Introduction

A few verses of the Qurʾān (33:6, 33:53) instruct Muslims to revere the Prophet's wives as the "mothers" of the faithful. Men should always respect their private spaces. One should ask permission before entering their homes and stay behind a partition when interacting with them. Over the centuries, those who despised the Prophet's son-in-law, ʿAlī, claimed that he scandalously flouted such commandments. According to these story-tellers, ʿAlī would secretly climb the walls of the home belonging to a wife of the Prophet to see her. They narrated that ʿAlī did this so frequently that his fingernails were reduced to stubs.[1]

This book examines the stories that some Muslims shared about a respected caliph in Islamic history, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661). The unique aspect of this study is that none of these tales come from his admirers. Rather, our informants will be individuals who considered him a man prone to error and misguidance. Evidently, from the example above, some portrayed him as a peeping Tom.

ʿAlī can be considered one of the most contested figures in Islamic history. Within a few centuries of his death, he had become a respected authority in both Sunnī and Shīʿī Islam, with the latter tradition especially dedicated to his veneration. However, his nearly universal portrayal in Muslim literature as a pious authority obscures a centuries-long process of contestation and rehabilitation. In fact, ʿAlī's revered status in Muslim theology and historiography is surprising in view of the early

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[1] Abū 'l-Shaykh, *Ṭabaqāt al-muḥaddithīn bi-Iṣbahān*, 3:303; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 23:517; Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil*, 4:266. In some versions of this report, the names of ʿAlī and Umm Salama are omitted: see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:229; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, 2:771.

successes of two separate parties that essentially destroyed him, namely, the Khawārij (sing. Khārijī) and the Umayyads. The former declared ʿAlī an infidel and managed to assassinate him. Their ideology survived and persisted throughout Islamic history in the doctrines of a small sect, the Ibāḍīs. The Umayyads (r. 40–132/661–750) were ʿAlī's political rivals and staunchly denounced him, his legacy, his descendants, and his partisans as criminals, both in his lifetime and after his death. Shortly after his assassination, they succeeded in obtaining the reins of the caliphate and establishing a dynasty based in Syria that lasted close to a century. Medieval sources indicate that rhetoric and propaganda hostile to ʿAlī once permeated all public discourse. When the Umayyad state fell, it is generally assumed that hostility to the legacy of ʿAlī was swept away with it as the Umayyads were replaced by a new dynasty, the ʿAbbāsids, that venerated him. The real story, of course, is not so simple.

This book considers the enduring legacy of early Muslims who were hostile to ʿAlī and his descendants, the ʿAlids. Later Muslim authors acknowledged the existence of such figures associated with "anti-ʿAlid sentiment" (naṣb) up to the ninth century. Later representatives of both Sunnī and Shīʿī orthodoxy condemned anti-ʿAlid sentiment as heretical, but many of these anti-ʿAlids nonetheless became revered figures in Sunnī Islam. They made literary contributions that subsequent Sunnī authorities transmitted, and circulated views about ʿAlī that later Sunnīs partially accepted as accurate. This book identifies those anti-ʿAlids and the ways in which their beliefs have impacted Sunnī Islam.

Anti-ʿAlid sentiment has received little scholarly attention for a number of reasons. First, unlike pro-ʿAlid sentiment, which found intellectual backing in Shīʿism, anti-ʿAlid sentiment in its most radical form was not represented by a parallel independent and enduring sect. Radical anti-ʿAlids participated in a variety of ideological and political circles, but it seems that the sects that flourished did not fully embrace their doctrines. Sunnīs adopted only the more moderate beliefs espoused by anti-ʿAlids active in pro-Umayyad and ʿUthmānī circles. The same can be said about Ibāḍism, the sole surviving branch of the Khārijī community that once encompassed numerous rival factions. The Ibāḍīs denounced other, now extinct Khārijī sects as extremists and hence did not preserve the literary works of their rivals. Although Ibāḍīs today mildly condemn ʿAlī and reject any veneration of him, Khārijī anti-ʿAlidism was much more pronounced in previous centuries. Consequently, heresiographers writing in later centuries did not dedicate separate chapters to anti-ʿAlids.

