

Umayyad Ideology and the Recurrence of the Past

Ideología omeya y el recurso al pasado

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the reign of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz (ʿUmar II) as the beginning of the end of the Umayyad power. Here we are referring to the so-called ‘reforms’ of ʿUmar II, which directly impacted Umayyad propaganda tools; such as history, poetry, and polemics, were severally damaged. The paper shows that it was these reforms and none other, which outlasted the Umayyads by severally hampering their efforts at maintaining their hegemony on legitimacy.

Keywords: Umayyads, propaganda, Sirah, Umar b. Abd al-Azīz, Abd al-Malik Bin Marwan, Islamic legitimacy, Islamic history, the fall of the Umayyads.

RESUMEN

Este documento analiza el reinado de ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz (ʿUmar II) como el inicio del fin del poder de los Omeyas. Con ello nos referimos a las llamadas “reformas” de ʿUmar II, que afectaron directamente a las herramientas de propaganda de los Omeyas, tales como la historia, la poesía y los debates, que fueron dañadas severamente. El documento demuestra fueron estas reformas y no de otras las que sobrevivieron a los Omeyas obstaculizando sus esfuerzos por mantener una hegemonía basada en la legitimidad.

Palabras clave: propaganda omeya, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyya, Umar b. Abd al-Azīz, Abd al-Malik b. Marwan, legitimidad islámica, historia del Islam, caída de los Omeya.

SUMARIO: 1. Modern Scholarship on Umayyad [il]legitimacy, 2. Umayyad Propaganda, 3. ʿUmar II’s Reforms, 4. Umayyad Propaganda Tools, 4.1 Polemics, 4.2 Panegyric Poetry, 4.3 Selective History.

The Beginning of al-Da‘wah

Abū Ja‘far said: And in this year—I mean the year 100—Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās sent Maysarah from the land of al-Sharāt to Iraq, and [he sent] Muḥammad b. Khunays and Abā ‘Ikrimah al-Sarrāj... to Khurāsān,... and he ordered them to propagandize for him and his household...¹

The above statement by the historian and Qur’ān commentator Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310 A.H./839-923 C.E.) may simply reflect an historical coincidence: that it was during the reign of the eighth Umayyad caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz (99-101 A.H./717-720 C.E. henceforth ‘Umar II) that the ‘Abbasid propaganda machine began. Others see it as a form of “topos” or literary trope,² having to do with apocalyptic notions surrounding the centennial of the Anno Hijri. Muslim historians, such as al-Ṭabarī in this case, saw that there was a direct correlation between ‘Umar II’s reign and the ‘Abbasid revolution, albeit maybe simply that the ‘Abbasid propaganda machine began to take affect during his reign. This after all is not a simple statement of ‘fact,’ rather it has a multitude of important ramifications especially with regard to our paper. Our paper argues that ‘Umar II’s reign was the period in which Umayyad propaganda was severally damaged. Here we are referring to the so-called ‘reforms’ of ‘Umar II.

There are a number of factors to which historians have attributed the fall of the Umayyads, none of which have anything to do with the loss of Umayyad propaganda: the *mawālī* issue, fiscal failures³, the Qaysī-Yamanī rivalry, Kharijite and ‘Alid rebellions, internecine actions by the Umayyads themselves⁴, and of course there are those scholars who attribute all of the above as factors in the demise of the Umayyads.⁵ There cannot be any question as to the important and

¹ AL-ṬABARĪ *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1960-1970, 6:562 [2/1358]. We shall refer to the page numbers of the European edition (*Annales quos scripsit Abu Dja'far Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1879-1901)), which are on the margins of the Cairo edition, throughout this article. In his translation of al-Ṭabarī, Powers comments on the above report, saying, “Even if the suspicions of Western scholars regarding the chronological accuracy of this report are justified, it is nevertheless the case that the ‘Abbasid propaganda was in place by the year 104/722-723.” POWERS, David Stephen, *The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. XXIV: The Empire in Transition*, Albany: State University Press of New York, 1985, xvi.

