object of the female jealousy. In her studies of dream texts, Huda Lutfi concludes that all the Medieval Arabic dream literature was written by men for men. This statement can probably be expanded to include almost all medieval literature including the *KTK*. It is also more practical for a man to report on themes of the women’s lives that men are associated with, simply because accessing such information is much easier. These issues, in turn, also become interesting to the prospective male readers. If we view the text as a work authored by a man who is addressing a male audience, the themes above may appear highly appropriate. It was important for the man to know how much *mahr* to pay his future wife, how to cover his daughters, and how to bury his mother in a fashion that reconciles religion and local tradition. It also informs the husband when it is considered alright for him to seek fulfillment with another woman. Therefore, a “how to” manual on how men should deal with the women in their lives seems to be what Ibn Sa’d aimed to offer in *Kitab al-Nisa*.

As alluded to previously, Khadija’s entry does not adhere to the “prototypical model” established for the rest of the wives. Unlike the other wives, Khadija is portrayed as a woman of strength and power. She was a woman of status and wealth and

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she was also a business woman. In her trading business she would freely compete in the money market just as men do, she also hired men and, when she heard of his trustworthiness, offered Muhammad a lucrative salary to come work for her. When Muhammad proved himself, Khadija doubled his salary and took the initiative to send him a marriage proposal which he accepted. The entry does not include the typical mentions of segregation, concealment, beauty, jealousy, or zuhd. Although Ibn Sa’d states that Khadija used to pray with Muhammad in secret, he is quick to mention that she died three years prior to hijra which was before “prayer” was ordained by God.\footnote{Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 9.} As is known, most of the detailed rulings pertaining to rituals in Islam were revealed through the Qur’an in the post-hijra Medinian period. In doing so Ibn Sa’d creates a clear margin separating Khadija from the main tenets of Islam which in turn invalidates her as a true model for future Muslim women. Although Khadija is highly revered in the \textit{KTK} as the first person to accept Islam and support Muhammad, she is also portrayed to have experienced a lifestyle that is grounded in the \textit{jahili} tradition; one that Islam was soon to reform. It was upto the Prophet’s other wives then to present the role-Model of the true Muslim woman.

Ibn Sa’d attempts to promote the patriarchal agenda through his exaggerated emphasis on shunning women into the privacy of their homes and behind the shadows of their \textit{niqabs}. However, what appears in between the lines suggests that women of his time were far removed from his “ideal” model. The mere need to emphasize such concepts in such a constructed manner is a clear sign that author was attempting hard to convince his own readers of his claims. The fact that Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr and al-’Asqalani did not find the need to stress such themes endorsing female subordination may in fact indicate that such was already the cultural setting of their own respective times. Even if the later societies had internalized the “ideals” that Ibn Sa’d tried to promote so aggressively in his own work, research has shown that women will always find means to mitigate male-dominance. The concepts of wailing and female jealousy have been presented from the mainstream patriarchal perspective aiming to present women as wild, chaotic, and innately weak human beings. However, those same themes have been
reviewed from a counter-perspective showing how they, in fact, celebrate female agency and freedom of expression as tools that women have mastered and maintained over the centuries and till this day.

The fact that Ibn Sa’d focused on themes of gender segregation and other themes that place the husband at the center of all female attention reflects his own bias in propagating a patriarchal discourse. His portrayed model of the ideal Muslim woman seems to stand in the face of discrepancies present in his own Baghdad at the time and endorses the patriarchal ’Abbasid imperial discourse of the time.
Chapter Three: The “Model” Man in the KTK

Introduction:
A true understanding of the women entries is not possible without incorporating a review of male entries. Such a process ensures a better understanding of Ibn Sa’d’s overall methodology and promotes a perspective that is both balanced and comprehensive at the same time. Gender study scholars believe that an attempt to study women’s history by looking at women only actually promotes further isolation of the sexes; in a way defeating the main objective that launched the entire field. Elaborating upon this view, Joan Scott argues that men and women must be defined in terms of one another, and that no proper understanding of either is possible through an entirely separate study. She believes that a proper understanding of gender is one which allows for an understanding of the significance of the sexes. Therefore this study also examines a few of the prominent male entries in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the gender discourse in Ibn Sa’d’s work.

This study examined the entries of prominent men to assess the differences and similarities Ibn Sa’d employs as main themes for each gender representation. The selection process utilized the size of the entries to indicate prominence, and the findings include both relatives and companions of the Prophet. Seven of the longest entries were selected for analysis and those include Hamza b. ’Abd al-Muttalib, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, ’Umar b. al-Khattab, ’Uthman b. ’Affān, ’Ali b. Abi Talib, ’Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr and Zayd b. Haritha. The conclusion will show that the prominent status of the men and the women is achieved through different vehicles. The male entries share details about their characters and personalities which in turn awarded them the Prophet’s companionship; however the women’s entries show the Prophet’s fatherhood, or marriage, as the catalyst.

that afforded the prominent women their status. In other words, the men earned their status while the women’s status was bestowed upon them. The prominent men are portrayed as active agents who fought courageously in battle, led the community in an exemplary manner, and dedicated their lives to the service of Islam. Prominent women in Kitab al-Nisa’ appear as passive women who became prominent through their marriage to the Prophet and not because of character or personality traits they individually possessed. With the exception of Khadija, the details of the Prophet’s marriages as shared by Ibn Sa’d do not reflect a woman’s personality in a way that may have prompted the Prophet’s decision to marry her. In some cases the entries make it appear as though the physical beauty of the woman was the main reason behind the marriage, as in the case of Safiyya b. Huyaiyy, Mariyya al-Qibtiyya, and Juwayriya b. al-Harith.\textsuperscript{316} As shown in the previous chapter, Ibn Sa’d’s entries on the Prophet’s wives and daughters mostly focus on details of marriage, segregation, and funeral rituals; areas which tend to reflect legal rulings and social traditions prevalent at the time. The women’s actual personalities are barely visible in the entries apart from a general inclination towards jealousy and in some cases piety, mostly in the form of zuhd.

When compared to the prominent male entries we note that Ibn Sa’d has the funeral ritual themes in common for both genders despite emphasis on different aspects for each gender. The male entries’ emphasis on funerary rituals includes wrapping of the body, praying, and burial of the deceased while the female entries mostly highlight the gender segregation involved in washing and burial. There is hardly any mention of male/female burial segregation in the case of male entries.\textsuperscript{317} Ibn Sa’d then replaces the other themes common in the female entries with more character related themes in the case of the male biographies. Such character related themes include valor, leadership, fairness, as well as a description of the final moments of life, including the death scene.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{316} The marriages may have been attributed to political reasons but Ibn Sa’d does not address that issue in any detail either.
\item \textsuperscript{317} The entries are full of details as to the specific rituals of the washing and the covering of the body. Some of the details include the type of material used for cover as well as the number of layers the body is wrapped in. The number of takbih during prayer is usually stated and there is often mention of the time of burial depicted as close to the time of death even if it is at nighttime. For more details on funeral rituals in early Islam see Muhammad Qasim Zaman “Death, Funeral Processions, and the Articulation of Religious Authority in Early Islam.” \textit{Studia Islamica}, no. 93 (2001): 27-58.
\end{itemize}
In other words, the male entries seem to be more concerned with establishing the credibility of the men as warriors who defended Islam, or as leaders who ruled with justice much more than they are concerned with details of their private lives.\textsuperscript{318} As a matter of fact, the male entries reviewed do not give any details about their marriages but merely list the names of their off-spring with each son/daughter attributed to their respective mother.\textsuperscript{319} There is also no mention of separation or divorce details.

Overall, both the male and female entries use similar dramatic tools of emphasis such as the injunctions of dreams, the use of active voice, and the repetition of reports. The references to Qur’anic verses appear more frequently in the women’s section; that may be because the verses used mostly correlate to legal rulings affecting marriage details and the concept of wives’ concealment which are not themes that are emphasized in the male entries. Other areas of similarity between the male and female entries include types of clothes worn; however, the male entries also do not reflect the emphasis on concealment as do the women’s. The notion of using henna or dye to color the hair/beard yellow is a prominent feature of the male entries, one that is coupled with an equally significant emphasis on the women’s use of yellow colored clothes and sometime hair dye as well. Although the above areas all present intriguing fields of analysis, such focus is beyond the scope of this study.\textsuperscript{320}

I. Structure:

Before we proceed with examining the main themes in prominent men’s entries it is important to note the main title of the volumes studied. The title of volume three is “The muhajirīn of Badr” indicating the very first category (ṭabāqa) around the Prophet. The sub-heading then introduces the entries by the following title “Names collected of

\textsuperscript{318} It is important to keep in mind however that as most of the prominent women were married to the Prophet himself, marriage details may have been more significant.

\textsuperscript{319} The fact that the name of the mother is mentioned is significant. Although on the surface it seems that this is for mere genealogical purposes, it may also indicate some type of female agency. Many entries name eight or more mothers to one man’s children, which indicate a tendency towards polygamy and, or, frequent remarriage.

\textsuperscript{320} Both male and female entries hint to a seeming fascination with the notion of numerology. An entire study can be performed on the examination of numerology and its significance in Ibn Sa’d’s work.
Muhajirīn and Anṣār who were the sahāba of the Prophet (pbuh), and names of those who came after them of their off-spring and followers who were known to be people of fiqh (jurisprudence), 'ilm (knowledge), and rīwayā l-il-hadīth (hadith narrators), reporting what has come down to us of their names, genealogies, nicknames, and descriptions tabāqa tabāqa (generations).\[^{321}\] This title is very telling for it lays out exactly what Ibn Sa’d was aiming to deliver. When we examine the title rendered for the male entries as compared to the title which precedes the entries of the women in Kitab al-Nisa’, we note a profound difference.

In volume eight on women, the title which precedes the listings of all women (including Khadija) reads, “Naming of Muslim women and Muhajirāt of Quraysh and Anṣāriyyat who gave the pledge and foreign (gharā’ib) Arab women and others.”\[^{322}\] While the men’s heading specifically states that it will include men of fiqh, 'ilm, and riwayat al-hadīth which in summary means men of knowledge; the female heading simply claims to state the name of Muslim women without identifying any particular criteria other than Islam. It is interesting to note that the criteria describing the men of knowledge strongly correlates to the description of the group of people who later in the Abbasid era became known as the 'ulama’ (religious scholars) responsible for developing the body of Islamic jurisprudence.\[^{323}\] In doing so, Ibn Sa’d was creating a cultural and social genealogy for the 'ulama’ of his own time. The absence of fiqh, 'ilm, and riwayat al-hadīth from the female titles show that women were not portrayed, and may have not been perceived, in such capacity by Ibn Sa’d; even though we know from other sources that the Prophet’s wives such as ’Aisha and Umm Salama were considered to be key hadith narrators and that other women were faqīhāt.\[^{324}\] The fact that Ibn Sa’d does not include such information about hadith narration and fiqh in his entries on prominent women shows that he does not want to represent them in that light. Rather, the

\[^{321}\] Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 1. Volumes one of the KTK is dedicated to the history of Prophethood and the biography of Muhammad and his genealogy. Volume two is entirely dedicated to the battles (maghāzi) of the Prophet; therefore the actual listing of the men begins with volume three.

\[^{322}\] Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 7. The original word used for foreign women is gharā’ib nisā’ al-’arab.

\[^{323}\] 'Ulama’ were considered to be the guardians, transmitters and interpreters of religious knowledge, and of Islamic doctrine and law. See Hunwick, “‘Ulamā’,” EP.

prominent women in Ibn Sa’d seem to reflect how wives should be; a role that entails realizing boundaries and learning how to deal with co-wives much more than it entails knowledge or transmission of knowledge. In effect, Ibn Sa’d’s representation of the prominent women in Islam reduces them to the traditional roles of wives and mothers as he strips them of significant contributions to early Islamic history.

Within volume three Ibn Sa’d structures the entries by starting with the circle that is closest to the Prophet (male family members) beginning with a short entry about the Prophet himself followed by his uncle Hamza b. ‘Abd al-Muttilib, then ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, then Zayd b. Haritha and some other mawālī of the Prophet’s family; then the rest of Banu ‘Abd al-Muttilib family.325 The listing then extends the circle to include the ’Abd al-Muttilib paternal cousins of Banu ‘Abd Shams, and their allies.326 The order is based on expanding the circle of relatives and allies first on the paternal side and then on the maternal side beyond the immediate family and out through the outer layers of the genealogy ending with the members and allies of Banu Ka’b which begins with Abu Bakr. Because of this peculiar order we note that someone as close as Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, for example, receives an entry on page 117 of volume three. Therefore, it seems that it was not early adoption of Islam (ṣabiqa) that was the criterion for constructing the male entries but rather family and tribal associations instead. This order somehow corresponds with the order we find in Kitab al-Nisa’ (volume eight of the KTK), with the exception of Khadija’s placement at the beginning.327 It is important to note that Khadija’s status as indicated by Ibn Sa’d’s placement thus places her as the closest relative to the Prophet similar to his uncle Hamza and dissimilar to all other wives. As the wives have no real equivalent in the male domain, it is hard to conduct an exact structural comparison. However, following the listing of the Prophet’s wives, we note that the rest of the women are listed in order of clan affiliation just as in the male entries.

325 It is important to note that the term mawālī used here does not refer to the later definition of mawālī which is “non-Arab Muslim converts” — such as Ibn Sa’d — but refers those who were in the service of the Prophet and those around him at the onset of Islam.
326 Section starts with ’Uthman b. ’Affan. Hamza is the only uncle of the Prophet listed in this section. Many cousins are not listed as well.
327 The listing following Khadija’s entry follows the same order as the men in which the Prophet’s daughter, aunts, and cousins are listed prior to the rest of his wives.
Identifying prominent women was not a difficult task, the fact that Ibn Sa’d refers to the Prophet’s wives as āmmahāt al-mu’minīn made the task rather straightforward when coupled with the Prophet’s biological daughters. However, examining male entries to establish “prominence” proved more difficult. To begin with, there is no equivalent to the “Prophet’s wife” in the male world. Furthermore, the Prophet left no adult male sons to compare to his daughters. The study thus examines the closest male relatives and/or companions of the Prophet in lieu of the absence of sons or partners. Since the rightly-guided caliphs — Abu Bakr (first caliph and Prophet’s father-in-law), ‘Umar (second caliph and Prophet’s father-in-law), ‘Uthman (third caliph and Prophet’s son-in-law), and the Prophet’s cousin ‘Ali — are not all listed directly following the Prophet; entry size was assessed as measure to assess prominence. As the entries of the above men, along with the Prophet’s uncle Hamza b. ‘Abd al-Muttalib, his adopted son Zayd b. Haritha, and ’Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr, constitute the longest entries in the entire volume, it is those seven men that this study examines.