Second, there was a sectarian incentive for Sunnīs to deny the existence of anti-ʿAlid sentiment among the leading personalities who were popularly depicted as harboring such beliefs. The acknowledgment of anti-ʿAlid feelings on the part of any Companion of Muḥammad was irreconcilable with belief in the righteousness of *all* Companions and in the superiority of the earliest generations of Muslims, positions that became orthodox in Sunnism. Certain historical precedents, such as the ritual cursing of ʿAlī from Umayyad pulpits, were undeniably anti-ʿAlid. In these cases, many Sunnīs advised against discussing the problematic events altogether.[2] Scholars argued that such discussions were divisive and had the potential to lead Muslims astray by causing them to dislike some Companions and other venerable predecessors. This kind of history fell under the rubric of *fitna* (civil war: lit., "sedition") and was best avoided. An obvious source of concern for anti-Shīʿī polemicists was that the Sunnī *ḥadīth* corpus occasionally validated Shīʿī arguments about the sinfulness of some Companions and other early authorities.

Sunnī historiography preserves accounts in which Companions, Followers (*tābiʿūn*), caliphs, and other respected authorities appear hostile to ʿAlī. The *Ansāb al-ashrāf* of al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), for example, includes numerous reports depicting ʿAlī's pro-Umayyad and ʿUthmānī rivals as anti-ʿAlid. The transmitters of these reports likely did not deem it necessary to interpret conflicts between Companions charitably so as to make all of the participants appear righteous. In these sources, Companions are capable of sins and crimes.[3] Loathing ʿAlī is one sin among others that include the sale and consumption of intoxicants,[4] lying,[5] adultery,[6] and mass

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[2] Ibn Abī 'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, 20:10–12; al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, 16:321–322.

[3] One example is al-Balādhurī's treatment of ʿUthmān: see Keaney, *Medieval Islamic Historiography*, 30.

[4] For reports about Samura b. Jundab selling intoxicants and Muʿāwiya serving intoxicants to guests, see Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 1:25, 5:347. For a report about Muʿāwiya selling them during the caliphate of ʿUthmān, see Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*, 4:828. In later sources, Muʿāwiya's name is omitted so that the owner of the alcohol remains anonymous: see Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 34:420; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba*, 3:299.

[5] Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr pledge allegiance to ʿAlī and ask him permission to leave Medina for pilgrimage when their real intentions are to launch a rebellion: see Ibn Abī 'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, 10:248. The two are described as swearing false oaths to ʿĀʾisha in the course of their rebellion: see ibid., 9:311; al-Iskāfī, *al-Miʿyār*, 56; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, 2:358. For a report about Ibn al-Zubayr doing the same, see Abū 'l-Fidāʾ, *Tārīkh*, 1:173; Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *al-Futūḥ*, 2:458; al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, 2:286.

[6] For the case involving al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba and Umm Jamīl, see ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, 7:384; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 8:234–235; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 6:560; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, 5:187.

murder.[7] But by the end of the ninth century, proto-Sunnīs had generally come to reject or reinterpret such reports to avoid identifying their own religious and political authorities as anti-ʿAlid.[8] Such identification would have not only validated the complaints of ʿAlid insurrectionists, who were considered enemies of the state, but also vindicated the claims of their partisans (Shīʿīs), who believed that non-Shīʿīs persistently ignored the rights of ʿAlids and treated them unjustly. Thus, Sunnīs had an incentive to deny the historicity of accounts that depicted certain Companions as anti-ʿAlids. Whenever possible, Sunnī biographers and theologians interpreted reports about anti-ʿAlids so that their actions did not entail animosity for ʿAlī. For example, they portray the rebellion of ʿAlī's most famous antagonist, the future Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–80), as prompted by a simple misunderstanding between the two.[9] In other reports, Muʿāwiya is described as openly admiring and weeping for ʿAlī.[10] As a result, anti-ʿAlid sentiment came to possess an *erased history* in Sunnī Islam.[11] Influential *ḥadīth* scholars of the ninth century began to condemn and cease transmitting many early anti-ʿAlid doctrines that had enjoyed popularity in the Umayyad period. The erasure of the history of anti-ʿAlid sentiment entailed not only its disappearance, but also a denial that it had ever existed among the Companions or their partisans. The suppression of earlier depictions becomes apparent only with a sustained reading of *ḥadīth*, biographical dictionaries, and theological texts.