² NOTH, Albrecht, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, trans. Michael Bonner, Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994, 62-63, 110-111.

³ BLANKINSHIP, Khalid Yahya, *The end of the jihād state: the reign of Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

⁴ ‘ISĀ, Riyāḍ, *Al-Nizā‘ bayna afrād al-bayt al-Umawī wa-dawruhu fī suqūṭ al-khilāfah al-Umawīyah*, Damascus: Dār Hassān lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa-al-Nashr, 1985.

⁵ FARRŪK, ‘Umar, *Tārīkh ṣadr al-Islām wa-al-dawlah al-Umawīyah*. Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1976; HAWTING, G.R., *The First Dynasty of Islam: the Umayyad Caliphate A.D. 661-750*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press., 1987; ṬAQQŪSH, Muḥammad Suhayl, *Tārīkh al-dawlah al-Umawīyah 132-41 H 661-750 M*, Beirut: Dār al-Nafā‘is, 1996; al-ṢALLĀBĪ, Muḥammad ‘Alī, *Al-Dawlah al-Umawīyah: ‘awāmil al-izdihār wa-tadā‘iyāt al-inhiyār*, Cairo: Dār al-Yaqīn lil-

very devastating impact that the above factors have had on the Umayyad dynasty, but previous scholars have severally overlooked the loss of the Umayyad's capacity to appeal to their Syrian supporters.

Much of the literary anecdotes one finds in the sources are a way in which the author or the transmitter tries to explain or embellish in a more pleasing manner his understanding of a known or accepted historical incident. It has become quite clear that there are layers of narratives in which the modern scholar has to sift through every time they are about to discuss one part or the whole of early Islamic history (610-770). These layers are molded by the source(s) from which the historian has gotten them or/and from the particular historian that is utilizing them.⁶ It is clear that there were definite efforts on the part of 'Umar II to reform the empire and one of those was the curtailing of Umayyad propaganda.

1. MODERN SCHOLARSHIP ON UMAYYAD [IL]LEGITIMACY

Much has been written on Umayyad [il]legitimacy in the secondary sources. In fact, most historical works that deal with the Umayyads start with a preamble on their accession to power as a clear divergence from that of the previous caliphs, especially with regards to their Islamic credentials.⁷ Some scholars have come to diametrically oppose the previous view and in fact have shown that the Umayyads were rather saturated in their Islamic credentials.⁸ We agree with this assessment

Nashr wa-al-Tawzīf, 2006. All of the above authors attribute the demise of the Umayyads to the above mentioned factors, Ṭaqqūsh is typical in that he devotes eight chapters to the problems of the Umayyads such as the internal struggle amongst the heirs, the tribal rivalries, the Arab chauvinism and the *mawālī* problem, the sectarian divide all of which lead to the 'bleeding' of the Umayyads and finally to their demise.

⁶ AL-SAYYID, Riḍwān, "Min al-khabar i'llā al-tārīkh: fikrat al-tārīkh wa-al-kitābah al-tārīkhiyyah al-'Arabiyyah", *Al-Manarah* VIII: 2 (2002) L 85-98, KESHK, Khaled, *The Historians' Mu'āwiya: The Depiction of Mu'āwiya in the Early Islamic Sources*, Saarbrücken, VDM Verlag Dr Müller, 2008, esp. 13-21.