The coming section will share some of the topos related to the male entries and analyze how they reflect on Ibn Sa’d’s methodology in constructing the male vs. the female prominent Muslim. The main themes include mention of the men’s courage at time of battle, fair and pious leadership, details of death, and special relationship with the Prophet.

II. Main Themes:

A. Courage and Bravery:

The theme of bravery and eagerness to go to battle on behalf of Islam is a prominent topic in the male entries. By showing how the prominent Muslim men fought for the

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328 According to the Sunni doctrine, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, and ‘Ali are the four rightly-guided caliphs. Although Ibn Sa’d does not list them in any particular order (relating to their posts as caliphs), he does conform to the Sunni doctrine in his presentation of their entries and identifies them as caliphs as in the established Sunni order.

329 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 73.
cause of Islam and defended the Muslims community, Ibn Sa’d is establishing the traditional male role of being the protector. Hamza b. ‘Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet’s uncle, who is the first person listed in the men’s entries, offers a strong example. The first line in the entry names Hamza the “Lion of God and the lion of his messenger.” The entry shows his courage in standing up to Abu Jahl who cursed the Prophet. Ibn Sa’d also states that Hamza was the very first Muslim sent by the Prophet to lead a battle. A major segment of the entry is dedicated to the battle of Uhud in which Hamza was martyred.

Another “war hero” presented by Ibn Sa’d is al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwam. Ibn Sa’d states that at the battle of Badr the Prophet had two horses, one for himself and the other for al-Zubayr. His magnificent participation in the battle of Badr even awarded al-Zubayr a connection with the angels. Al-Zubayr had a yellow mark during the battle, and the Prophet is reported to have said that the angels came down onto that yellow spot. In another report, the Prophet states that the angels landed on al-Zubayr’s horse. The entry boasts that al-Zubayr had fought in all the battles alongside the Prophet and had pledged his life to the Muslim cause. Note that the theme of courage is often associated with a topos indicating a special mark or flag that connotes brave leaders of battles Islam. In the battle of Tabūk, Ibn Sa’d states that the Prophet gave his famous black banner to Abu Bakr; another brave man who fought alongside the Prophet in every battle. Studies show that it was the ’Abbasids who promoted the use of black flags and costumes on the battlefield. Thus, the handling of the banner could be associated with the leadership role of the Prophet himself; bestowing such an assignment onto a person is a sign of both

331 Original states “asad Allah wa rasulahu.”
332 Hamza was sent to Banu Qunaiqā’.
333 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 70.
334 Carrying a banner, rāya or liwā’, at times of battle is a custom that dates to pre-Islamic times. When pre-Islamic Quraysh went to battle they raised a white banner. It is also reported that the Prophet used a black liwā’. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 119.
335 The move was part of an attempt to establish political legitimacy and authority on the part of the ’Abbasids. See Khalil Athamina, “The Black Banners and the Socio-Political Significance of Flags and Slogans in Medieval Islam.” Arabica 36, no. 3 (Nov. 1989): 321.
leadership and prestige.\textsuperscript{336} Through this example Ibn Sa’d is also setting a Prophetic precedent for a contemporary custom and thereby raising the legitimacy of the ’Abbasids versus the Umayyads.

Another companion who proved indispensable for the triumph of Islam as presented by Ibn Sa’d is ’Umar b. al-Khattab.\textsuperscript{337} ’Umar was known to be fierce and severe. He participated in Badr, Uhud, Khandaq and all the other battles with the Prophet, and also led troops on his own. Ibn Sa’d states that the Prophet gave ’Umar the banner (liwā’) of leadership in Khaybar. He goes on to show that ’Umar’s courage also helped the Muslims outside the battlefield. As Muslims were not allowed to pray at al-Bayt (the Ka’ba), it was ’Umar who fought the enemies and facilitated public prayer at al-Bayt for all Muslims from then on. Ibn Sa’d also depicts ’Ali b. Abi Talib as another brave warrior. At the battle of Badr ’Ali was distinguished by a white piece of wool, and he was also the leader of many of the Prophet’s missions. The entry goes on to state that he usually carried the banner of the Prophet at battle time.

Participation in battle appears to not only be an integral role for the companions, but an honorary one as well. During the battle of Tabūk the Prophet requested that ’Ali remain behind to manage affairs in his absence. However, ’Ali was upset at the loss of the privilege of going to battle. ’Ali even heard people claiming that the Prophet did not send him because he was upset with him. It was then that the entry shows a live debate between ’Ali and the Prophet in which ’Ali inquires “Are you leaving me behind to be like the women?” The Prophet’s reply was quick and gentle, he said, “Don’t you want to

\textsuperscript{336} In his famous work Kitab al-Aghani, Al-Asbahani shares a rendition in which ’Ali b. Abi Talib was carrying the Muslim flag in the battle of Uhud and had a target of killing whoever was carrying the flag on the enemy side. Whenever the person carrying the flag was killed, someone else in the enemy’s troops would quickly carry the flag until the last man’s hands were cut off and so he held the flag between his neck and his chest. Finally, when he died a woman named ’Umra bt. Ulaqama al-Harithiya carried the flag until they fled. See Ibn Wasil al-Hammawy, Tajrid al-Aghani. Edited by Taha Husayn and Ibrahim al-Ibyari (Cairo: Matba‘at Misr, 1957), vol. 2, 1638.

\textsuperscript{337} Before he adopted Islam, the entry shows the Prophet praying to God asking him to support the cause of Islam by granting ’Umar to Islam. From the day ’Umar heard the Qur’an at his sister’s house he adopted Islam and became an integral part of the mission of protecting the religion. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 190.
be to me what Harun was to Moses? Here it is the same situation except you are not a messenger.”

The above samples clearly reflect the companions’ role as protectors of the religion, a role in which they were designated not only as fearless warriors but as army leaders anxious to defend the Muslim cause. A similar role was portrayed by the ’Abbasid rulers of Ibn Sa’d’s’ time as was presented in the previous chapters. Such a heroic battle role is perceived as a great honor for any man, stated differently, a man who’s denied the privilege of joining battle is perceived as being in shame; a shame that equates him with the passive role of a woman staying behind inside the home. This process of equating the shame associated with a non-battling man with women is quite reflective of Ibn Sa’d’s general portrayal of active man-hero and passive woman-wife; a portrayal that appears to be an integral part of his gender constructions.

B. Fairness:

Many of the prominent men in the KTK are portrayed as fair and pious rulers. This topos serves to enforce the model of the man as the person who administers fairness in the household. As the typical woman has been presented as a person who is often jealous and over-demanding, the male-counterpart is portrayed as fair and self-less. The case of Abu Bakr is a prime example. As Caliph, Abu Bakr was known as al-Awwāh (the one who sighs) for his tenderness and kindness in dealing with the people. In his journey to hajj in year 12 A.H., while Caliph, the entry states that Abu Bakr stood calling to ask if there was anyone who had experienced injustice or had a problem and needed help. Furthermore, Abu Bakr was the first to distribute the money from Bayt al-Mal across the entire community evenly regardless of age, gender, or status as freeman or slave. When he gave speeches he would request that people follow him when right and urged them to

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339 Abu Bakr was the first adult male to adopt Islam and the first to pray. He was earlier also known by ‘Atiq (salvaged) and it is said that he was given that name because he was to be salvaged from hell fire. Later when the Prophet experienced the isrā’ (transposition) he was worried about people not believing his story. It was the angel Gabriel himself who then comforted the Prophet by telling him that Abu Bakr will believe him for he is the Ṣiddīq (the believer). Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 119.
correct him when wrong. He exhausted his wealth in the service of Islam through freeing slaves or securing supplies. This model of piety, selflessness, and fairness is abundantly referenced throughout the entry.

'Umar b. al-Khattab is another remarkable leader according to Ibn Sa’d. He was also the first to start the Diwân and distribute the income onto the community based on precedence and relationship to the Prophet. Ibn Sa’d makes it clear that despite 'Umar’s abundant wealth, he chose to lead a very simple and ascetic life. His food was harsh and simple and so was his general lifestyle. Examples of utmost fairness are repeated through many examples in the entry. 'Umar was known as al-Farūq (the divider) because he was perceived to be the dividing line between right and wrong. In his struggle to secure justice 'Umar would publicly state, “if someone under me is blamed of injustice and I have not alleviated it than it is I who is unjust.” The entry is very long and full of active voice dialogues that add a great sense of reality to the renditions.

It is interesting to note here the references to women in 'Umar’s entry; although few, they are quite telling. Once while roaming the streets at nighttime, 'Umar overheard

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340 When Abu Bakr was appointed Caliph he continued his own personal work as a trader as a means to support his family. It is stated that 'Umar then insisted that Abu Bakr get paid through Bayt al-Mal so he would have the time to manage the community. Even then, Abu Bakr took barely enough to feed his family. To dismiss any notion that Abu Bakr may have pursued the caliphate for the purpose of wealth and power, a point of contention later in Shi‘ite discourse, Ibn Sa’d also depicts him as an extremely charitable leader who was selfless in promoting the cause of Islam. Prior to Islam, the entry states that Abu Bakr was a wealthy man with a fortune in excess of 40,000 dirhams. By the time he migrated to Medina his wealth had dwindled to 5,000 dirhams which he continued to invest in the same manner.

341 The entry states that he was the first to collect the Qur’an, the first to document the hijri calendar in his official letters, and the first to initiate conquests and expeditions to places such as Iraq and Egypt among others. Ibn Sa’d reports him as the first to establish taxes and jizya payments onto people in conquered territories which in turn brought in tremendous wealth to the community. Jizya is a poll tax which non-Muslims paid to the administration after the conquests. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 190.

342 In distributing the wealth among the community 'Umar was the first to establish individual shares based on: participation in the battle of Badr, precedence in accepting Islam (sabīqa), and kinship to the Prophet. 'Umar awarded the highest shares to the Prophet’s wives with 'Aisha getting the highest share among them.

343 The entry states that a man came to 'Umar and told him that with all the wealth he brought to the community he ['Umar] should be eating the best of foods and wearing the best of clothes. 'Umar used a palm frond to strike the man accusing him of saying that to get closer to 'Umar and not to God. 'Umar then shared an analogy in which he said, “if you and others entrusted a guide with your money to assist you on travels, would it be alright for that man to then use your money for himself?!”' 'Umar then said that he was similar to the guide in the story, he was the man entrusted with the community’s money and therefore could not use it for his own purposes. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 201.

344 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 220.

345 'Umar b. al-Khattab’s entry occupies 85 pages of vol. 3,190-275.
some women talking about the men of Medina and asking who was the most handsome of all the men. He heard one woman say that it was a man called Abu Dhi’b. The next morning ’Umar summoned Abu Dhi’b and indeed found him to be extremely handsome, and then accused him of being like a “wolf”. ’Umar then vowed not to tolerate living in the same community with such a man and ordered his exile to Basra.

In another instance, ’Umar arrived home to find a new carpet with his wife ’Atiqa bt. Zayd. Upon inquiry she told him that it was a gift she received from Abu Musa al-Ash’ari. ’Umar was furious and proceeded to beat his wife on the head with the carpet until her head was shaking. He then stated that he had to go take care of Abu Musa. ’Umar then approached Abu Musa who pleaded with him to be patient, but ’Umar proceeded to use the carpet to hit Abu Musa’s head scolding him “what business is it of yours to give gifts to my wife?” Those female references in ’Umar’s entry reflect the general perception towards women that we gather from reading many of Ibn Sa’d’s entries; one in which women are perceived as a potential threat. As we can see, there is a subtle insinuation that women are not to be trusted or that they can cause shame. The grave reactions ’Umar displays in both examples show the tremendous fear associated with the idea of possible mingling between the sexes. A fear so daunting that it can exile a man from his community simply because of his threatening good looks. Earlier in the entry, the section dedicated to the Diwān distribution of money states that ’Umar granted the largest shares to the Prophets’ wives. This veneration of the Prophet's wives by ’Umar further displays the emphasis on “proper” female demeanor, for it is the model-example established by the Prophet’s wives that awarded them such high reward. This

346 The word dhi’b in Arabic “ذئب” means wolf.
347 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 205.
348 Abu Musa was was one of the two arbitrators appointed by ’Ali’s followers at Siffin in 37/657 to settle the dispute between ’Ali and Mu’awiya. He was released from his post as governor during the reign of ’Uthman, re-instated by popular demand and later dismissed by ’Ali for his adoption of a neutral stand during the conflict between ’Ali and ’Aisha. See Veccia L. Vagliari, L. “Abu Musa al-Ash’ari.” Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition. Edited by Bearman et al. Brill Online.
349 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 222.
model is established by Ibn Sa’d to reflect an utmost concern for observing proper segregation and privacy.  

To further glorify those prominent men, the scenes of their death are usually graphically depicted as well, particularly after a life full of service for the cause and people of Islam.

C. Death and Martyrdom:

The moment of death is an important theme which further differentiates the entries of men from those of women. In the case of the prominent women, the occasion of their death is hardly mentioned, although the funeral rituals are usually highlighted. But, in the case of the prominent men we note that in almost every entry a clear description of the situation of death is narrated; sometimes in what seems to be shocking detail. In other words, the prominent men’s death can be viewed as a public endeavor whereas prominent women’s death is much more of a private affair.

The death of the Prophet’s uncle Hamza is the first death scene we encounter in the listings of the men of the first tabaqa. The details are quite graphic. The setting is the battle of Uhud in which Hamza is fighting using two swords simultaneously. As he maneuvers back and forth his horse trips and Hamza falls on his back. It was precisely at that vulnerable moment that a man struck a spear through Hamza’s body. The entry then shares the details of Hamza’s stomach being cut open and the infamous report of Hind bt. ’Utba attempting to eat it. When the Prophet saw the desecrated body he vowed to take revenge by killing seventy men of the enemy’s army. When the Prophet made his vow of revenge, Ibn Sa’d reports that Gabriel came with the Qur’anic revelation (16:126) stating that punishment must be similar to initial offense. The Prophet then regretted his

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350 'Uthman b. 'Affan’s entry also shows him as a fair and pious leader. He spent his time in the mosque inquiring about people’s lives and trade prices of buying and selling, he would then lead the prayer and return to direct community affairs. At times he would even spend the night in the mosque. 'Uthman’s kindness was also exemplary for he would often loan his money. In the middle of the night when he would get up for prayer he would not wake up any of the help to fetch the water for ablution stating that nighttime was the time for them to rest. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 36.