The absence of anti-ʿAlidism as an independent sect in heresiographies explains the fact that secondary literature generally contains only brief, tangential notes about individuals accused of anti-ʿAlid sentiment without providing a framework to contextualize and judge such claims.

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[7] Busr b. Abī Arṭāt is infamous for the murderous raids he led near the end of ʿAlī's caliphate: see Madelung, *Succession*, 299–307.

[8] One can compare portrayals of ʿAlī's political rivals in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (or Madelung's *The Succession to Muḥammad*) to their presentation in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba*. For a passionate defense of the righteousness of Companions and a refutation of their alleged sins, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-ʿAwāṣim*, 280–281, 289, 340. For studies on the historiography of Companions, see Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 221–285; Osman, "ʿAdālat al-Ṣaḥāba."

[9] According to these Sunnīs, Muʿāwiya and other rebels wanted to punish ʿUthmān's murderers right away, while ʿAlī desired to delay such action until civil strife had subsided. Some Sunnīs speculated that Muʿāwiya believed that the punishment of murderers was a collective obligation (*farḍ kafāʾī*) that anyone could carry out independent of a ruling authority, while ʿAlī believed otherwise: see Amaḥzūn, *Taḥqīq mawāqif al-ṣaḥāba fī ʾl-fitna*, 454; al-Khamīs, *Ḥiqba min al-tārīkh*, 117–120.

[10] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 24:401–402.

[11] On erased histories, identity politics, and their relationship to memories of pain, see Brown, "Wounded Attachments."

Asma Afsaruddin, Abbas Barzegar, Patricia Crone, Wilferd Madelung, Christopher Melchert, and Muhammad Qasim Zaman have all commented on early anti-ʿAlid attitudes in the nascent Sunnī community, but they have offered neither a comprehensive rubric nor a chronological narrative for understanding the phenomenon.[12] This work aims to fill this lacuna in the study of anti-ʿAlid sentiment in Islamic history.

I survey medieval Muslim literature (from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries) across a number of genres, including ḥadīth, biographical, historical, and theological works. References to anti-ʿAlids are frequently elusive and brief. Nonetheless, the diversity of the sources provides rich portrayals of a few key anti-ʿAlid figures and their alleged beliefs. I consider common themes in these texts and the reception of this literature among prominent medieval Muslim scholars who discussed them.

Chapter 1 identifies the phenomenon of anti-ʿAlid sentiment in its varied expressions in early Muslim political and intellectual history. The chapter also provides a framework for researchers to locate and contextualize anti-ʿAlid doctrines that appear in later Sunnī and Ibāḍī historiography. I identify six distinct positions on ʿAlī held by Muslims, and I arrange these doctrines on a spectrum from the ardently pro-ʿAlid to the radically anti-ʿAlid to enable readers to (1) interpret literary depictions of ʿAlī and (2) situate authors who engaged in theological discussions about ʿAlī with like-minded peers even when they were separated by sectarian boundaries, geography, and hundreds of years. The remainder of the book is devoted to the study of influential personalities in Islamic history who articulated anti-ʿAlid doctrines or showed sympathy for them. These case studies are organized chronologically.

Chapter 2 examines the doctrines of two sociopolitical factions that influenced later Sunnī thought: the Umayyads and the ʿUthmāniyya. These two factions were most active in the earliest periods of Islamic history (the seventh and eighth centuries). Historians have attributed the earliest expressions of anti-ʿAlid sentiment to members of these groups (alongside the Khawārij). Since anti-ʿAlids active before the fall of the Umayyads did not leave primary documents discussing ʿAlī, this chapter relies on ḥadīth and on biographical and historical literature to elucidate the doctrines of the two groups. The historicity of these portrayals is not of primary importance for this literary survey. At the very least, this literature

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[12] *EI²*, s.v. "Imāma" (W. Madelung), "ʿUthmāniyya" (P. Crone); Afsaruddin, *Excellence*, 14–23; Barzegar, "Remembering Community"; Crone, *God's Rule*, 20–32; Melchert, "The Rightly Guided Caliphs," 65–68; Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 49–63.

6   Introduction

documents for us the memories of later Muslims about this early period. Subsequent chapters access the views of influential authors and the religious communities that they represented primarily through the texts they penned themselves.