⁷ WELLHAUSEN, J., *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, trans. Margaret Graham Weir, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927, especially 1-113; LAMMENS, Henri, *Etudes Sur le Siècle des Omayyades*, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1930; PETERSEN, Erling Ladewig, *'Alī and Mu'āwiya in early Arabic Tradition*, trans. P. Lampe Christensen, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1974; LAPIDUS, Ira M., "The Separation of State and Religion in the Development of Early Islamic Society". *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6 (1975): 368-369; SHARON, Moshe, "The Development of the Debate Around the Legitimacy of Authority in Early Islam". *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984): 121-141. Sharon's article does not really belong to either this camp or the one mentioned below, but it is an important contribution to the legitimacy issue and we felt it important to add it here; 'ĀQIL, Nabih, *Dirāsāt fī al-'Aṣr al-Umawī*, 4th ed., Damascus: University of Damascus, 1991-1992; AL-WAKĪL, Muḥammad al-Sayyid, *Al-Umawīyyūn bayn al-Sharq wal-Gharb: Dirāsah Wasfiyyah wa-Taḥlīliyyah li-Dawlah al-Umawīyyah*, Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1995.

⁸ CRONE, Patricia and HINDS, Martin, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; HAWTING, *The First Dynasty of Islam*. Hawting, Crone and Hinds espoused ideas that have been summarily dismissed as lacking in sound readings of the sources, see Uri Rubin and Abdulhadi Alajmi below; AL-SAYYID, Riḍwān, "Ru'yat

and add that the Umayyads did in fact see themselves as the natural (God-decreed) leaders of the Islamic Empire. They in fact perpetuated this argument through their ‘theological’ propaganda. There are many cases where the early Umayyads championed one theological argument over another depending on its utilitarian value to their rule. A case in point is the whole commissioning of the *kitāb al-‘Irjā’*. Here, whether we believe that ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān commissioned al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya or that al-Ḥasan dedicated it to the caliph; a theological argument in the acceptance of the status quo; the suspension of judgment; and the delegitimization of opposition to the rule of the Umayyads be it peaceful or violent is encompassed in one treatise.⁹ The Umayyads were very interested in utilizing other propaganda tools such as but not limited to: poetry, architecture, coinage, polemics, and selective history. The early Umayyads were in favor of pre-Islamic poetry and tales of pre-Islamic Arabia, *ayyām al-‘Arab*, which they cultivated in their courts. In an anecdote found in al-Mas‘ūdī, we are told that Mu‘āwiyah b. Abū Sufyān (r. 38-60 A.H./ 657-680 C.E.)¹⁰ used to spend a third of the night listening to stories of the Arabs, the Persians, and other peoples.¹¹ The sources show that the Umayyads did not have any interest in, unlike their opposition, the history of the struggles between the Prophet and Quraysh, which included all the heroics of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār.¹² Quite the opposite the sources show that there was an

al-Khilāfah wa-Bunyat al-Dawlah fī al-Islām”. *Al-Ijtihād*, vol. 4, 13-16 (1991-1992): 11-45; idem, “Al-Khilāfah wa-al-Mulk: Dirāsah fī al-Ru’yah al-Umawīyyah lil-Sulṭah”. *Proceedings of the Third Symposium on the History of Bilād al-Shām during the Umayyad Period. The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām*, ed. Muḥammad Adnan Bakhīt (Amman: University of Jordan, 1989), 96-142; AL-QĀDĪ, Wadād, “The Religious Foundation of Late Umayyad ideology and Practice” in *Saber religioso y poder político en el Islam: Actas del simposio internacional, Granada, 15-18 Ocotobre 1991*, ed. Manuela Marin and Mercedes García-Arenal, Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1994, 231-273. Here Qādī looks at the period between 101/720-132/750; RUBIN, Uri, “Prophets and Caliphs: The Biblical Foundations of the Umayyad Authority” in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, ed. Herbert Berg, Leiden: Brill, 2003, 73-101; AGHA, Saleh Said and KHĀLIDĪ, Tarif, “Poetry and Identity in the Umayyad Age”. *Al-Abḥāth* 50-51 (2002-2003), 55-119; ALAJMI, Abdulhadi, *Political Legitimacy in Early Islam: Al-Awzā’ī Interactions with the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid State*, Saarbrücken, VDM Verlag Dr Müller, 2009, esp. 166-197.