351 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 4.
statement and opted to exercise patience instead. Here we find the insertion of a Qur’anic injunction similar to those used in the women’s entries, an addition that builds credibility and significance and acts as a basis for legal rulings at the same time. The Prophet also requested Hamza’s corpse not to be washed stating that martyrs should be buried without washing. Here we see another reference to what became a legal ruling regarding the washing of martyrs. The entries go on to share extremely detailed death scenes of ’Uthman b. ‘Affān and ’Ali b. Abi Talib among others; scenes that also reflect their roles as pious leader who became martyrs of Islam.

The fact that Ibn Sa’d pays such close attention to the details associated with the death of each of the prominent men shows how different the gender entries are constructed, for there is no coverage of death scenes of prominent women. Although in both cases the details of the burials are usually shared, most of the men were killed – while the women were not – as such their death represents a political situation which Ibn Sa’d believed needed to be documented for future reference. In other words, the men’s deaths may have been portrayed because they were much more politically significant. The fact that the bay’a (pledge) to the following leader is often associated with the death of the current leader may be another reason why Ibn Sa’d shares the details of death in the entries of the prominent men surveyed here. Finally, as with the case of the fitna, death often had political and legislative ramifications which later impelled the various schools of jurisprudence to address through related aḥkam.

Those reasons alone though cannot explain the detailed graphic descriptions which give minute-by-minute details of the last moments of the prominent men’s lives. The paramount drama present in the death/killing scenes appears to be more related to a doctrine of glorification and veneration than a desire to simply share historical data. Such

352 Qur’an (16:126) “And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: but if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient.”
353 The Prophet explained that it was because the martyr’s wounds would remain fresh and smell like misk (perfume) while vouching for them on the Day of Judgment.
354 Many collections cite hadith stating that a martyr should not be washed. However the same hadith states that a martyr is not prayed upon although that is not the case stated in Ibn Sa’d’s entry on Hamza. See Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 1, 239.
355 Although Abu Bakr’s death was of natural causes, it is also explicitly detailed in his entry. See Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 139.
graphic scenes are symbols of veneration and reverence, which remind us of prominent men who remained true to the word of God up to the very last moments of their lives, oftentimes extending their last breath while reciting Qur’an or while mounted on a horse in the defense of Islam. It is precisely this type of magnificent character those men possessed which placed them in a very special position close to the Prophet’s heart; a special position which in-turn legitimized the position of some of them as rightly-guided caliphs and thereby endorsed the ’Abbasid Sunni doctrine of the time.

The death and funeral renditions within the male entries in Ibn Sa’d appear to facilitate the establishment of the Sunni doctrine vis-à-vis the legitimacy of the caliphate structure, since each caliph is clearly shown to have appointed, or at least indicated, whom he wished to become the Muslim leader following his death. However, the funerary scenes in Ibn Sa’d’s female entries act more as support for legislation endorsing the segregation of the genders. It is also worth noting here how the same theme of death can be manipulated through literary rendition to portray public heroes on the one hand while instilling the private domain as the proper female dwelling on the other.

Within the male entries we find some reports of female behavior at times of death. Hamza’s entry shares several reports of women crying and wailing along with a clear mandate from the Prophet condoning crying but condemning wailing as in the death of Mariyya’s son Ibrahim. In one report a woman is seen with her hands on her head wailing, the Prophet told her that she is copying the example of what the devil did when he was sent to earth. On this occasion the Prophet makes a statement in which he says, “they are not considered as one of us those who, at times of grief, cut their hair, tear their clothes, or scream.”

The mere formula of the statement using the Arabic rhyming (saj’) words halaq, kharaq, and salaq reflect the type of agency such a statement may have, particularly that it is uttered in the active voice of the Prophet himself on such a dramatic occasion. It is brief and easy to memorize like poetry but sums up the legal ruling on signs of grief prohibited in Islam, but quite popular in pre-Islamic times. In a

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similar reference, found in the women’s entries, the Prophet described crying as something that comes from the eyes and heart and thus is allowed, while wailing was something that came from the tongue and hands and was thus from the devil.\(^{357}\) The Prophet’s statement acts as a clear basis for a legal rule (\(\textit{hukm}\)) on such occasion. Here we note Ibn Sa’d’s emphasis on women being seen (under proper cover of course) but not heard; as the tongue and the hands represent speech and action, women are denied their active agency and are prompted to be contained in the passive role of silent grief.

Another mention of female behavior in a male entry is that of Hamza’s sister Safiyya bt. ’Abd al-Muttilib, who came to inquire about her brother, but al-Zubayr was too scared to tell her what had happened. The Prophet then said that he was concerned about telling her the news upfront in fear that she may lose her mind. Ibn Sa’d reports that the Prophet then placed his hand upon her chest and started uttering \(\textit{du’ā’}\) (prayer) until she said “\(\textit{inna l-il-llah wa inna lahu raji’ūn}\)” (to God we shall return) and started crying.\(^{358}\) Here we note the Prophet actually touching a woman (albeit his aunt), although Ibn Sa’d’s rendition of the women’s \(\textit{bay’a}\) in the opening of \(\textit{Kitab al-Nisa’}\) shows tremendous emphasis on the fact that the Prophet refused to touch the pledging women’s hands. Ibn Sa’d’s examples of women in the death section of the male entries, as shared above, portray women as emotional beings who easily lose control. The fact that a woman such as Safiyya bt. ’Abd al-Muttilib may have been at risk of losing her mind reflects Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of how fragile women are at times of distress. The fact that Ibn Sa’d places such information within the male entries shows how improper the women’s behavior can be in public. The women appear fragile and overly emotional; such weakness not only marks the battlefield as clearly inappropriate grounds, but may seem to condemn women’s presence in the public domain altogether.

D. Special Companions of the Prophet:

Along with presenting the prominent men as courageous warriors, remarkable and just leaders, and martyrs or men who have spent their lives in the service of Islam, Ibn Sa’d

\(^{357}\) Ibn Sa’d, \(\textit{KTK}\), vol. 8, 24. Qur’an (2:156).

\(^{358}\) Ibn Sa’d, \(\textit{KTK}\), vol. 3, 8.
also emphasized their very special position in relation to the Prophet. A special position that appears to have been awarded to them in return for the magnificent role they played throughout their lives. Since many of their glorious moments happened after the Prophet had already died, it is important to note how the Prophet’s active voice is kept alive through the use of dreams and visions as noted in many references above. Their privileged status is also noted in the leadership roles assigned to them during raids. However, during his lifetime, the Prophet is said to have made clear mentions of these men’s privileged status.

Zayd b. Haritha’s entry shows the very special relationship he had with the Prophet. In his life, the Prophet had named him as his own son. When Zayd died, the people noticed the Prophet weeping profusely over his death, and when they inquired the Prophet said that was the “cry of a lover longing for his loved one”. The summons of the active voice of the Prophet speaking through his own tears describing the agony he feels for Zayd’s loss is a highly dramatic scene which powerfully reflects Zayd’s very special status. Zayd’s entry also establishes the *ahlkām* related to adoption in Islam.

It is important to note here the difference between Zayd’s entry and that of his ex-wife Zaynab bt. Jahsh in volume eight on women. In Zaynab’s entry, the details of her marriage to Zayd are shared. The fact that Zayd abstained from approaching her before their divorce and his turning his head to look away when delivering a message sent to her by the Prophet are details that are only mentioned in Zaynab’s entry and are not part of Zayd’s. Furthermore, the details of Zaynab’s initial refusal to marry Zayd and her accepting the Prophet’s command to marry him are also shared in Zaynab’s entry alone.

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359 As a child, Zayd was gifted to the Prophet after he was abducted from his original tribe and sold in the market leaving his father distraught. When the father finally located Zayd and offered the Prophet a payment to get him back, the Prophet left the decision up to Zayd whose personality reflected his courage as a young boy confidently declaring his desire to remain with the Prophet. It was then that the Prophet officially named him as his son until the Qur’anic verse forbidding adoption was revealed. Ibn Sa’d, *KT*, vol. 3, 29. Qur’an (33:5), “Call them by (the names) of their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah but if ye know not their father’s (names, call them), your Brothers in faith, or your Mawla s. But there is no blame on you if ye make a mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.”

360 Ibn Sa’d, *KT*, vol. 3, 32. Note the earlier reference to the Prophet condoning crying but forbidding wailing addressed in the earlier part of this chapter.

361 Ibn Sa’d, *KT*, vol. 8, 71.
The presence of those mentions in Zaynab’s entry only, although they are situations shared by both Zayd and Zaynab, reflect Ibn Sa’d’s own biases in constructing gender entries. The male entry reflects bravery, leadership and martyrdom which all combined resulted in a special place in the Prophet’s heart. The female entry shows a beautiful woman who adheres to the strictest levels of gender segregation, and displays signs of jealousy and zuhd, as the key elements of her personality. Zayd and Zaynab in these situations act as prototypes of how Ibn Sa’d perceives the model Muslim man and the model Muslim woman. Even marriage itself appears to be a womanly theme indicating that the woman’s need for a husband is greater than a man’s need for a wife.

Ibn Sa’d’s entry on Abu Bakr seems to establish his special status with the Prophet in a way that leads up to his legitimate succession of the Prophet. Apart from his role in battle and his financial support of the Muslim cause, Abu Bakr was the Prophet’s companion on the hijra to Medina and there are several reports of the Prophet stating, “If I could have a partner in this world I would have chosen Abu Bakr.” It was also Abu Bakr whom the Prophet asked to lead the Muslims in prayer when the Prophet became too ill to do it himself. When he was ill, the Prophet asked his wife ‘Aisha to call her father Abu Bakr to lead the prayer. However, more than once ‘Aisha tried to convince the Prophet to ask someone else as her father had a soft voice and often cried in prayer but the Prophet insisted on his choice. This anecdote serves an important purpose. It proves the fact that the Prophet did not arbitrarily choose any one of his close companions to take his place and it also eliminates the possibility of ‘Aisha having interfered to appoint her own father. A few other reports in Abu Bakr’s entry state that a woman went to the Prophet for advice but he asked her to come back a few days later, when the woman asked the Prophet what should she do if the Prophet was not available upon her return (i.e. deceased) the Prophet instructed her to ask Abu Bakr. Finally, upon the Prophet’s death, the people gathered to appoint a leader for the community, someone then recited the Qur’anic verse (9:40) about the Cave (al-Ghār) and said that God had

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362 Some of the reports elaborate on the Prophet saying that he could not choose a partner because God had chosen him as His partner. Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 3, 124.
363 Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 3, 137.
ordained that Abu Bakr be the one who follows the Prophet.³⁶⁴ The combination of these reports, along with Abu Bakr’s incredible commitment to Islam, make his appointment as first Caliph appear not only appropriate but in fact predestined.³⁶⁵ It also implicitly refutes later Shi’i discourse which presented Abu Bakr and the following three Caliphs as usurpers.

’Umar b. al-Khattab’s entry also legitimizes his appointment as Caliph. Upon arrival in Medina, the Prophet joined Abu Bakr and ’Umar in brotherhood, the Prophet also announced “whomever would like to see the masters of heaven — apart from the Prophets and messengers — should look at those two men.”³⁶⁶ Abu Bakr’s entry states that during the first hajj the Prophet had appointed Abu Bakr to lead, and the Prophet himself led the following year.³⁶⁷ Similarly in Abu Bakr’s first year of caliphate he appointed ’Umar as the leader of hajj and went himself the following year; an act that appears to foreshadow Abu Bakr’s official assignment of ’Umar as his successor. When he fell ill, Abu Bakr wrote a letter in which he stated that he was about to end his time on earth and begin his time in the heavens and as such has appointed ’Umar as his successor.³⁶⁸ When ’Umar died he was buried next to the Prophet and Abu Bakr; Abu Bakr was placed at the Prophet’s shoulders, and ’Umar was placed slightly further below.³⁶⁹ This dramatic image of Abu Bakr’s actual body being buried at the Prophet’s shoulder and then ’Umar’s body being placed a degree below presents a visual manifestation of the hierarchy of Muslim leadership in the early years. It also endorses the later Sunni discourse which venerated the Caliphs according to their historical

³⁶⁴ Qurʾan (9:40), “If ye help not (your Leader) (it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him; when the unbelievers drove him out: he had no more than one companion: they two were in the cave, and he said to his companion “Have no Fear, for Allah is with us”: then Allah sent down His peace upon him, and strengthened him with forces which ye saw not, and humbled to the depths the word of the Unbelievers. But the word of Allah is exalted to the heights: for Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.”

³⁶⁵ Ibn Sa’d reports that when Abu Bakr died, he was buried right next to the Prophet with his head placed at the Prophet’s shoulder. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 149.


³⁶⁷ Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 125.

³⁶⁸ Abu Bakr goes on to state that if ’Umar proves to be a good leader than he would have done what Abu Bakr expected and knew of him, and if he proved otherwise, then to each man lies the burden of his actions and no man can foretell the future. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 142.

³⁶⁹ Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 268.
accession to the caliphate and labeled them as (al-khulafā’ al-rashidūn) the rightly-guided Caliphs.