The case studies in Chapter 2 include Companions of the Prophet and other early Muslims who were portrayed as anti-ʿAlids. A commitment to the belief in the righteousness of the Companions played an important role in the reception of anti-ʿAlid *ḥadīth* in Sunnī Islam. It created an incentive for scholars to reject or charitably reinterpret not only texts that disparaged ʿAlī but also those that portrayed other Companions despising him.

Chapter 3 examines the views of ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869), a Muʿtazilī bellettrist who lived in a period in which anti-ʿAlid sentiment still ran high in various parts of the Muslim world. His *Risālat al-ʿUthmāniyya* examines the views of one of the factions introduced in the previous chapter and constitutes a seminal text for understanding this anti-ʿAlid current in early Islam. The work of al-Jāḥiẓ foreshadows that of another author, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), discussed in Chapter 5. Both provide comprehensive arguments and many proofs in favor of anti-ʿAlid doctrines while claiming to be Muslims who respected ʿAlī. Al-Jāḥiẓ's treatise triggered a number of rebuttals from authors who condemned him as an anti-ʿAlid.

Chapter 4 discusses the literary heritage of one of the least discussed sects in Islamic history, Ibāḍism. The Ibāḍīs portray ʿAlī as having been a righteous Muslim and a legitimate caliph until the end of the battle of Ṣiffīn.[13] At that point, they believe, he fell from grace in his quest for power. This image of ʿAlī differs from ʿUthmānī and Umayyad portrayals of him as vicious and sinful throughout his life. This chapter draws primarily on the *Kitāb al-Dalīl* of Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Wārjalānī (d. 570/1175), an influential Ibāḍī scholar, complemented by expressions of anti-ʿAlid views in other authoritative Ibāḍī historical works. Ibāḍī communities in Oman, Zanzibar, and North Africa still rely on such works to understand history and this suggests that the Khārijī legacy of anti-ʿAlidism survives even in the contemporary world.

Chapter 5 examines the writings of the highly influential Sunnī scholar Ibn Taymiyya and those of some of his detractors, who accused him of advocating anti-ʿAlid doctrines. Ibn Taymiyya discussed his views of ʿAlī and anti-ʿAlids in his multivolume anti-Shīʿī work *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*. His anti-ʿAlid and anti-Shīʿī claims illuminate the tension

[13] Al-Kāshif, ed., *al-Siyar*, 1:97–104, 371, 375; al-Wārjalānī, *Kitāb al-Dalīl*, 1:28.

that some Sunnīs (and their predecessors such as al-Jāḥiẓ) faced in oppos-
ing Shīʿism while simultaneously rejecting anti-ʿAlid sentiments.

The concluding chapter reconsiders certain important assumptions
about anti-ʿAlid sentiment: namely, that it was limited to the early
Umayyads and Khawārij, and that it played no role in shaping Sunnī
theology. Instead, my literary excavation reveals strong indications of an
enduring legacy that continued to shape medieval and contemporary Sunnī
views about ʿAlī. The conclusion also discusses the methods that Sunnīs
used to transform ʿAlī from a villainous character to a righteous one.
I draw on canonical *ḥadīth* and parallel recensions in other works to
argue that Sunnī writers actively engaged in the process of rehabilitating
ʿAlī by censoring, reinterpreting, and emending texts that portrayed him
negatively and by circulating counterclaims that exalted him. Scholars also
selectively appropriated anti-ʿAlid reports to modulate ʿAlī's image. They
tempered the pro-ʿAlid (and Shīʿī) portrayal of ʿAlī as an impeccable saint
via reports that portrayed him as sinful or frequently mistaken. On the
whole, we can consider Sunnī efforts to construct an image of ʿAlī that
differed from both Shīʿī and anti-ʿAlid views to have been successful. After
three centuries of contestation, Sunnīs came to value ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib
universally as nothing less than a knowledgeable Companion, a valiant
warrior, and the fourth rightly guided caliph. Most Sunnīs subsequently
understood the succession of rightly guided caliphs to indicate their spirit-
ual ranks in the sight of God. Accordingly, ʿAlī could not have acceded to
the caliphate before ʿUthmān, ʿUmar, or Abū Bakr since God had ensured
that those with the most merit would rule first. However, beyond this
simple picture lies an intense history of debate among Muslims both inside
and outside the Sunnī community.[14]