⁹ MADELUNG, W., “Murḍijī’a” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

¹⁰ For an explanation of the dating, see KESHK, Khaled, “When did Mu‘āwīya become Caliph?”. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 69:1 (2010): 31-43.

¹¹ AL-MAS‘ŪDĪ, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Ma‘ādin al-Jawhar*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥiyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1948, 3:40-41.

¹² There is one anecdote found in Ibn ‘Asākir (*Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* 59:150) wherein Mu‘āwiyah is on his way to Iraq to confront al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī after the death of the latter’s father. It is said that on his way there, for ten days the *quṣṣās* would tell the men stories (*yaqīṣūn*) and incite the Syrians at every prayer time. It is more than likely that these preachers/storytellers were inciting the people against al-Ḥasan and his supporters, as Ch. Pellat argues in his article on the *quṣṣās*, where he maintains that their function was two-fold during Mu‘āwiyah’s time: “to curse the enemies of Islam and all the infidels... [and] to explain the Qur’ān after the khutba on Fridays.” See “Kāṣṣ,” *EF²*; LEDER, Stefan, “The Literary Use of the *Khabar*: A Basic Form of Historical Writing”. In *The*

attempt by the Umayyads to suppress this particular period. Our clearest indication of such a policy comes to us from an incident that involves ‘Abd al-Malik and his son and second in line for the Caliphate, Sulaymān (r. 96-99 A.H./715-717 C.E.), who understood and even articulated the idea that stories from this particular period could pose a danger to his regime. Before we discuss that particular incident, a more thorough look at the propaganda tools utilized by the Umayyads in defense of their rule is in order.

2. Umayyad Propaganda

The Umayyads’ source of power and legitimacy was the region of al-Shām (Greater Syria). Its people represented the vanguard of the dynasty, their importance to the Umayyads can never be over emphasized; it was after all the Syrians who rocketed Mu‘āwiyah to power; it was at Jābiyya that the Syrians rescued the Umayyad dynasty from ignominy by choosing the Marwānids.

The Syrians themselves were a very interesting audience in that they were not familiar with the Hijāz milieu. They lacked information or background on the prophetic and early community experience that would be later cemented into the form that we know as the *sīrah*. The following story illustrates this very well: Mu‘āwiyah b. Abū Sufyān asked ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ to find him a man from the Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib who had a defect (*lūthah*), so ‘Amr suggested ‘Uqayl b. Abī Ṭālib. After the usual bantering,¹³ Mu‘āwiyah tried to demean ‘Uqayl, asking the Syrian audience if they knew that Abū Lahab in the Qur’ānic verse was a reference to ‘Uqayl’s paternal uncle. To this ‘Uqayl retorted that the following verse about the carrier of coal was a reference to the paternal aunt of Mu‘āwiyah.¹⁴ The above story dramatically illustrates the ignorance of the Syrian public about the specifics of the main characters of the prophetic *sīrah*. After all, Abū Lahab was a very important antagonist in the story of the Prophet and yet the Syrians had no idea of his relation or even his wife’s relation to the ruling elite!

Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material edit. Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1992, 277-315.

¹³ This topos is repeated through out the early Islamic sources when it comes to Mu‘āwiyah’s career after the first civil war: a Hashimite or an individual known for his piety points to the greatness of ‘Alī and his followers and the lowliness of Mu‘āwiyah and his followers. In this case, it is indicated that all of ‘Alī’s men at the battle of Ṣiffīn were from the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn, while all of Mu‘āwiyah’s men were from the Ṭulaqā’ and the Aḥzāb. For more on this phenomenon, see: PELLAT, Charles, « Le Culte de Mu‘āwiyah au IIIe siècle de l’hégire ». *Studia Islamica* 6 (1956): 53-66; Keshk, *The Historians’ Mu‘āwiyah*; EL-HIBRI, Tayeb, “The Redemption of Umayyad Memory by the ‘Abbāsids”. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 61:4 (2002): 241-265.