The legitimate appointment of the following two caliphs is strongly endorsed in Ibn Sa’d’s entries as well. Before his death 'Umar was asked to name a successor and he assigned a delegation of six people who in-turn appointed 'Uthman as the next caliph. 'Uthman’s appointment appeared to have also been heavenly ordained as his entry shares narrations of the Prophet before his death telling 'Uthman not to take off the robe that God had placed upon him.370 These references thus vindicate 'Uthman’s official claim to the caliphate. Eventually, when 'Uthman was under siege he requested the presence of 'Ali, however the besiegers refused to allow 'Ali to go through and therefore he was not able to physically reach 'Uthman before his death. However, the entry states that 'Ali then un-wrapped his black 'imāma ( turban) off his head and gave it to 'Uthman’s messenger to deliver to 'Uthman. Just as most leaders assign their successor right before their death, this reference insinuates the notion that 'Uthman was about to do such thing but fate stood in his way. 'Ali’s “black turban” gesture seems to act as proof of 'Ali having received 'Uthman’s message and was his way of letting him know that his message was delivered. The entry then states that 'Ali then denounced the entire siege scene and publicly announced that he did not condone the killing of 'Uthman and had never suggested it.371 The day following 'Uthman’s death, 'Ali’s entry states, the crowds pledged allegiance to 'Ali.372 Ibn Sa’d dedicates entire pages to share reports about 'Ali’s privileged status with the Prophet.373

370 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 46. Reference is made to a meeting between the Prophet and 'Uthman before the Prophet’s death in which he uttered those words to 'Uthman; words that foreshadowed his eventual role as leader of the community.
371 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 47.
372 The entry goes on to state that al-Zubayr and Talha were part of the crowd that performed the bay‘a to 'Ali but later states that they may have been forced to do so. The details of the Battle of the Camel follow in which it is said that Talha, al-Zubayr, and 'Aisha’s troops were defeated and that al-Zubayr and Talha were killed along with 13,000 other people Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 20. For details see Afsaruddin, "'Aisha," EP.
373 Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of 'Ali appears to be in accord with the Sunni caliphate dogma as he is presented as a caliph among the other three caliphs. In other words, there is no clear indication that Ibn Sa’d venerated 'Ali as part of the shi’ite imāmate dogma. An accurate analysis would require a special study of 'Ali’s portrayal throughout the entire work and not through a reading of 'Ali’s dedicated entry alone.
The above data shows how keen Ibn Sa’d was on establishing the legitimacy of the four rightly-guided caliphs. The entries are laden with instances of foreshadowing, dreams, and the voice of the Prophet which dramatically reinforce the legitimacy and order of leadership. As the entries smoothly transition leadership assignments through direct appointment, or strong insinuation, the reader is left with what appears to be a clear understanding of the “natural” sequence of events; a sequence that endorses, and establishes the Sunni rhetoric of the ’Abbasid’s at Ibn Sa’d’s time. Such rhetoric established those four men as clearly prominent men whose pious model is to be followed, much like the model set through the portrayal of the prominent women in the KTK.

Conclusion:

It is important to note that the similarities between the male and female entry details mostly lie in the area of genealogy listing and funerary practice. This emphasis on genealogy and burial reflect the starting point and the end point of the person’s life, which leaves the actual existence of the men and women to be shared in very different lights through the entries of the KTK. All the male entries shared above show a vivid rendition of the men’s personalities and characters at times of battle and at times of peace. The attributes of bravery, selflessness, fairness, and justice are but a few of the male gender “key” personality traits. These attributes seem to be the catalyst leading to their special status as close companions to the Prophet. This linear relationship of “cause” which reflects men extending their lives in the service of Islam leading to the “effect” of gaining status as close companions (Ṣaḥāba) to the Prophet is clearly established throughout the prominent male entries. In other words, there seems to be a direct correlation between the men’s character and their privileged relationship with the Prophet.

On the other hand, the case of women of the Prophetic household reflects a derivative relationship whereby their status is imposed upon them as a result of their
relationship with the Prophet. Their entries do not reflect an independent personality that led the Prophet to become close to them as in the prominent male cases; they are simply present in the entries as wives or daughters but not as individuals. In the examples of the women, it is the fact that the Prophet fathered them, or married them that makes them prominent (ummahāt al-mu‘minin) who then, in turn, provide the example of model Muslim women.\(^{374}\) The criteria of the “female model” according to Ibn Sa’d’s text seems not to be based on personality traits or character as much as it is based on their adherence to norms of female privacy and separation from the world of foreign men. The man is thus presented as an active agent who creates his destiny through his own independent actions of bravery, piety, and support to the Prophet. The woman however is portrayed as a passive being whose destiny is imposed through her connection to the Prophet; prominence is then bestowed upon the woman as she adheres to the established rules and regulations.

The above discourse promotes the notion of women being secluded members of the community, members who exist in the private sphere but not the public one. An interesting observation that relates to this idea is the fact that the female entries do not share a description of how the women actually look while all the prominent male entries do.\(^{375}\) Apart from mentioning the fact that some of the women were beautiful, without qualifying what such beauty entails, the men’s entries reflect actual features without any judgment call associated to such looks. The fact that beauty is a subjective measure assessed by the onlooker further enhances the notion of female passivity and seclusion; as one can hear that a woman is beautiful without actually seeing her, however a physical description implies actual interaction. The male descriptions usually relate to their

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\(^{374}\) The prominence of the Prophet’s daughters is clear as they are his only off-spring who survived beyond childhood.

\(^{375}\) Abu Bakr was a thin man whose fair skin revealed the veins on his face, he had deep sunken eyes and a protruding forehead. 'Umar had pale skin with a reddish tone; he was bald with some grey hair and was a tall man. 'Uthman was neither tall nor short, had a pleasant face, fair complexion, long beard mostly black, and large muscles. 'Ali was heavy, dark, and had a large beard, he was almost bald and had big muscles on his arms and legs, his stomach was big and was considered a huge man although not tall, dark; merchants who sold Persian garments in the market used to call him “Budha shaknab amed” which translated to “big stomach, the top full of knowledge and the bottom full of food.” See Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 3, 17. Al-Zubayr was of medium height, closer to thin than heavy, and had a thin dark beard which didn’t turn grey.
height, skin color, and overall figure/weight; all attributes that are easily perceived through public interaction.

Such binary setting of men and women at opposite ends of the spectrum carries an inherent limitation to accessing comprehensive information about the “other”, particularly when promoting gender segregation. The patriarchal model of studying gender rests on the notion of difference between the sexes. Catherine McKinnon argues that women are perceived as sexual objects by using the formula “man marries woman” and translating it into subject-verb-object; scholars thus claim that women are being objectified. While such an analysis does carry a lot of merit, the study above shows that we can just as easily look at the formula from the opposite perspective. Prominent women’s lives’, as presented by Ibn Sa’d, revolve around the male’s presence in the woman’s life. This shows women’s presence as a derivative of man’s presence and makes the man the object of life. Whether we view the relationship from McKinnon’s perspective, or from this study’s reverse perspective, we inevitably reach the same conclusion. A conclusion that places men and women at the opposite ends, each playing a “set” role in a manner that appears both static and non-negotiable; in this case, one that simultaneously reinforces social norms, grounds the contemporary Sunni doctrine, and promotes the establishment’s patriarchal power discourse.

In pointing out the different representations of prominent males and females we must realize that they are both gendered perspectives reflecting what the author wished to portray. Just as women are molded into passive domestic beings, the men seem to be equally molded into brave and fair heroes. The “male” perspective probably warrants a separate study on the limitations of the male portrayal. In her study of the “ideal male”, Nadia al-Cheikh warns against limiting the study of men to the “typical” presentation of men as Caliphs, bureaucrats, judges and military officers and not as simply “men” as a defined gender category. She elaborates, “By not making men or masculinity an object of study, the secondary literature sustains a political construction into our sources. Indeed, by not making such a gendered reading of the texts, one is in danger of reiterating

376 McKinnon, “Feminism, Marxism,” 515.
the assumptions present in the homocentric discourse of the text. 

Although a separate male analysis is beyond the scope of this study, what is significant here is to appreciate how the male and female portrayal are constructed differently in Ibn Sa’d’s work. By establishing different gendered-norms in his portrayal of men and women, Ibn Sa’d attempted to establish a clear difference between the sexes. Lober argued that gender differences are primarily a means to justify sexual stratification claiming that if no difference is established then it becomes difficult to establish inequality. Therefore, by viewing the women as the “other”, the embedded discourse thus justifies the administrations patriarchal inclinations in which the Muslim male is perceived as the “self” and the rest of the community represents various degrees of being the “other.”

Ibn Sa’d’s work, and his gendered constructions of men and women, fits into the establishment of the ’Abbasid’s imperial power and its efforts to create works of apologetics that help ground the ’Abbasid claims. In his study of similar texts, Lassner argues that such works show a conniving effort to legitimize the ’Abbasid rule itself. To support his claim Lassner analyzed the details of two different accounts of the Prophet’s last day and proved that the ’Abbasids interest was best served by showing that Abu Bakr was the rightful successor and not Ali. He concludes, “When taken as a whole, this material represents the echo of sustained and sophisticated efforts to legitimize the ’Abbasid Caliphs and their forbearers by creating for them a past that transmuted historical realities.”

However, it is not only history that Ibn Sa’d recounts, as noted he often interjects situations that were the basis of legal rulings as well.

Khaled Abou al-Fadl argues that early Islamic law was the negotiating instrument between history, theology, and politics. To establish the ‘Abbasid imperial project all three aspects had to fall into place; history had to support their legitimate claim to power,

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theology had to approve the *ahkām* rendered by Iraqi jurists of the time, and both combined needed to serve the political ambitions of the ’Abbasid establishment. The entries of prominent men and women as portrayed by Ibn Sa’d seem to deliver all three concepts and confirm Abou al-Fadl’s theory. Ibn Sa’d ensured that the history of men produced laws which reflected the authority of a legitimate centralized government that combined religion and the state under its umbrella, while the images of women — as segregated and subordinate — confirmed the patriarchal discourse propagated by the regime.
Chapter Four: Counter Narratives - Common Women versus Women of the Prophetic Household

Introduction:

This chapter will focus on the women in the *KTK* who are listed in the section following the section on the Prophet’s family and wives. As mentioned earlier, these women’s entries are also separated from the prominent women’s entries by a topical section that addresses issues related to the Prophet as a husband. For lack of a better term, the entries reviewed in this chapter will be labeled as “common women’s entries”. That is not to say that these individuals did not play a significant role in early Muslim history, for many of them are heroines in their own right, however this definition is simply for differentiation purposes. The objective of this chapter is to highlight the major areas of differences in the portrayals of both groups of women. Inconsistencies in representation will be examined in order to identify discrepancies in the way Ibn Sa’d chose to present women he perceived as prominent vis-à-vis his presentation of other women.

Although the number of prominent women (Prophet’s daughters and wives) in the *KTK* represents only two percent of the total number of women presented in volume eight of the *KTK*, their entries comprise over a third of the entire volume. If we include the section describing the Prophet as a husband (which naturally concerns his wives over other women), the combined total would be close to half the volume. Such disproportionate representation (dedicating half the work to less than five percent of the listings, while leaving the remaining half to cover the 95 percent of Muslim women) compels an analysis of further differences in representation.
Space and Number Representation of Prominent and Common Women:

The chart above offers a visual reflection of the disproportionate emphasis Ibn Sa’d places on prominent women.\(^{381}\) Such emphasis divulges the author’s strategy of focusing on the “Model Muslim Woman” by sharing in-depth examples of the lives of ummahat al-mu’minin and the Prophet’s sole living off-spring; his four daughters. Such focus leads the reader to revere these women as the guiding light for Muslim women of later generations.

Ibn Sa’d’s skillful fusion of the women’s daily lives with religion, by mixing narrations about prominent women’s daily behavior and interaction with the Prophet, while utilizing Qur’anic references and barakāt that place these women in an unequivocal special light, has elevated their biographies to being exemplary models of the “ideal” Muslim women. The author’s insistence on the repetition of certain themes in the prominent women’s entries leaves the reader with the impression that the practices illustrated by the women are part and parcel of the religion itself. It is therefore

\(^{381}\) The number of Prophet’s wives and daughters is 13 while the number of other women is 615. The total number of entries in volume eight is 628. The Space dedicated for the Prophet’s wives and daughters as well as the Prophet’s role as a husband is 138 pages out of a total 343.
important to examine how Ibn Sa’d handles the entries of the other Muslim women in the same volume to compare and contrast the lives of the so-called “prominent” Muslim women and the “common” Muslim women of the same time. The examination will reveal clear inconsistencies between both types of portrayal. The “common” women appear to have enjoyed much more liberties that their “prominent” counter-part. They are portrayed participating in battle, speaking up against unwanted suitors, demanding divorce, and in fact working and earning money. Such independent character is not presented within the prominent women’s biographies despite what is known from other biographers about their examples of strength of character and public engagement.

Following a brief comparison of the general outline of the entries, the focus will shift to the main areas of difference between the two sections.

I. Structure:

The placement of the Prophet’s family upfront mirrors a ripple effect in which the Prophet and his family are the resonating nucleus off of which the entire Muslim community revolves. The common women’s entries are placed in order of tribal allegiance with the immigrants of Quraysh (Qurayshi muhajirāt) leading the following 20 subsections listing Muslim women of various origins. Unlike the male volumes, Kitab al-Nisa’ only focuses on the women living in Medina around the time of the Prophet and shortly thereafter and does not cover other regions or later generations as the male volumes do. The Muslim female ansār follow with those who belong to the Aws tribe listed first followed by al-khazraj. The final sub-section lists 98 women with a heading stating that they narrated hadith on behalf of the Prophet’s wives’ but have no direct hadith narrations from the Prophet himself. Such a heading implies that all the previously listed women have narrated hadith directly from the Prophet which is a fact that is not directly stated by the author.
Although Ibn Sa’d’s *KTK* includes the largest number of women portrayed in a work of *Tabaqāt*, the decline in female representation within the *KTK* from the first generation to the next and their complete abortion in the later period divulge Ibn Sa’d’s exclusive interest in sharing the model female community of the forbearers only. The fact that no women are listed in the later generations sheds light on Ibn Sa’d’s own stance towards the declining importance of women from the Prophet’s time to his own time. The logic of the text seems to be built around the “ripple” effect discussed earlier. It is the women and men within the inner circle that this study examines, for it seems that it was on their shoulders that Ibn Sa’d laid the burden of conveying the great precedence of the Prophet onto the later generations.

Unlike other biographers, Ibn Sa’d does not methodologically state the women’s role in hadith narration as he does not clearly state who narrated on the women’s behalf. This may be because hadith as a science was still developing at his time or because Ibn Sa’d may have been more interested in the specific behavioral patterns of such women as examples in and of themselves. This limits the female’s role as an official “traditionist” and thus limits her role as a future contributor to religious sciences by narrowing the benefit of early Muslim Women to example-setting at the time of the Prophet only; thus after the Prophet’s death, the role of Muslim women as contributors to public life became redundant. From that point on, women were made to be followers of their model Muslim forbearers, with no possible further contribution on their own part.

Ibn Sa’d’s ordering of common women based on tribal allegiance and geographical origins (immigrants or locals) reflects his own interest in social hierarchies. As Baghdad was a cosmopolitan metropolis that seems to have had a rigid hierarchal structure, mirroring such classification through preservation of the tribal origins may have been influenced by the norms of his own day. It also promoted the preservation of proper lineage which had an effect on the Muslim empire as it validated the ‘Abbasid’s rightful rule as heirs of the Prophet for many years to follow.