Sectarianism between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs is widespread in the Middle
East, and continues to affect the region's geopolitics. Public figures in the
Middle East aiming to stir up fear or outrage among their supporters may
cite historical fault lines between sects in order to drum up opposition to
"the other." For example, Arab Shīʿīs are accused of being agents of Iran.
Shīʿīs commonly describe Sunnīs supportive of anti-Shīʿī doctrines as
"anti-ʿAlids" (*nawāṣib*). Sunnīs vigorously deny the accusation while
nevertheless condemning Shīʿī devotion to ʿAlī as misguided. Obviously,
there is a longstanding debate on what can and cannot be categorized
as "anti-ʿAlid." For example, some Sunnīs deny that the esteemed

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[14] For an excellent study of debates regarding spiritual precedence, merit, and their relation-
ship to Muslim debates on the caliphate, see Afsaruddin, *Excellence*.

personalities discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 were truly anti-ʿAlids. This book notes these debates and theorizes a framework for resolving such identity questions. I have aimed to make its writing style accessible to a wider audience while providing extensive references to engage with current scholarship.[15] Appendices to Chapters 1, 2, and 5 offer extracts from anti-ʿAlid texts in English translation as illustrative supplements to the themes discussed in their respective chapters.

EARLY PORTRAYALS OF ʿALĪ

This study is not a biography of ʿAlī, although Muslim historiography regarding his life is central to it. Rather, it is an attempt to understand unfavorable depictions of ʿAlī popular in the Umayyad era and their subsequent transmission and reception among Muslim scholars. Despite the warranted objections to the term "proto-Sunnī,"[16] I use it to refer to authorities who lived between the eighth and tenth centuries and appear in influential Sunnī *ḥadīth* collections and legal texts. In spite of their differences, these proto-Sunnī authorities generally considered the first three caliphs to have been legitimate, and apparently abstained from attending Khārijī and Shīʿī circles of learning. Some proto-Sunnīs considered ʿAlī's life to have been one of complete wisdom, whereas others condemned his conduct. Contestation within the Sunnī community regarding ʿAlī's place in history, law, and theology is an important indication of his prominence in the literature.

The author of *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* was a Kūfan Shīʿī who denounced the majority of Muslims as misguided for following political leaders other than ʿAlī. Although the narratives in this polemical and hagiographical

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[15] For simplicity's sake, I reference *ḥadīth* as I do any other literature: I refer to the title of the collection, volume, and page number. Free online access to many of the editions I use is readily available with an Arabic-language search. One website, www.shiaonlinelibrary.com, has digitized essential texts from both the Shīʿī and Sunnī traditions. Those wishing to follow up my citation of a *ḥadīth* from a famous collection (e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 7:73 or al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 8:58) will find that they correspond to these digitized editions. To accommodate various editions of a single collection, academic conventions in the citation of *ḥadīth* have changed over the years to include *bāb*, *ḥadīth* number, or the first sentence of the text. One drawback to implementing these conventions is their inconsistent adoption for some *ḥadīth* collections and not others. For these reasons, I avoid their use and hope the above alternative meets the needs of those desiring to perform Arabic-language searches of *ḥadīth*.

[16] For a discussion of the methodological problems associated with the term, see Dann, "Contested Boundaries," 8–14.

Shīʿī text do not seem to offer any reliable historical information, its reproduction of a sermon of ʿAlī's summarizing the edicts of the first three caliphs deserves some attention.[17] The sermon depicts ʿAlī as a nonconformist, frequently disagreeing with the judgments of his predecessors and thus diverging from other Companions who adopted the opinions of the first three caliphs.[18] Shīʿī writers emphasized the motif of ʿAlī's nonconformism to the point of making it seem that ʿAlī never agreed with the actions of the other caliphs; but this depiction is not entirely faithful to the sources. Twelver Shīʿī law and ethics, which claim to reflect the opinions of ʿAlī, converge so frequently with Sunnism and the views of other Companions that the claim that ʿAlī *always* disagreed with his peers is unwarranted.