¹⁴ IBN BAKKĀR, Al-Zubayr, *Al-Akhbār al-Mawfaqīyyāt*, ed. Sāmī Makkī al-‘Ānī, Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1996, 277.

The Umayyads then not only had a number of tools in their arsenal: Syrian military might, and propaganda such as: poetry, architecture, coinage, polemics, and selective history, but also and perhaps more importantly, the target of this propaganda was the newly conquered regions, specifically the Syrian milieu.¹⁵ The dissemination of the propaganda was wide spread: panegyrics by the most famous poets were utilized quite effectively; monuments and buildings were quite extensive in much of the empire; coinage was standardized early; polemics, especially against ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib and his supporters, were widely spread and the use of selective history to champion the victory of the Umayyads over the enemy (whether internal or external) was told and retold at every opportunity. The suppression of any counter-propaganda went hand in hand with the above particularly in order to maintain Syrian loyalty. Since this propaganda machine seemed to have been very effective, what then happened? What major changes occurred that affected this propaganda? This gets us back to our first quote and the start of ‘Abbasid propaganda being tied to the reign of ‘Umar II. It is ‘Umar II, particularly his reforms that dealt the death blows to this powerful Umayyad propaganda machine.

3. ‘UMAR II’S REFORMS

Many modern scholars have articulated ‘Umar II’s reformer image.¹⁶ They have done so by consistently pointing to ‘Umar II’s military, fiscal, and social policies; which they see as much needed reforms that were vital for the survival of the Umayyads.

Much has been said about ‘Umar II’s reforming, or more accurately his attempts at reforming, the Islamic empire and the Umayyad dynasty. ‘Umar II is seen as a “genius” who realized that, in order for the Umayyad dynasty to survive, certain new policies needed to be implemented. These included an attempt at the reconciliation of the different groups that had arisen by his time; the assimilation of all Muslims regardless of their ethnicity into the empire; and the need for a sound fiscal policy. Some of these very same scholars have stated that the lack of implementation of these reforms, because of the untimely death of ‘Umar II contributed to the fall of the Umayyad dynasty.¹⁷ Scholars such as Nabia Abbot

¹⁵ One could add the Mesopotamian and North African milieus but one could argue that the former was under a military ‘iron-fist’ policy and the latter was under the direct rule (Egypt in particular) of members of the dynasty.

¹⁶ BORRUT, A., « Entre tradition et histoire: genèse et diffusion de l’image de ‘Umar II ». *Mélanges de l’université Saint-Joseph*, 58 (2005): 329-378.

¹⁷ ABBOTT, Nabia, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur’anic Commentary and Tradition*. Oriental Institute Publications Volume 76, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1967. Abbott believed that ‘Umar II was especially interested in a fiscal reform that adhered to strict Islamic precedents (see p. 32); LAPIDUS, Ira M., *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Lapidus writes that ‘Umar II understood that, “...the empire could no longer be an Arab empire

pointed to 'Umar II's interest in what they termed 'religious' and 'social' reform. The religious "reform" that is discussed is the idea that 'Umar II was the champion of tradition, especially prophetic tradition. The social reform also required knowledge of the precedents of the Prophet and his Companions, but this time in the form of the *sīrah* genre.

There are a few scholars who consider that 'Umar II represented a clear divergence from the rest of the Umayyads, not only in his personal conduct, but also in his capacity as caliph. H. M. T. Nagel points out that under the Umayyads the politico-religious opposition was developing along three main lines: the *Khawārij*, who wanted the strict application of the Qur'ān; the *Shī'a*, who favored a charismatic leader given to divine inspiration; and the Sunnis, who:

were convinced that strict application of the standards which were sanctioned by the Prophet's and his Companions' deeds and sayings would procure the salvation of the Muslim community. With the exception of 'Umar II, who accepted the ideas of Sunnism, the Umayyad caliphs were not able to amalgamate these new trends with their concept of government.¹⁸

To be more accurate, the Umayyads could not win in any of the above "arenas." They had no charismatic leadership, they were not as strict as the Kharijites demanded, and more importantly, enough time had not yet passed for them to be able to adopt the ideas of Sunnism.