Highlighting the individuals’ genealogical background and tribal/geographical allegiances allows for a structured view of society. Such structure was present in
Baghdad but included other stratification criteria such as Arab/mawla, Muslim/dhimmi, free/slave, elite (royal)/common, to name just a few. Clear classification is an important component of any power system. Labeling groups and individuals within the groups allows for a hierarchal categorization of the self and the “other”. As those in power view themselves as the “self”, “others” are often perceived as subordinate and that, in turn, establishes legitimate grounds for exploitation. The same philosophy applies to patriarchal societies in which women as a group are viewed as the “other.” In turn women’s subordination and oppression is often viewed as a phenomenon that is not only natural but necessary in order to maintain, what is perceived to be, the proper balance of the society.

II. The “Typical” Entry:

All entries begin with a listing of the woman’s name followed by her paternal lineage. This is a feature common to all entries in the KTK including both male and female volumes, and it shows how important the individuals’ genealogy was at the time. What is interesting however is the fact that, similar to the entries of women of the Prophetic household, many entries in the “common” women’s section include maternal lineage as well. The case of Asma’ bt. ’Umays, for example, lists six generations of maternal lineage. Although a long listing of the paternal lineage can be easily understood within a patriarchal society structure, the emphasis on the maternal ancestry reflects the significant role of mothers within the society as well. This is further supported by the fact that listings state the name of the children the women gave birth to.

Following the lineage, the entries list the name(s) of the men whom the women were married to. In most cases the women were married more than once. Whether the marriage ended due to divorce or widowhood is not always stated. In some cases, including those of the Prophet’s own granddaughter, a woman is listed as having been married five times. Such high level of repeat marriages reflects a dynamic society as the multiple marriages must have created a large social web that related many people to one
another which, in turn, increased the level of social interaction between the families. In all cases, such high level of marriages must have resulted in a society that was not as segregated as the author makes the reader believe from reading the prominent women’s section. The mere fact that so many people within the community ended up being married to ex-partners of people they know from within the community, and sometimes from within the same family, could have led to high levels of interaction.

Just as it seems important to list the maternal lineage of the individual woman, the entries go on to list the names of the off-spring the woman produced while attributing each child to the appropriate father. Here we see the continued significance of women as mothers in the society. Deniz Kandiyoti argues that women in classical patriarchal societies attempted to secure their financial security through the bearing of sons stating that “the risks and uncertainties that women are exposed to in classic patriarchy create a powerful incentive for higher fertility.” Women may have thus believed that having sons would act as a security blanket that will protect them in their old age or when the husband was no longer around. Having many children can also be viewed as a tactic that women utilized to mitigate their financial dependence on the husband in case of death or divorce.

It also must be mentioned that since none of the Prophet’s wives bore him children, except Khadija, the emphasis on the women’s role as mothers in the earlier section of the book was extremely limited. Although maternity appears to be celebrated within the KTK, the actual role of the mother beyond birth-giving is completely absent in the entries. There is hardly any mention of the mother interacting with her children in any nurturing or disciplinary manner. Limiting the role of the mother to birth-giving reduces her role to that of a vessel which represents no later significance. Since we know that mothers must have been, at some level, involved with their children,

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382 Because the author does not share details of the common women’s lives, it is difficult for the reader to comprehend the reasons behind the multiple marriages. However, it appears to have been a common practice which may be attributed to female financial dependency, desire for a greater number of children, political aspirations, as well as to love and attraction.
384 Mariyya’s child died as an infant.
it is clear that this aspect of the woman’s personality was not deemed important by the
author or, possibly, his sources.

Most entries then include a line stating that the woman converted to Islam,
pledged the oath of allegiance (bay’a), and, in the case of the muhajirīn, migrated to
Medina. Many entries only list the type of information shared above; name, lineage,
mariages, off-spring, and conversion to Islam; this information is also shared in the
section on the women of the Prophetic household when applicable. However, in some
entries of “common” women there is more detail regarding the woman’s life. Of those
examples, the topics below have been selected to reflect the significant variance between
them and the prominent women’s portrayed behavior.

III. Concepts Unique to the “Common Women’s” Entries

A. Courage and Battle Participation:

As previously addressed, the prominent women’s biographies do not share information
about them participating in battles, nor do they reflect characteristics of courage or
independence. However, some of the other female entries in the work show us a
significantly different side of women in early Islam.

Common women’s entries reflect a few women who have actively participated in
battle in various forms. Ibn Sa’d states that Umm ‘Umara fought in the battles with a
sword and arrow. She was one of the women at the ’Aqaba pledge (bay’a), she
participated in Uhud, al-Hudaybiyya, Khaybar, Hunayan, and the battle of Yamama. She
initially left to Yamama to serve water to the soldiers but when she saw the Prophet under
attack, she took it upon herself to defend him. She was inflicted with 12 wounds and
eventually lost her hand. The fact that the entry does not add any narrative denouncing
such participation shows that such action was not condemned.

385 Some entries in the later section of the volume state that they converted to Islam after migration.
386 Her real name is Nasiba bt. Ka’b Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8. 283.
Ibn Sa’d states that Umm Salim participated in the battle of Uhud while pregnant and had a dagger (Khanjar) tied around her stomach. Additionally, Umm ‘Atiyya’s entry states that she attended seven battles where she helped feed and nurse the troops. It is interesting to note how the above women were known by a kunya of “umm” instead of by their actual names, this may be indicative of their more active role in public life. It may also imply that the motherhood of men conveyed a privileged status or maturity.

In fact, the entry of Umm Sinan actually reports the Prophet’s own perspective on female battle participation. The entry shows her asking the Prophet’s permission to join the battle and his reply stated that many women had already asked him and that he had given his consent. The Prophet even gave Umm Sinan the option of joining his troop or remaining within her own tribe’s group. Such approval by the Prophet reflects the lenient attitude he had towards women’s presence in battle which is a public space involving foreign men. Examples such as the above are only to be found beyond the biographies of prominent women, although other sources tell us that ummahāt al-mu’minīn such as Umm Salama and of course ‘Aisha have had important roles in the history of Muslim warfare.

Battle participation was a theme identified in the prominent male entries. By showing similar participation amongst common women, it appears that going to battle was a community endeavor in which many members of the society participated. As a matter of fact, Sumayya bt. Khayyat is even listed as being the first martyr in Islam. This divulges how Ibn Sa’d seems to have manipulated the text to deliver a particular, opposing image, about Model Muslim women. The fact that works by other biographers, as addressed in the previous chapter, show Umm Salama in the heart of the battlefield

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387 She was also in the battle of Hunayn giving water and medicine. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 291.
388 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 312. The entry of Hamna bt. Jahsh also states that she attended the battle of Uhud and was tending to water supply and the wounded. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, Vol. 8, 175. There are many other examples of women who participated in battle according to Ibn Sa’d, for details visits Ku’ayba bt. Sa’d, Umm Muta’, Umm Sinan, Ummayyaa bt. Qays on pages 213 & 214, Umm Mani’ bt. ‘Amr p. 280, Umm ‘Atiyya al-Ansariyya p. 311..
389 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, Vol. 8, 214.
390 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, Vol. 8, 193.
while Ibn Sa’d remains completely silent on the matter reveals his own bias in representation.

Women who participate in battle must be truly courageous women who, even if limiting their participation to the side-lines, take active involvement and responsibility in community affairs. By stripping the prominent women’s biographies of any mention of battle participation, Ibn Sa’d is sending a message to Muslim women that their place is not on the field but, like the prominent women in Islam, at home. Securing the notion that the woman is confined to her home promotes the patriarchal ideology of male control over women’s mobility; a fact that Ibn Sa’d vehemently stressed in his rendition of prominent women. However, the examples of the “common” women noted above do not share the same inhibitions the patriarchal system attempts to bestow. They represent women who stood up for their beliefs and took it upon themselves to participate in acts of defense.

Another interesting example of women playing a protective role is found in the case of the Safiyya bt. ’Abd al-Muttilib, the Prophet’s paternal aunt, who personally killed a spy outside her home.391 Her entry states that, for safety purposes, the Prophet left his family at the house of Hassan b. Thabit while he was away at battle. When Safiyya spotted a Jewish spy eavesdropping by the door, she asked Hassan to go kill him but Hassan shied away. At that point, Safiyya took it upon herself to kill the spy by discreetly opening the door and striking him repeatedly with a pole. Not only did this act reflect signs of bravery and power, but it also shows how the woman possessed greater courage than the male guardian whom the Prophet assigned as protector. This idea of a woman being strong and independent does not support the role Ibn Sa’d draws up for “model” Muslim women and is thus not present in the entries of the Prophet’s wives and daughters. Safiyya bt. ’Abd al-Muttilib’s incident shows how, contrary to Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal, society may have indeed celebrated female strength and courage; a side that Ibn Sa’d clearly subdues in his model-setting examples

391 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, Vol. 8, 28.
By showing the model of the prominent women adhering to their homes, with ’Aisha crying in regret in her old age when reminded of how she should have stayed home, Ibn Sa’d attempts to establish the ideal of women staying at home and not participating in public community affairs. Such an ideal reflects the patriarchal notion of women being dependent upon men and and places power and authority within the sole custody of the man. It also poses the man as the only means a woman has to access the outside world. Fear of women meddling in state affairs may have been a very common concern during Ibn Sa’d’s own time. As we have reviewed in the earlier chapter, Harun al-Rashid’s mother, al-Khayzuran, was known to control governmental affairs until the time of her death.\textsuperscript{392} There are examples of other Caliphs having overpowering mothers as well; a situation that led the administration —following the death of al-Muqtadir — to establish the death of the mother as a criterion for selecting the following caliph.\textsuperscript{393} Records show that local customs did not accept such powerful female roles, those women usually had to mitigate their power through conspiracies with top viziers.\textsuperscript{394} With stories blaming al-Khayzuran for plotting the death of her own son Musa, to clear the way for his brother Harun to ascend the throne, it is obvious how some elements of society may have rejected such female intervention. By Ibn Sa’d establishing the “ideal” that good Muslim women stick to the home, he is in fact attempting to send a message to the women of his own time to follow the model of their forbearers and stop meddling in public affairs. In other words, the discrepancy between how Ibn Sa’d portrays the prominent women and what we note from common women’s entries seems to reflect Ibn Sa’d’s own attempt to address his contemporary society’s fears and concerns.

\textbf{B. Integration not Segregation:}

The concept of gender segregation is one of the primary concepts propagated in the entries of prominent women. However, an examination of the other entries in the work reflect gender interaction, and point to the fact that male and female intermingling may

\textsuperscript{392} Al-Khayzuran died three years after Harun’s ascent to the caliphate. See Omar, “Harun al-Rashid,” \textit{EF}.
\textsuperscript{394} Kennedy, \textit{The Early Abbasid Caliphate}, 112.
have been common. What is more interesting is the fact that the examples listed include interaction with prominent male figures such as the Prophet himself, as well as ʿAli b. Abi Talib, who exemplify model Muslim male behavior.

Upon the Prophet’s migration to Medina, Ibn Saʿd reports that the very first location the Prophet and Abu Bakr stayed at was that of a woman named Umm Miʿbid (ʿAtika bt. Khalid). The entry goes on to share the conversation that went on between her and the Prophet and how the Prophet miraculously milked her goat causing it to produce an endless supply of milk. Such an encounter shows that the Prophet interacted with foreign women and even took women as hostesses for lodging purposes. Additionally, Umm al-Fadl (Libaba bt. al-Harith’s) entry shows the Prophet napping in her house as well. In fact, her entry states that she used to put Kuhl in the Prophet’s eyes while lying on her lap, she also used to inspect his head for lice. In another example Ibn Saʿd states that the Prophet used to frequently visit Umm Salim at her home; he also adds that the Prophet would often nap in her house and that she would collect his sweat drops in a vile to later use as fragrance. This reflects how common it may have been for the Prophet to visit women in their homes, and it also shows physical contact between Umm Salim and the Prophet as she attempts to collect his sweat drops. Furthermore, for the Prophet to nap at women’s homes reflects how casual and comfortable their relationship with the Prophet must have been. How does this reconcile with the tens of mentions in the bayʿa opening section that emphasize the fact that the Prophet refused to shake hands with the women?

The case of Umm Salim also shows a woman of strong will power and courage as she stands in the face of her husband’s wishes and encourages her son Malik to adopt

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395 Ibn Saʿd, KTK, Vol. 8, 211.
396 Ibn Saʿd, KTK, Vol. 8, 203.
397 Ibn Saʿd dedicated seven pages to Umm Salim’s entry recounting her role in battles and narrating several reports on her behalf concerning marriage and funerary rituals. The entry goes on to state that Umm Salim was the mother of Anas b. Malik and she was the reason behind his acceptance of Islam as a young boy despite his father’s rejection. Ibn Saʿd, KTK, vol. 8, 290.
398 Also the very first entry in the common women section states that Fatima bt. Asad bt. ʿAbd Manaf, who was married to the Prophet’s uncle Abu Talib, was known to be a pious woman whom the Prophet visited regularly and was also known to take naps in her house. Ibn Saʿd, KTK, Vol. 8, 161.
Islam along with her initiative to participate in battle as stated earlier. These elements reflect a type of woman that is very different than those depicted as Model-Muslim women, however the fact that her entry is seven pages long shows how she was celebrated by the community and how Ibn Sa’d himself did not shy away from sharing such “different” type of information about a pious Muslim woman. This is a very different scene than that depicted by Ibn Sa’d in the prominent women’s entry in which, for example, the mention of ’Aisha’s extreme efforts of concealment from foreign men in repeated over 20 times in her entry. It also collides with Zaynab’s entry in which the Prophet refused to enter her house when her husband Zayd was not present, and later showing her ex-husband Zayd giving her his back during a conversation. Such discrepancy endorses the notion that the biographies of the women of the Prophetic household seem to have been tailored to reflect the author’s “desired” values rather than values that were necessarily practiced at the Prophet’s time.399

In another instance Asma’ bt. Abi Bakr’s entry states that one day she was working in the field and carrying a heavy load of dates on top of her head. When the Prophet approached and saw her he lowered his mule and asked her to ride with him. Asma’ rejected the offer in fear of her husband’s (al-Zubayr b. al-’Awwam) known jealousy.400 What is interesting in this anecdote, other than the fact that a woman was working outside the home, is the fact that the Prophet himself promoted the concept of interaction while the refusal came due to the husband’s own issues of extreme jealousy. In other words, religion (symbolized by the Prophet) did not have an issue with gender interaction but the social pressure and fear of the husband did. The entry also states that Asma’ suffered from a huge lump in her neck and that the Prophet himself sat by her side stroking her neck and praying for God to cure her. Once again we note that the Prophet seemed to have no issue with intermingling with the women of the community; a fact that is clearly subdued in the entries discussed in the previous chapter. Another entry shares a story in which Ummayya bt. Qays boasted that she had a necklace that the Prophet

399 In another example in the case of Umm Khalid (Ama bt. Khalid b. Sa’id), the entry states that the Prophet had a new garment and wanted to put it on someone special so he asked the people to fetch Umm Khalid whom he then adorned with the new garment. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 168.
400 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 183.
personally placed it around her neck. These anecdotes, and their casual mentions, reflect what seems to have been a common practice. In some cases it was precisely such male-female interaction that saved the Prophet’s life. The entry of Raqîqa bt. Abî Sayfi states that she was the one who warned the Prophet that Quraysh where plotting to murder him one night; that is when the Prophet asked 'Ali b. Abî Talib to sleep in his place and his life was hence spared. All those examples make the repeated attempts the author places on forwarding the segregation claims in the earlier section of the volume appear too constructed.

