The Ten Granted Paradise

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Introduction

The Veneration of Companions in Imāmī Shī‘ism

There are a number of noble figures venerated in the collective Muslim memory of Islamic history. The term “collective” signifies that memory which all Muslims who faced the Ka‘ba at the end of the first century agreed upon. Whether they lived in Damascus and supported the Umayyads, in Kufa where many held Ali b. Abi Talib and his family in high esteem, or the Hijaz where many Muslims considered themselves the partisans of the first three caliphs and their descendants, each party possessed a memory of the past which praised their heroes and their wisdom. For example, in the Hijaz, the hadith and legal practice of Aisha bint Abi Bakr, the intellectual and spiritual inheritor of the first caliph, and ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, the inheritor of the second caliph, played an extremely important role in subsequent Sunni and Maliki teachings (ibn ‘Umar especially in the latter case). In each of these political circles, a few Companions and their students became the subject of hadith and legendary tales about their merit, some of which later scholars of hadith concluded to be fabrications. In some cases, it is difficult to judge the authenticity of such reports, so an historian is left to provide a narrative that either acknowledges their existence or suppresses them.
A number of scholars (Shīʿī, Sunni and non-Muslim) claiming the authority to speak on behalf of the Shīʿī community have inappropriately characterized the sect as one that generally despises Companions of the Prophet, curses them, and considers them to have become apostates after his death (see ibn Taymiyya, E. Kohlberg). These misconceptions and hasty generalizations are not only derived from a cursory reading of a few Shīʿī texts and unrepresentative thinkers, but the second-hand authority of many writers with a clearly uninformed or anti-Shīʿī worldview. Such writers have opted to suppress or willfully ignore early, medieval, and modern Shīʿī authors who have cited various Shīʿī texts and the collective Sunnī-Shīʿī memory of the past that have praised a number of Companions (see Tusi, Amin, Musawī). Likewise, they have ignored Shīʿī commentaries and nuanced discussions regarding early Shīʿī hadith that appear “anti-Companion.”

The Sunni historical tradition certainly recognized that days after the death of the Prophet and during the caliphates of Uthman, Ali, Hasan, and Yazid, the Muslim community was embroiled in conflict. The partisans of each group condemned the other, so it is no surprise that the Shīʿī intellectual history has preserved much of the criticism leveled against Ali’s rivals. Sunni hadith and biographical literature likewise preserves the various ways in which partisans of Ali’s rivals would condemn and curse him and his family. For example, Bukhari and other hadith specialists relied upon Harīz b. Uthman (d. 163 AH), a narrator who
despised Ali for killing his ancestors at Siffin and claimed that Ali once tried to injure or kill the Prophet (see ibn Hajar, 2:210). Harīz would verbally abuse (yasubb) and pray for the damnation (yal'an) of Ali b. Abi Talib (see ibn Asakir, 12:348). Syrian soldiers fighting Ali at Siffin allegedly believed that he was a person who did not pray (see Tabari, 4:30). A canonical Sunni hadith likewise portrays Ali as disappointing the Prophet by refusing his invitation to join him in prayer (see Bukhari, 2:43, 8:155, 190; Muslim, 2:187, ibn Hanbal, 1:77, 91, 112).

Sunni orthodoxy eventually began to abstain from discussions about conflicts during those volatile periods so that the honour of any Muslim who met the Prophet remained intact. However, Shī‘ism has continued to remain invested in analysing those conflicts, with the Household of the Prophet and those who sided with them portrayed as righteous, wise, and patient, while their rivals consistently appeared mistaken, confused, or regretful for opposing the Prophet’s family.

Whether one sympathizes or disagrees with the views and conduct of Ali b. Abi Talib and his party, a researcher of Islamic history should consult a few studies (e.g. the works of W. Madelung and S.H.M Jafri) to become acquainted with the numerous Companions of the Prophet venerated in the Shī‘i and early pro-‘Alid (or pro ahl al-bayt) Sunni tradition. One will conclude Shī‘i antipathy for Ali’s rivals may be true, but animosity toward Companions as an entire group would be inaccurate.
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Ironically, some Companions praised in the Shī‘ī tradition are attacked and/or ignored in the Sunni tradition, which claims to venerate “all” Companions. Examples of Companions who are attacked or whose pro-‘Alid tendencies are considered problematic in the Sunni tradition include Muhammad b. Abi Bakr, Hukaym b. Jabala, Hujr b. Adi, Sulayman b. Surad al-Khuza‘i, Muslim b. ‘Awsaja and Abu Tufayl ‘Amr b. Wathila. How does Sunnism view the political careers and the trustworthiness of these pro-‘Alid Companions? Most Sunni thinkers will find the question unsettling due to (1) an aversion to discussing events regarding the period known as “fitna” and (2) the conduct of these Companions, which seem to validate Shī‘ī views regarding history.