G.H.A. Juynboll supports the above argument when he writes: "The Umayyad administration was, on the whole, not very much concerned with accounts of the Prophet's behavior and that of his Companions. 'Umar II is here an exception."¹⁹ Another scholar, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī, writes that 'Umar II wished to gather the sayings of the Prophet and set them down so that they would not be lost.²⁰ This interest led to 'Umar II's commissioning such figures as Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 A.H./742 C.E.) to write down the *ḥadīth* and the *sīrah*. In fact, it is interesting to note the difference between 'Abd al-Malik's task for al-Zuhrī and 'Umar II's task. The former simply wanted al-Zuhrī to learn more *ḥadīth* in order to function better as a jurist, while the latter wanted al-Zuhrī to actually write down the *ḥadīth* and the *sīrah*,

but had to be the imperium of all Muslims" (p.63); BLANKINSHIP, *The End of the Jihād State*, especially 114-116.

¹⁸ NAGEL, H.M.T., "Some Considerations Concerning the Pre-Islamic and the Islamic Foundations of the Authority of the Caliphate". *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G. H. A. Juynboll, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982, 196-197.

¹⁹ JUYNBOLL, G. H. A., "On the Origins of Arabic Prose: Reflections on Authenticity". *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, 169.

²⁰ AL-SHARQĀWĪ, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Khāmis al-Khulafā'*: 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, Cairo: Dār Gharīb, 1986, 67.

in order for it to be taught to others.²¹ Even more damning is the story of ‘Āṣim b. Umar b. Qatādah b. al-Nu‘mān b. Zayd b. ‘Āmir b. Sawād b. Ka‘b (d. between 119-129 A.H.) Ibn Ishāq is reputed to have transmitted from him and he is reputed to have knowledge of *Sīra* and *al-Maghāzī* stories. He was told to teach these stories to people at the Damascus mosque by Umar II.²² Lecker remarks on the appointment of ‘Āṣim by ‘Umar II as, “[...] yet another realm in which ‘Umar II is supposed to have deviated from the ways of his wrongheaded predecessors. While they were opposed to the transmission of the Prophet’s *maghāzī* (i.e., the Prophet’s biography as a whole, not only his expeditions) and the virtues of his Companions, inevitably including those of ‘Alī, ‘Umar II supported it.”²³ Still, all except for two of the reforms of ‘Umar II were overturned by his successors, which leads one to believe that had he lived a little longer, not only would these reforms have been permanent, but the ‘Abbasids would not have had such a disgruntled and receptive audience.

In the sources ‘Umar II is also seen as a ‘reformer’ of sort, he is stylized as ‘*mujaddid*’ of the faith.²⁴ The concept of the *mujaddid* is probably late, created by the Shāfi‘īs.²⁵ It is nevertheless important to note that ‘Umar II’s reputation as a reformer of some type or another preceded this nomenclature. ‘Umar II was also the subject of two other genres, namely the *sīrah*²⁶ and the *musnad*.²⁷ It is interesting to note that of all the non-*Rashīdūn* caliphs, be they Umayyads, ‘Abbasids, or Ottomans, only ‘Umar II has a *musnad*.

²¹ See SCHOELER, Gregor, “Foundations for a New Biography of Muḥammad: The Production and Evaluation of the Corpus Traditions from ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr” in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, 21-28, especially 23, where he talks about the importance of al-Zuhrī as a transmitter of the *sīrah* from ‘Urwah.

²² AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā’ al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf, Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1980-1992, 13: 528-531 [no. 3020]. On both characters, ‘Āṣim and ‘Umar II, association with the transmission of *siyār* and *maghazi* see LECKER, Michael, “King Ibn Ubayy and the Quṣṣās” in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, 29-71, especially 65-71.