It should be stated that all the women mentioned in the above examples are known to be pious women who were some of the earliest to adopt Islam, and some were also related to the Prophet through his marriages and extended family. Such elevated status makes the discrepancy in their entries even more significant as they would be part of the elite women of society who would normally represent model-behavior as well. Can it be that such interactions were only valid as they involved the Prophet himself, since the Prophet was infallible? However, such patterns of male-female intermingling is not restricted to the interaction with the Prophet only. In Umm ‘Atiyya’s entry, Ibn Sa’d states that 'Ali b. Abî Talib used to nap at her house and that she used to pluck his underarm hair while he was lying down. In another example, the Prophet in fact asked Fatima bt. Qays not to spend her 'idda in Umm Shirîk’s house because his friends often frequented Umm Shirîk’s house. These examples show us that men and women did indeed mix in the early Muslim society. Such intermingling was not limited to the homes only, as Umm Sabiyya bt. Qays claims in her entry that during the Prophet’s time it was common practice for her and her female friends to linger about in the mosque where they would chat and weave and sew. She states that such practice continued during Abu

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401 Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 214. The case of al-Rabi’ bt. Ma’adh states that the Prophet entered her room on her wedding day and sat on her bed and listened to her friends playing the drums. Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 305.
402 Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 162.
403 Umm ‘Atiyya’s entry states that she was an *Ansari* woman who was responsible for washing the Prophet’s daughter Zaynab after death. Her entry shares many details about the washing rituals. See Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 311.
404 He asked her to spend it in the blind man’s home of Ibn Umm Maktum instead. Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 200.
Bakr’s caliphate but ʽUmar prohibited it shortly after his accession to power.\textsuperscript{405} So it appears the men and women may have indeed intermingled during the time of the Prophet despite Ibn Sa’d’s dire efforts to segregate them. To comprehend Ibn Sa’d’s discourse, a better understanding of patriarchy and early Islam is necessary.

An understanding of the motivation behind of Ibn Sa’d’s strong endorsement of segregation entails an understanding of classical patriarchal imperial dynamics. Patriarchy is based on the premise of male dominance. Such dominance is, partly, practiced through male control over woman and manipulation of her mobility. Under this system the male is entitled to sexual privileges, in return for financial support and protection. During Ibn Sa’d’s time, control was practiced at the girls’ initial home by the father and later at the woman’s own home by her husband. Furthermore, control and dominance were also manifested in the institution of slavery as well as present in various forms of racial and religious discrimination.\textsuperscript{406}

Through her studies of jurisprudence in early Islam, Kecia Ali argues that the rules applied to slave women gradually, over the first two centuries of Islam, came to be adapted to rules regarding marriage. Such transformation resulted in an indirect correlation between wife and slave and, in turn, echoed into an association between husband and master that is typical of patriarchal systems.\textsuperscript{407} While such rules seem to present a contradiction between ethical and legal Islam, Ali believes that jurists of Ibn Sa’d’s time did not pose the “egalitarian ideal” as their objective, she states, “It is vital to recall that these jurists did not idealize an egalitarian order. Instead, they believed that some people were, though not inferior as believers, properly subordinate to others in the life of this world.”\textsuperscript{408} In their defense, Ali explains that the context in which the jurists were present presumed male dominance and thus “fairness” did not mean equality as is presumed nowadays. Ali elaborates that within such a context religion was believed to hand the Muslim man the responsibility of being fair to the rest of the members of

\textsuperscript{405} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 217.
\textsuperscript{408} Ali, \textit{Marriage and slavery}, 190.
society. Since the responsibility of ensuring the proper application of religion solely relied on the male, the patriarchal system in effect reproduced itself and endorsed its own ideologies of male dominance.

Such a process of dominion is a layered one in which one member, in turn, dominates another; for example men control women. Men and women then control slaves; however in all cases, man is at the top of the hierarchal ladder. To ensure such dominion, control is practiced as a means to keep subordinates in-check. In this case, it was important to the men to attempt to oust woman from the public domain so as to subdue her voice, minimize her interaction, and hence limit her potential authority or chance of control within the community. Although Ibn Sa’d may have tried to present such isolation as the ideal behavior for Muslim women, we can see from the biographies of the common women that such was not the actual practice at the time of the Prophet. This discrepancy between what we know about women from reading the above biographies and what Ibn Sa’d portrayed in the prominent women’s section further drives the theory that what he tried to portray was merely an “ideal” state but not a living reality.

C. Character Strength:

The entries of the women of the Prophetic household, as discussed earlier, focused on concepts of gender segregation and male domination as reflected in the author’s description of marriage details. The entries repeatedly highlighted the eminent need for a walī, even if the he was a young boy as in the case of Umm Salama. This absolute power given to the walī in the earlier section of the KTK is countered with some anecdotes about women overriding the authority of the walī in the latter section of the book.

Ibn Sa’d states that Khansa’ bt. Khudham did not agree with the choice of marriage her father had made for her and was advised by the Prophet to marry whom she wished.\textsuperscript{409} Similarly, the entry of Zaynab bt. ’Uthman shows that her uncle had married her to a man she did not want. So she and her mother went and complained to the Prophet and informed him of whom she wanted to marry instead. The Prophet then

\textsuperscript{409} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 312.
annulled her first marriage, and she later married the man of her wish.\textsuperscript{410} Another example of female strength is present in Umm Kulthum bt. 'Uqba’s entry which states that she was the first woman to defy her entire family and adopt Islam; she even migrated to Medina on her own with the assistance of a foreign man during the period of the Hudaybiyya truce.\textsuperscript{411} The entry goes on to state that her two brothers came in search of Umm Kulthum to return home but that the Prophet refused to send her back.\textsuperscript{412} Umm Kulthum was later married to al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam who was known to be harsh towards women and the entry states that Umm Kulthum hated him and insisted on a divorce.\textsuperscript{413} Such strong will-power and forwardness does not match the timid portrayal of women Ibn Sa’d shares in the prominent women’s biographies.\textsuperscript{414}

Several examples show women insisting on divorce and getting it despite the husband’s pleas to continue the marriage.\textsuperscript{415} Fatima bt. 'Utba married 'Uqayl b. Abi Talib and it was her initiative to later end the marriage.\textsuperscript{416} Her sister Hind bt. 'Utba’s entry reflects similar character strength as Ibn Sa’d narrates how she mandated that her father ask her permission before accepting any marriage proposals claiming that she was a strong-willed woman and had to personally accept the contender herself; her father obliged. Hind was also given ample voice in the opening bay’a section of the \textit{KTK} in which she argues with the Prophet following every mandate.\textsuperscript{417} Even the Prophet’s own

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{410} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8., 197. The case of Habiba bt. 'Utba also reflects her strong will as she went to the Prophet telling him that she no longer wants to live with her husband and was the entry shows the first mention of (\textit{Khul'}) whereby a woman buys herself out of a marriage. Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 304.
\item \textsuperscript{411} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 167.
\item \textsuperscript{412} The Prophet then stated that God had ordained that women had the right to break the Hudaybiyya agreement because of their potential ill-treatment in case of return.
\item \textsuperscript{413} Her biography lists a total of four marriages for Umm Kulthum after Islam.
\item \textsuperscript{414} The entry on Hawwa’ bt. Zayd shares how she converted to Islam and didn’t tell her husband and the Prophet made him pledge to be kind to her .Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 237.
\item \textsuperscript{415} The case of Burayra \textit{mawllāt} 'Aisha is another example of strong female will-power. Burayra was a married slave-woman. When she became free the Prophet gave her the option of remaining with her husband or leaving him, and she opted to leave her husband. The entry states that her husband spent a long time following her around town crying and asking for her return but she maintained her stance and rejected him.  Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 188.
\item \textsuperscript{416} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 173.
\item \textsuperscript{417} When the Prophet asked the women not to steal, Hind said that her husband is a miser and she has to access food behind his back to survive; when the Prophet asked the women not to commit adultery, Hind said that free women don’t commit adultery; and finally when the Prophet asked the women not to kill their off-spring, Hind replied that there were no off-spring left as the Prophet had killed them all in the battle of
\end{itemize}
grand daughter is presented in a light that reflects her strong character; Fatima bt. al-Husayn b. ‘Ali rejected Ibn al-Dahhaq’s continual requests to marry her to the point that she reported his harassment to *Amīr al-Mu ’minīn* who ordered him ousted from his official post, fined 40,000 *dirhams*, and publicly tortured. ⁴¹⁸ This latter example not only reflects her determination and strong will, but also proves that men and women did indeed interact in society.

The above examples show that women around the Prophet’s time and place did in fact have a voice, unlike what is presented in the biographies of the prominent women in which their voice was subdued except on issues of segregation and jealousy, or in the case of wailing which was vehemently prohibited. The fact that Ibn Sa’d shared the common women’s entries in such a manner, without any condemnation of the fact that such women spoke up and made their own decisions, shows that such practice was not uncommon at the time. As female voice is a mode of self-expression, patriarchal systems strive on silencing the feminine voice in an attempt to maintain absolute power and dominion. The examples above not only share the women’s assertive voice, but also show how the Prophet supported their stance and helped them achieve their demands; proof that Ibn Sa’d’s constructed image of prominent women may have been more representative of his own time than that of the Prophet’s himself. Furthermore, the common women’s entries does not merely share examples of women speaking up in self-defense or to merely convey their own personal wishes, but also shares various example of women’s voice helping others through their possession of knowledge in the community as shall be reviewed below.

**D. Hadith Narrators and Scholars:**

Although it may be implied from the context of the *KTK* that the women listed in volume eight have encountered the Prophet and narrated hadith on his behalf, such a blanket statement is not clearly stated by Ibn Sa’d. However, some entries of specific common

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⁴¹⁸ Ibn Sa’d, *KTK*, vol. 8, 325.
women do include mention that they had narrated hadith on the Prophet’s behalf such as in the case of Umm Khalid b. Sa’id, Umm Qays bt. Muhsin, Barra bt. Abi Tajra among many others. There are over 20 women listed as official hadith narrators in the section on common women.\textsuperscript{419} In the later part of the section we note some women who are listed as having narrated hadith on behalf of the Prophet’s wives such as in the case of ’Aisha bt. Talha, or on behalf of the \textit{sahaba} such as in the case of ’Aisha bt. Qudama and Safiyya bt. Shayba.\textsuperscript{420} In some cases the entries state that many people later narrated hadith on behalf of the above women. Although other biographers clearly list the names of the people who narrated from and on behalf of the women while Ibn Sa’d doesn’t, Ibn Sa’d’s attempt to share the fact that such women were indeed hadith narrators proves the significance of women to hadith science. Since hadith as a science was still developing at the time of Ibn Sa’d, the methodology may not have been clearly established at the time. However, the mere listing of their role in the chain of isnad carries a clear message of how integral women were to the development of the Islamic hadith doctrine. Such significance is subdued in the earlier section on prominent women as Ibn Sa’d does not share information on who narrated hadith on the women’s behalf which minimizes their role in carrying over the Prophetic tradition per se. Rather, it poses them as models themselves to show future generations how the ideal Muslim woman behaved.

The common women’s section not only lists women who were official hadith narrators but sheds light on women who practiced religious authority. Umm Waraqa bt. ’Abd Allah’s entry shares how she was requested by the Prophet to lead her household in prayer, she is even said to have had her own \textit{mu’adhin} (person who calls for prayer).\textsuperscript{421} The biography of ’Umra bt. ’Abd al-Rahman states that she was a scholar who advised


\textsuperscript{420} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 320, 321, and 333.

\textsuperscript{421} Ibn Sa’d, \textit{KTK}, vol. 8, 313.
the people on Prophetic Sunna as well as narrated hadith. Ibn Sa’d goes on to state that later, ‘Umar b. ’Abd al-’Aziz ordered that the sayings of ’Umra bt. ’Abd al-Rahman be documented in written form in fear of scholarship getting lost after the death of the scholars.422

E. Working Women:

Along with religious contributions, the common women’s section in the KTK shares examples of working women as well. The case of Rayta bt. ’Abd Allah shows that she was a working woman who financially supported her husband and children.423 Ku’ayba bt. Sa’d was a known nurse who set up a clinic-tent inside the mosque.424 Even in the trade business, women were active; Asma’ bt. Mukharraba used to receive imported perfume from Yemen and sell it to Ansari women in Medina.425 While Qubayla Umm Bani Anmar is narrated to have personally consulted with the Prophet on her trade business asking him for advice on negotiations related to buying and selling.426 According to Ibn Sa’d some women were also sheep herders.427 Some entries clearly state that it was the wife who financially supported the husband such as in the case of Khawla bt. Tha’labah and Fatima bt. ’Utba.428

The examples of women actively involved in the well-being of society through their capacity as religious contributors to hadith and fiqh as well as professional women working in the fields of medicine and trade is limited to the section on common women only. Does that mean the prominent women did not productively contribute to the

422 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 331.
423 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 212.
424 She also participated in the battle of Khaybar. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 213.
425 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 220.
426 Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 228.
427 Some women would lead their sheep to Abu Bakr at the end of the day so he can help milk them. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 249.
428 The case of Khawla bt. Tha’labah is a good example for courage, independence, and will power all in one. Her husband had committed to an oath of (zihār) whereby he vowed that she would be like a mother to him but in regret he wanted to seek the Prophet’s advice as to how to resolve such oath but was too embarrassed to go the Prophet so he asked his wife to go. Not only did Khawla go the Prophet’s house but she argued with the Prophet when she didn’t agree with his opinion until Qur’anic verses were revealed to resolve the issue. She also informed the Prophet that she was financially supporting her husband and confidently presented her argument in an extremely logical manner. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 257. For Fatima bt. ’Utba see Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 173.
society or is it simply the manner in which Ibn Sa’d chose to portray them that stripped them of such capacity? This study cannot answer such questions but can highlight the fact that such discrepancy is in need of further exploration. Although the prominent women’s entries were much longer than their “common women” counterparts, Ibn Sa’d shared more information about the common’s women professional contribution to society than he did in the earlier section. The long prominent women’s entries focused on driving the concepts of segregation and sharing rituals related to funerals and marital details but did not address the women’s individual characteristics or professional inclinations. Such variance in representation highlights the fact that Ibn Sa’d utilized the prominent Muslim women to establish a “persona” of how prominent women behaved without real emphasize on who these women really were as people.