Nonetheless, this Umayyad-era portrayal of ʿAlī as a dissident is echoed by prominent proto-Sunnī *ḥadīth* transmitters, who depict him or his family members contradicting the first three caliphs on a variety of issues. They also report that ʿAlī considered himself to be the most qualified person to lead the community after the Prophet's death. *Naṣb* (anti-ʿAlid sentiment) and *tashayyuʿ* (pro-ʿAlid sentiment) stood against each other as currents in the nascent Sunnī community, always in perpetual conflict, both politically and intellectually. Anti-ʿAlids considered ʿAlī the worst calamity to befall the community, whereas his partisans saw him as a peerless and charismatic leader. A third group consisted of Muslims who were ambivalent about ʿAlī's personality and treated him simply as a Companion no different from other Companions of the Prophet. For them, ʿAlī was liable to making mistakes, but he was not evil. This middle ground between the warring factions eventually became the hallmark of Sunnism, and it enshrined the Sunni view of ʿAlī as a nondescript personality among many righteous peers.

Various Sunnī and Shīʿī sources have depicted ʿAlī's kin, close friends in Medina, and disciples in Kūfa as the earliest individuals who championed

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17 *Kitāb Sulaym*, 262–265; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 8:58–63 (for one relevant commentary). See also al-ʿAskarī, *Maʿālim*, 2:352–356.

18 For discussions regarding ʿAlī's views on the caliphate and the Prophet's estates, see *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, s.v. "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib" (F. Manouchehri, M. Melvin-Koushki, R. Shah-Kazemi, et al.); Jafri, *Origins*; Madelung, *Succession*. For the divergent opinions of ʿAlī and his family on the origin of the *adhān*, the phrase "come to the best of works," *sahm dhī ʾl-qurba*, the waiting period of a widow who is pregnant, and certain rituals related to the pilgrimage, see Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣīlī, *Musnad*, 5:123–124; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 1:135; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 1:425; Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, 1:244, 3:342, 374, 393–394, 4:341; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 11:155–156; Ibn Shāhīn, *Nāsikh al-ḥadīth wa mansūkhuh*, 272–275.

his views and resolutely followed them despite their divergence from the community's normative practice. This pro-ʿAlid faction generally believed that the community had wronged ʿAlī in rebelling against him during his reign as caliph, while some considered him the direct heir of the Prophet's authority. Shīʿism eventually came to represent the sentiments of the latter group and developed its own literary tradition that embellished (sometimes clearly ahistorical) anecdotes in which ʿAlī would display his superior wisdom at the expense of the first three caliphs.[19] However, the same motif exists implicitly in Sunnī sources as well.[20] Theological, historical, and biographical works written in Sunnī and Shīʿī circles alike mention individuals and groups who believed in the superiority of ʿAlī (*tafḍīl ʿAlī*) in relation to other Companions. For example, members of ʿAlī's own clan (the Hāshimids), a number of Companions, and Kūfans who fought for him all appear as proponents of *tafḍīl ʿAlī* in various genres of Sunnī literature. Some Muʿtazilī and Sufi scholars became proponents of *tafḍīl ʿAlī* in later centuries. It is frequently unclear whether this *tafḍīl* was spiritual, political, or both.[21] The scope of this book, however, is limited to the study of anti-ʿAlid sentiment.

Anti-ʿAlidism appears to have been fairly common among some populations before its suppression and virtual extinction among Sunnīs. Early anti-ʿAlids despised the personality of ʿAlī and considered him to have been evil. They likewise condemned those who cherished the memory of ʿAlī as heretics. On the other hand, influential *ḥadīth* scholars of the ninth century, such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), are reported to have expressed public discontent with peers and predecessors who had displayed anti-ʿAlid sentiment.[22] The formation of Sunnism as a social and intellectual tradition seems to have encouraged the censure of eccentric views at both the pro-ʿAlid and the anti-ʿAlid end of the spectrum.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY

This book does not attempt to provide a definitive narrative of the life of ʿAlī or to judge the historicity of the reports on which it draws. The historicity of accounts describing events in the life of the Prophet and his

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[19] For example, see Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, 2:178–194.
[20] For example, see Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Sunan*, 2:339; al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Mustadrak*, 1:457; al-Khuwārizmī, *al-Manāqib*, 80–81, 95–96, 99–101.
[21] For a comprehensive study of *tafḍīl ʿAlī*, see Mamdūḥ, *Ghāyat al-tabjīl*, 113–205.
[22] See Chapter 6.