Sayed Ammar Nakshawani in the following work not only corrects the widespread misconception that the Shī‘ī intellectual tradition despises and curses all Companions, but also clarifies the reason for which some Companions were considered people of Paradise in the Shī‘ī (and usually the Sunni) tradition. In a few places, the author notes reasons for which the Imāmī tradition does not venerate certain Companions. Many Muslims will likely find those sections of the book controversial and contest the authenticity of some of the relied upon reports. Discussing controversial history as it relates to Companions and the ahl al-bayt remains a difficult enterprise, where methods and premises, let alone conclusions, substantially differ from scholar to scholar. What qualifies as “offensive”? Have Muslims developed a
method to critically and fairly discuss issues that one party may consider offensive? Can such discussions occur without falling into polemics, where one assumes *a priori* the malicious intent of the opposition or the infallibility of one’s own interpretation? The popularity of literalism and absolutism in many Muslim communities leaves prospects for any immediate change in the discourse bleak.

It is no secret that Sunnism, based on a famous hadith, generally presents a different list of “ten promised Paradise” consisting of revered political figures. For the benefit of the reader, critiques regarding the authenticity of the Sunni report within Shi‘ism are cited below.

Sunnī hadith literature famously names a list of “ten promised Paradise,” beginning with the first four caliphs, Talhah, Zubayr, Sa‘īd b. Abī Waqqas, ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Awf, Abu ‘Ubaydah al-Jarrah and Sa‘īd b. Zayd. However, the report is doubted in the Imami tradition for a few reasons. First, the hadith is considered a “solitary report,” which some theologians did not consider to be valid in establishing theological tenets. Second, the only Companion who may have narrated this report was Sa‘īd b. Zayd who included himself in the list. In light of the Qur’anic prohibition, “And do not claim purity for yourselves” (Q53:32), Shaykh al-Mufid argues that testimony attesting to one’s own character is not considered authoritative in legal disputes (see *al-Ifsah*, p.71-89). The hadith of Sa‘īd can be rejected since other trustworthy witnesses besides the claimant himself have not corroborated it. Al-Mufid also
cites one narrative in which Imam Ali heard the hadith, rejected its attribution to the Prophet, and considered it the claim of Saʿid (al-Kafiʾah, p. 24-5). According to al-Amīnī, recensions of the hadith that are attributed to ʿAbd al-Rahman b. ʿAwf (d. 32 AH) are unacceptable since there is a missing link between him and the next narrator, Hamīd b. ʿAbd al-Rahman (d. 107 AH). Hamīd was either born a year after ibn ʿAwf’s death or in the same year (see al-Ghadīr, 10:122). Third, the hadith names the most famous political rivals of Ali and polemically guarantees their salvation, when members of the community hotly debated the righteousness and openly condemned some of these Companions for over a century (e.g. Talhah, Zubayr and Ali himself). Thus, the hadith reflects late second-century Sunni attempts to become non-partisan by rehabilitating all Companions as righteous rather than acknowledging earlier debates and tensions. Sunnism eventually claimed that all six individuals named in the council to elect the third caliph represented those surviving Companions promised Paradise. An indication of the non-existence of the hadith and/or this theological belief at the time of the election is Saʿid b. Zayd’s conspicuous absence. Why doesn’t ʿUmar or anyone on the council request Saʿid’s presence if the Prophet had named them all together? Finally, the hadith clearly ignores the names of (1) famous Ansar from Medina, (2) those Meccans guaranteed Paradise who were not from Quraysh (e.g. Ammar b. Yasir and his family), and (3) those who supported Ali’s wars
during his caliphate. The author includes members from these three excluded groups in the entries below.

As an expert of the Shī‘ī tradition, Sayed Ammar Nakshawani presents relevant Shī‘ī hagiographical narratives for non-specialists who would otherwise be unaware of them. Future historiographical studies can no longer ignore Imami literature that venerates Companions. Thus, the following biographies fill a lacuna in knowledge about Companions not only revered in the Shī‘ī tradition, but according to the collective memory of pro-Alid Sunni and Shī‘ī authors, granted Paradise.

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Works Cited
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