Conclusion:

*Kitab al-Nisa’* is segmented into two types of biographies; those of prominent women such as the Prophet’s family emphasizing his daughters and wives, and those of the rest of Muslim women in Medina. An analysis of the typical portrayals of both segments reflects quite a different representation of the early Muslim woman. While the prominent women’s entries are much longer, their details cover issues related to particular themes such as jealousy among the wives, funerary rituals, marriage rituals, and most prominently male/female segregation. On the other hand, the entries of the common women, although much shorter in length, do not reflect similar concepts but rather share examples of women who were more active in society as is evident through their religious or professional capacities, as well as participation in battles and mingling with the Prophet. Examples of women with strong and independent characters are also present in the common women’s section only. Such distinction gives the impression that the first segment of the book attempted to present prototypes, while the latter segment of the book shared actual information about individuals. In other words, the first group presented Ibn Sa’d’s gendered portrayal of the ideal Muslim female, while the second group simply listed scattered information about some women living in Medina at the time.
To better understand the above distinction, it is useful to examine what scholars of gender studies have identified as the difference between “gender” and “sex”. Simone de Beauvoir argued that sex and gender are not the same thing. Sex is a natural phenomenon that is related to the person’s biological composition, while gender is a social construct that is imposed by the society. Elaborating on de Beauvoir’s concept, Judith Butler states that gender involves acquiring skills, “becoming a gender is an impulsive yet mindful process of interpreting a cultural reality laden with sanctions, taboos, and prescriptions.” As the body is the locus of gender, attempts are often made to manipulate the female body to produce the gendered woman that fits within the particular cultural norms of a society.

Gender is thus a process of interpreting the body and giving it cultural form. Such manipulation of the female body is evident in the KTK. As Ibn Sa’d places restrictions on female mobility, dress, and voice and attributes such behavior to the prominent Muslim women, he is in effect constructing a gendered representation laden with cultural influences and represents them through controlling the female body and its behavior. The entries of the prominent women continue to manipulate the female body even after death through reflections on funeral rituals. The latter section, on common women, does not seem to share the same level of manipulation evident in the former section. By analyzing the discrepancy between the biographies of the women closely related to the Prophet and common women as presented by Ibn Sa’d we note how the common women are presented more as individuals who are female without a overly constructed effort to portray them in particular schema. However, the prominent women appear to represent the “gendered” representation of the Muslim woman, one that conforms to the norms and the sanctions of the society. Ibn Sa’d’s efforts at emphasizing certain concepts, and in-turn instilling certain taboos, in the biographies of prominent women appears to be a

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429 Butler, “Sex and Gender”, 34.
430 The fact that Ibn Sa’d seemed more relaxed in his portrayals of common women does not mean that he did not practice any form of censorship or selectivity in their entries for they also represent his choice of material to share. It is simply not as evident as in the case of the prominent women. For example, the case of ’Aisha bt. Talha just shares her biography much like any other woman listing parents, husbands, and offspring. However, when we consult ’Aisha bt. Talha’s biographies in other works we note that she is a woman of pomp, fashion, and fame who was highly sought after by several of the famous men of the early period. Ibn Sa’d, KTK, vol. 8, 320. Also see Roded, From Ibn Sa’d, 50.
conscious and constructed attempt to portray them in a particular light. He thus confirms Judith Butler’s claim that gender is never “natural.” Ibn Sa’d maybe mandating to the women of his own generation the appropriate sex-roles they need to subscribe to if they want to be like the model Muslim woman of the earlier days of the Prophet. He thus places a moral obligation on future generations of Muslim women to live up to their “ideal” predecessors. As societies place tremendous pressure on gender compliance, despite is oppressive nature; most individuals strive to adhere to the social norms so as not to risk being an out-cast. In this case Ibn Sa’d exploits the revered status of prominent Muslim women such as the Prophet’s own wives and daughters to have them personify the gender norms desired by the author’s own patriarchal ideologies propagated in his own ’Abbasid society. Such an analysis may explain Ibn Sa’d’s disproportionate representation of allocating close to half the book to only two percent of the personalities reviewed.

Additionally, the discrepancy presented between the portrayal of prominent women and common women seems to reflect an apparent turmoil in the way gender was socially structured and perceived at the time of Ibn Sa’d. On the one hand we note an image of women whose main concern was to endorse gender segregation and please their husband, while on the other hand we see women who actively participated in the community, fought in battles, demand divorces, as well as worked and often supported their husbands. One group appears inhibited and restrained while the other seems to enjoy free-will and independence. Which aspect of the female image was closer to the actual life of women at the Prophet’s time, or what percent of the women fell into which category is beyond the scope of this study and, in a way, irrelevant to the focus of this research. What is of prime importance to this study is, in fact, the way in which the author portrayed each group of women and thus contributed to the articulation of gender at his time. The objective then is to attempt to interpret how gender is produced and promoted within the KTK in order to be able to comprehend the limitations of reading such a seminal text.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

This study has examined Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of the women of the Prophetic household in the *KTK* and has placed such representation within the context of the author’s own ’Abbasid Baghdad. The findings suggest that Ibn Sa’d may have used the biographies of such prominent Muslim women to promote particular model-setting examples of what he perceived to be “ideal” female behavior. Additionally, the author seems to have used these “models” as a platform to propagate certain *ahkām* and establish ideals related to his own cultural context. The gendered prototype of the “ideal” Muslim woman produced in the text strongly promotes the patriarchal ’Abbasid imperial discourse of Ibn Sa’d’s time.

Ibn Sa’d utilized various tactics to establish the supremacy of the women of the Prophetic household as model-setters. First he placed the biographies of those particular women at the onset of the volume, immediately following the *bay’a* rendition which, in effect, physically locates them closest to Islam. He then created a separator section between them and the biographies of the rest of the women; this section is dedicated to the Prophet’s marriages and symbolically acts like a curtain (*hijab*) isolating the eminent women from more common women. Ibn Sa’d utilized the size of the entries and space attributed to the topic as a tool to reflect his emphasis as well. Over half of the volume is dedicated to the prominent women and their relationship with the Prophet, which leaves the entries of over 600 remaining women to fit within the second half of the volume. All of these tactics, along with the very special relationship these women appear to have enjoyed with the Prophet, set those women on a pedestal high above the rest of the women in the community; a model to emulate and aspire to across time and place. Finally, Ibn Sa’d abruptly ends volume eight at the second generation of Muslim women and does not continue the listings, as he does with the men, up to his own time; as a result
only one volume is dedicated to women while five volumes are dedicated to men.\textsuperscript{432} The fact that women are listed separately in the last volume of the work is indicative of the author’s own ideology as well. Tarif Khalidi believes such placement is a symbolic gesture echoing the role of the women at prayer time.\textsuperscript{433} Such placement promotes the concept of women as being separate and subordinate to men; an ideology that correlates with the cultural tradition present in Baghdad, as well as serves the aspirations of the patriarchal ’Abbasid imperial project.

By adopting the main tenets of “Deconstruction Theory,” this study has identified the major themes and topoi within the entries of the Prophet’s wives and daughters. Those themes were then juxtaposed against the events of the time, and the results reflect a strong correlation whereby issues emphasized in the entries echoed concepts discussed by the jurists of Ibn Sa’d’s time and place. Such correlation is not haphazard but reflects the dominant discourse of the time. Foucault claims that power is often created through discourse. Hence the discourse identified in this study can be viewed as part of an ’Abbasid imperial attempt to gain power. The KTK should therefore not be viewed as a mere text, but as an important component of this overall power discourse. Foucault argues that to accept theories, people draw on a stored “archive” of rules and constraints that conform to societal consensus; such “truths” are reinforced by the intellectual and political authorities of the day.\textsuperscript{434} The fact that Ibn Sa’d drew on the existent cultural heritage present in Baghdad reflects his own “archival” reference and ensured that the information he presented was just as easily absorbed by his society as well. Such discourses are propagated through practices of exclusion and organization, as exemplified by Ibn Sa’d’s own attempts at structuring the “model” Muslim women’s behavior by focusing on certain themes while completely ignoring others. Such a power discourse was further supported by Ibn Sa’d’s powerful use of topoi such as Qur’anic references, dreams, and barakāt; all elements that connote divine and supernatural energy that are

\textsuperscript{432} As referenced earlier, the first two volumes of the KTK are dedicated to the Prophet and his sira. The KTK comprises a total of eight volumes.
\textsuperscript{433} Khalidi, Arabic Historical Thought, 46.
\textsuperscript{434} Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker, A Reader’s Guide, 179.
beyond the grasp of the normal human mind and thus denote greater Power and Knowledge that Muslim readers should, in turn, succumb to as true believers.

The courts of Harun al-Rashid and al-Ma’mun reflected their interest in dominating both the religious and the secular aspects of life. As discussed in chapter one, both Caliphs presented themselves as the protectors of the religion with al-Ma’mun giving himself the title of imām. During their time the translation movement flourished, libraries were erected, and the literary movement set the “golden age” of the ’Abbasid caliphate in motion. As referenced earlier, it was at this time that major works documenting early Muslim history were authored, and the tenets of fiqh and hadith were also established. Life in Baghdad at the time seemed to be going through a cosmopolitan fusion of cultures and religions which reflected various mores and traditions. The Shu’ubiyya movement of the non-Arab mawali aimed to preserve their Persian cultural background under the auspices of Islam, at the same time the ’Abbasids attempted to ground their Arab ancestry by presenting themselves as the legitimate descendants of the Prophet. In the meantime, while the court was trying to maintain a stronghold on religion as evidenced by al-Ma’mun’s mihna, the popularity of the conservative ’ulama’ was soaring.

Ibn Sa’d stood at the trajectory of all these forces by being a mawla of Persian heritage, subscribing to the world of the ’ulama’ through his scholarship, and siding with the court when summoned in the mihna. The KTK appears to be a reflection of all of the above; it promotes aḥkām correlating to the fiqh of Iraq which accommodates the cultural background present in the region, while at the same time acts as a hagiography venerating the Prophet and his family as the true ancestors of the ’Abbasid Empire. Across the entries a clear patriarchal discourse emerges; one that establishes male dominance and promotes the patriarchal structure symptomatic of the inherent culture of the region.

Apart from clear positioning tactics, the concept of women being separate and subordinate is emphasized in the main themes Ibn Sa’d presented in the biographies of

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the prominent women as well. First and foremost, it is exemplified through his exceptional emphasis on the notion of gender segregation which is conveyed in two main ways; 1) promoting the value of staying inside the home, and 2) covering up in case of any male, or public, encounter. Studies show that such practices were part of the non-Arab cultural heritage present in Baghdad at the time; it was not an integral aspect of the Medinian culture. As a matter of fact, studies suggest that women at the time of the Prophet may have enjoyed more freedom than their jahili predecessors. Additionally, some scholars argue that the concept of niqāb was a practice adopted by some women pre and post Islam for reasons of adornment and was not part of a religious doctrine. However, Ibn Sa’d portrayed the concept of gender segregation almost as a sacred value reflected in all the prominent’s women’s biographies. Even his presentation of death and funerary rituals reflect Ibn Sa’d’s emphasis on gender segregation as well.

None of the prominent women entries examined in the KTK show them speaking in public or actively involved in public endeavors. The entries rarely share any interaction between the sexes and hardly reflect personal skills, work, or talents the women may have had. Ibn Sa’d also does not portray the women of the Prophetic household in an intellectual capacity nor as scholars (a heading he reserved for the introduction of the early Muslim men). Furthermore, Ibn Sa’d does not share any data about the continued role of these women as official hadith narrators, whereas both al-’Asqalani and Ibn ’Abd al-Barr usually indicate who narrated hadith on behalf of each woman. In other words, Ibn Sa’d effectively concealed the side of the women’s character that showed them as active, outspoken, intellectual, or talented. There is also no mention of the those women taking a role in battle. While Ibn Sa’d actively employs the Prophet’s wives and daughters as models against which the ideal Muslim female behavior is exemplified, he fails to celebrate their role as active participants, and sometimes leaders, within the community. By obscuring their respective roles in public

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437 This may be the case as the science of hadith continued to develop throughout the third century A.H. Across the two canonized hadith collections of Muslim and Bukhari, eight of the Prophet’s wives are listed as narrators of authentic traditions. See Abu Shuqqa, Tahrir al-Mar’a fi ’Asr al-Risala, vol. 1, 119-120.
participation and failing to report the many men and women who narrated hadith on their behalf, Ibn Sa’d limits the prominent women’s life to the private sphere, and, in turn, to the *ahkām* pertaining to that side of their life.

An examination of biographical works written by other authors revealed that the same women may not have been as segregated and passive as Ibn Sa’d portrays them to be. Aisha for example is considered by other biographers to be a scholar whose religious guidance and advice were sought after by the esteemed male and female members of the Muslim community. She is also proclaimed for her outstanding skills in medicine and poetry. However, Aisha’s participation in public life is definitely subdued in Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal. What the reader gathers from Ibn Sa’d’s recount of Aisha’s life is her utmost concern for concealment, her jealousy, and the remorseful attitude she had towards the end of her life, all coupled with the fact that she is presented as the Prophet’s favorite wife. Ibn Sa’d thus establishes a direct correlation between adopting the passive traits of segregation and the pleasing of the Prophet. In other words, a good Muslim woman is one who is not heard or seen beyond the boundaries of her home. In fact, reading Ibn Sa’d’s rendition of Aisha leaves the reader with the impression that it is the biography of a whole other woman than the one present in works by other authors.

Similarly, Umm Salama’s entry in Ibn Sa’d, when compared to the other two biographers as shared in chapter two, reflects an equally distorted representation. Similar observations can be made about Safiyya bt. Huyayy and Zaynab bt. Jahsh. Amira Sonbol argues that the image of seclusion that medieval *fiqh* portrayed represented how scholars believed women should live rather than the way women actually lived. This

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438 Safiyya and Umm Salama’s active and assertive character alluded to by other biographers was discussed in the chapter on prominent women and compared to their portrayal in the works of al-’Asqalani and Ibn ‘Abd-al-Barr.


effort to turn the entries of the women of the Prophetic household into a “prototype” of the model Muslim woman may have been a conscious attempt on the author’s part. This theory is supported by the fact that Ibn Sa’d does not reflect the same guidelines in his portrayal of the other women within the early Medinian society.

An examination of the “common” women’s entries within the KTK showed examples of female activity that do not conform to the ideals Ibn Sa’d established in his prominent women prototype.442 Chapter four noted how women actively participated in battles, contributed to the community in terms of work and scholarship, and also took control of their own futures, often inspite of their wali’s recommendations. Furthermore, we noted how the Prophet himself used to visit women’s homes and in some cases even nap on their laps. Other examples show the Prophet empowering women to make their own decisions regarding their future, and even participate in battles; all concepts that are not present in the entries of the Prophet’s own wives and daughters. These examples show the significant difference between Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal of the “model” women and the rest of the women in the society. As the common women entries were mostly very short and placed at the tail end of the entire eight-volume KTK, we note how their behavior falls outside the boundaries of the gendered roles portrayed in Ibn Sa’d’s presentation of the more prominent women.

Although Ibn Sa’d portrays the Prophet’s wives as models for the ideal Muslim women’s behavior, he nevertheless incriminates them with the ills of the female gender as a whole. By presenting ummahāt al-muʾminīn as weak women unable to shed the innate ills of female jealousy, and implicating some of them in conniving tricks against one another, Ibn Sa’d establishes general grounds for setting limits on women in society. Barbara Stowasser argues that scholars of the time took the Qur’anic rulings that were particular to the elevated status of the Prophet’s wives and applied them to all Muslim women. While on the other hand, they took the social ills present in common women —

442 The term “common” is used for comparative purposes and has no bearing on the significant role of these women in Muslim history.
which the Qur’an attempted to rectify — and applied them to the Prophet’s wives. Scholars thereby legitimized the need for establishing boundaries for women within the community. Such limits, as seen through Ibn Sa’d’s portrayal, secured not only the isolation of women but simultaneously ensured their subordination as well.

Mukti Barton argues that Religion is often used as a tool to legitimize dominance. She believes that gender was one of the fundamental pillars on which Imperialism was built. Reading Kitab al-Nisa’ reflects how applicable Barton’s statement may be. Her research also points to the various types of passive-resistance techniques exercised by women in patriarchal societies. Even within the KTK’s entries of the prominent women we have recounted acts of resistance to the patriarchal discourse promoted in the text. The notion of jealousy is a potent tool that women often use to subvert male dominance. By adopting interpersonal strategies to manipulate the affection of their husband, the women are in effect mitigating their own subordinate condition. Deniz Kendiyoti identifies such behavior as a process that allows women to bargain with patriarchy.

Additionally, veiling should not be perceived only as a means to enforce segregation and isolation, it can also be viewed as a tool to reinforce power structures within the societies. Female veiling is a tradition dating back to cultures present in Mesopotamia. One of its main purposes was to distinguish between the elite women and the common women. This type of socio-economic stratification is an important feature of cosmopolitan life. Therefore, reinforcing the concept of female veiling may also be part of the ’Abbasid patriarchal discourse to maintain the structure of the socio-economic hierarchy within the community. Attributing gender segregation to the behavior of women of the Prophetic household also poses it as a value that is enforced by the religion itself.

443 Barbara Freyer Stowasser, Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation (New York, Oxford University Press, 1994), 104.
444 Although her area of research is not Islam, nor the ’Abbasids, Barton makes observations that may be applied to general power discourses.
The conservative attitude promoted by Ibn Sa’d is representative of the religious ‘ulama’ of his day. His examples of asceticism stand in clear contradiction to the abundant and luxurious lifestyle experienced by the elite of Baghdad at his time. This conservative attitude is further reflected in Ibn Sa’d’s failure to feature music and poetry in the biographies examined, despite the many records reflecting the significant role of male and female musicians, both in the early days of Islam and within the courts of Harun and al-Ma’mun. Furthermore, some lifestyle narratives of ’Abbasid Baghdad show that elite women were not as secluded as is often believed. In fact, some women possessed higher authority than that deemed acceptable at the time. The case of Harun al-Rashid’s mother, al-Khayzuran, reflects the tremendous authority she exercised in appointing her son to power. Historical records show other women in the court who exercised remarkable power as well. As local customs did not accept such powerful female roles, those women usually had to mitigate their power through conspiracies with top viziers.

As gender segregation appears to have been a value propagated by the patriarchal discourse of the time, it may also be that Ibn Sa’d simply portrayed the women of the Prophetic household in the light that he deemed appropriate based on his own cultural values. In other words, Ibn Sa’d’s presentation of the women of the Prophetic household maybe based on what his own ideological references allowed him to imagine what such women would have been like. Through his process of selecting the type of information to share in the biographies of such prominent women, Ibn Sa’d could have skipped what he deemed to be unfit for inclusion. Jerry Bentley’s study on what is referred to as “mythhistory” offers a theoretical frame-work for the above phenomenon. Proponents of this theory argue that historians often produce knowledge that is based on professional historical scholarship but one that “draws inspiration from perspectives that offer

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448 Al-Khayzuran died three years after Harun’s ascent to the caliphate. See Omar, “Harun al-Rashid,” *EI²*.


450 Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 112.
idealized visions of a community and endow its historical accounts with meaning.”

He adds that historians generally reflect an urge for attachment and identity; Ibn Sa’d’s efforts to ground the early Muslim tradition into terms that are familiar to his own cultural value-system may be one reason behind his unique portrayal of the prominent Muslim women. Ironically, Hugh Kennedy argues that it was in the middle of the eighth century, which is around Ibn Sa’d’s time, that the “harem” started becoming a separate and secluded structure for women of the Caliphal court. Therefore, what Ibn Sa’d presented in his entries may have been what he envisioned to be “ideal” female behavior based on what his own society condoned; an ideal which the women of the Prophetic household must have abided by.

However, records of the time also show that women were active as religious scholars, with several known to have been practicing jurists (faqīḥāt). Apart from the women of the court and religious scholars, female slave singers and musicians seem to have been associated with a lot of wealth and power during Ibn Sa’d’s time as well. These examples of strong female agency during Ibn Sa’d’s own time may have contributed to fears of upsetting the patriarchal power structure the ’Abbasid’s aspired to maintain. This may have, in-turn, triggered a need to establish the behavior pattern of the ideal Muslim woman as one who is silent, segregated, and submissive. Such a portrayal not only supported the call of the conservative ‘ulama’, but triumphantly propagated the patriarchal discourse adopted by the ’Abbasid imperial project and legitimized the norms of the existing heritage as well.

The way in which Ibn Sa’d presented the concept of marriage is another example of the influence of his patriarchal context on the text. He strongly supports the concept of kafā’a in which the compatibility of the bride and groom is a pre-requisite to the marriage; legislation that relates to the jurisprudence of Iraq and not Medina. Ibn Sa’d

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also endorsed the concept of having a male *walī* to act as the guardian who approves the marriage. His emphasis on *ʿidda* and *mahr* also echo the norms of his contemporary Baghdad where social stratification was a main characteristic of the society; one which required Islamic legislation to accommodate the needs of a cosmopolitan life. Unlike Medina, the numbers of female slaves in Baghdad had multiplied, the notion of the harem was being set in place, and a clear distinction between elite women and slave girls was established. These circumstances not only created many more marriage options for men (which may explain Ibn Saʿd’s emphasis on female beauty) but also dictated legislative rulings on the amount of *mahr* and waiting period (*ʿidda*) that was deemed appropriate for each type of woman. Ibn Saʿd’s commitment to presenting details that correlate with Iraqi *fiqh* rulings in the area of marriage is a clear example of the influence of the context on his work.

Male-dominated systems of societies typically adopt discourses that endorse patriarchy by advancing rationales for the subordination of women. In this case, Ibn Saʿd promotes such a discourse by associating it with the Prophet thus making it appear divinely ordained. In analyzing early Islamic texts, Asma Barlas argues that the Sunna served as both a text and as an extra-textual context through which the Qurʾan was interpreted. According to her, such process results in putting an Islamic stamp on extra-Islamic misogyny. This dominant patriarchal discourse is also present in Ibn Saʿd’s portrayal of prominent men in the text.

An analysis of prominent men in the *KTK* reflected main attributes that complement the role of women and further enforced the patriarchal power dynamics. While the prominent women of Islam were presented as secluded in their homes and avoided all public interaction, the prominent Muslim men are portrayed as courageous warriors that fought to protect their families and religion. As women of the Prophetic household appeared passive and silent, the prominent men are portrayed as active leaders

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who guided the community to prosperity. While some prominent women connived in acts of jealousy, the prominent men are celebrated for their ultimate fairness and justice. Accordingly, the prominence of women is bestowed upon them as a result of their affiliation to the Prophet, while the prominent men appear to have earned their privileged status with the Prophet through their individual characteristics of bravery, service, and justice. Even the titles of both sections support the same notion; the title of the men’s section states that the men listed are hadith narrators and scholars of hadith and fiqh, while the title preceding the women’s section states that the women listed are simply women who have adopted Islam and migrated to Medina. Such distinction in the way men and women are presented supports the gender construction Ibn Sa’d promotes; they divulge the underlying patriarchal power dynamics Ibn Sa’d sets in place. Each gender is carefully moulded to fit within specific sex-roles painted by the author and the society.

Sex-role training is a key element in gender construction, as it teaches people how they are supposed to behave. On the institutional level this is achieved through legislation, regulations, and law; a doctrine that was being established around Ibn Sa’d’s time. However, a complex social process creates gender, a process that operates at the level of the individual, the community, as well as the institution. One way in which gender is constructed at the community level is through what Schwalbe and his colleagues describe as “trading power through patronage.” In the examples of the women of the Prophetic household, we note how they gain power through the patronage to the Prophet himself. Their actions thus establish the standard of ideal form of gender interaction and over time endorses an ideology that supports such construction.

By utilizing the example of ummahāt al-muˈminīn as a prototype of the model Muslim woman, Ibn Sa’d uses what is similar to the contemporary marketing techniques of “celebrity endorsements” in which the popularity of a famous figure is exploited to induce a positive association with a particular act (in this case ḥkām) or product being promoted. At the same time the text sets precedent by utilizing the authority of the

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Prophetic Sunna to establish law. This analysis of Ibn Sa’d’s *KTK* urges scholars to question and revise the classification of the work itself. As a work of *tabaqāt*, does it belong to hadith criticism, jurisprudence, *sira*, hagiography, or a combination of various elements? With the type of the information examined, it may be more accurate to classify the *KTK* as part of the *Adab* literature which joined pre-Islamic and cultural traditions with religious tradition to produce what the author believed to be the “ideal” Muslim character.

The significant impact of Ibn Sa’d’s time and place on his work not only confirms Foucault’s claim that Man is unable to stand outside history, but more importantly urges scholars of Islamic Studies to re-examine primary texts with a stringent analytical eye to better understand the impact of authors, and their contexts, on such works. The significant temporal, and spatial gap between the early years of Islam (up till the death of Prophet Muhammad in year 11 A.H.) and the time, and place, in which those years were later documented in major works (second and third century A.H.) may have contributed to the production of a severely subjective recount of history. Effective deconstructive analysis offers a tool in the attempt to better understand the extent of such bias.

As long as the only access to historical literature about early Muslim women is filtered through the eyes and pens of male authors, scholars cannot aspire to achieve more than mere theorizing. It is thus important to understand the limitations of such knowledge, and utilize it as a general guide that offers a map of how to read historical texts. On the other hand, other disciplines such as sociology should include religious studies as one of the venues in which they explore gender construction. Nason-Clark and

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459 Stern argues against the authenticity of the hadith present in the text itself. She believes that Ibn Sa’d has utilized what can be called the “family isnād” in which the second link and possibly the third belong to the family of the original authority or the woman who is he subject of the tradition. It will be found that frequently these traditionists were considered unreliable or are not traceable and moreover, that when the matn of the tradition is examined it will be seen that the subject matter of the text is of doubtful authenticity and unduly enhances the reputation of a member of the family. Gertrude H. Stern, *Marriage in Early Islam*, London, The Royal Asiatic Society, 1939), 12.


461 Munslow, *Deconstructing*, 12.

462 Major works on the early Islamic period use *sira* and *maghazi* works as main references. References include the works of Ibn Ishaq (d. 151/768), al-Waqidi (d. 207/822), Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833), and al-Tabari (d. 310/922-3).
Fisher-Townsend’s study on sociology and social research points to the fact that there seems to be a huge rift between gender studies and religious studies. Their findings show how little space is dedicated in the world of sociological research to exploring gender issues within religious studies.\footnote{Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend, “Gender”, In \textit{Handbook on sociology of religion and social institutions}, Helen Rose Ebaugh. New York: Springer, 207-223.}

Finally, it should be noted that this study has shed some light on various areas that warrant further independent academic study. The \textit{KTK} begs for a similar deconstructive analysis to be applied across male entries to fully understand the overall power discourse at hand. A methodological scientific analysis of Ibn Sa’d’s \textit{aḥkām} and how they correlate to the various schools of \textit{fiqh} can similarly shed more light on his inclinations. As for women in particular, in depth studies that establish scientific comparisons between Ibn Sa’d’s portrayals of women versus their portrayal in other works is also necessary to offer clear guidelines of how to interpret the effect of each biographical author on his text. A study of who Ibn Sa’d chose to include in the biographical listing versus the number of Muslim women in the community at the time will help shed more light on his selection criteria.\footnote{Additionally, particular themes within the \textit{KTK} offer interesting areas of examination such as the repeated references to the color yellow, the study of the types of foods presented in the text, and an in depth analysis of the concept of numerology across the entire work.}

Beyond the \textit{KTK}, the discrepancy between accepting al-Waqidi’s work on \textit{sira}, while rejecting his work on hadith, is an extremely important area of investigation. Such studies would not only promote a better understanding of Islamic history, but can generally further the cause of Islamic Modernism; a movement aimed at adopting a historical exegesis of the divine revelation of the Qur’an. Muslim scholars must dissect historical texts by optimizing the use of post-modern theories of knowledge to be able to diminish the huge rift that currently exists between egalitarian Islam on the one hand and political Islam on the other. Coulson sums up this notion by stating that “The Muslim jurist of today cannot afford to be a bad historian.”\footnote{Coulson, \textit{A History of Islamic Law}.7.}
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