²³ LECKER, Michael, “King Ibn Ubayy and the Quṣṣās”, 67.

²⁴ IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah*, ed. Maḥmūd Fākhūrī, Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1979, 2:113-127; IBN KHALLIKĀN, *Wafayāt al-A‘yān wa-Anbā’ Abnā’ al-Zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1968, 3:147-150.

²⁵ See for example the poem by one al-Muṭṭawwa‘ī, who has a poem listing the *mujaddids* from ‘Umar up to his time, which was around the fifth century *hijrī*. AL-SUBKĪ, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Fataḥ al-Ḥilw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī, Cairo: al-Ḥalabī, 1966, 4:396.

²⁶ IBN ‘ABD AL-ḤAKAM, *Sīrat Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz: ‘alā mā rawahu al-imām Mālik b. Anas wa-aṣḥābuh*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Ubayd, Syria: al-Maktabah al-‘Arabiyyah, 1966; AL-ĀJIRĪ, Abū Bakr, *Akhbār Abī Ḥafṣ Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Usaylān, Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risālah, 1979; IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *Sīrat wa-Manāqib Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz: al-Khalīfah al-Zāhid*, ed. Na‘īm Zarzūr, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1984; IBN KATHĪR, *Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, ed. Aḥmad al-Shirbāsī, Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyyah, 1966.

²⁷ IBN AL-BĀGHANDĪ, *Musnad Amīr al-Mū‘minīn Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, ed. Abū Ḥājir Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd b. al-Basyūnī Zaghūl, Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyyah, 1986.

These *siyar* should be utilized, as Franz Rosenthal advises, as examples of “the deep influence of religio-legal thought upon Muslim historiography [...]”²⁸ Indeed, all of these *siyar* show ‘Umar II as a jurist/caliph who was very much interested in reforming the empire with an eye to “returning” the community to the example of the Prophet, which in turn created an interest not only in *hadīth* but also the *sīrah*. Many of these biographies show that ‘Umar II had a genuine interest in reforming the empire.

The coming of ‘Umar II saw a decline in the use of Umayyad propaganda tools; especially poetry and polemics. Most importantly ‘Umar II showed a clear shift with regards to history: he had a clear preference towards the history of the struggles between the Prophet and Quraysh, which included all the heroics of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār over and above what his predecessors preferred.

4. UMAYYAD PROPAGANDA TOOLS

4.1 POLEMICS

The stopping of the cursing of ‘Alī did not have an immediate effect; that is to say, its stopping was not as effective as its starting. At first Mu‘āwiyah started the cursing of ‘Alī in reaction to hearing that ‘Alī used to curse him, but later he continued this action because it inflamed the passions of ‘Alī’s supporters, so much so, that they were induced to show their true colors.²⁹ ‘Umar II banned the cursing of ‘Alī, this is so well attested in the sources that even the most anti-Umayyad volumes repeat this fact about ‘Umar II.³⁰

4.2 PANEGRIC POETRY

Uri Rubin’s article, “Prophets and Caliphs: The Biblical Foundations of the Umayyad Authority” argues that the Umayyads saw themselves as being chosen by God to be the Prophet’s legatees.³¹ Rubin comes to this conclusion using panegyric poetry and al-Walid II’s (r. 125-126 A.H./ 743-744 C.E.) letter designating his sons as heirs. For our purposes we will only look at his use of the panegyric poetry.

Rubin argues that panegyric poetry, more precisely that of al-Farazdaq (d. 112 A.H./730 C.E.),³² links (legitimizes) the Umayyads to the Prophet and the early caliphs, particularly Abū Bakr (r. 11-13 A.H./632-634 C.E.), ‘Umar (r. 13-23

²⁸ ROSENTHAL, Franz, "Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam," *EI*.

²⁹ For more on these antagonisms see: KOHLBERG, Etan, *Belief and Law in Imami Shī‘ism*, Vermont: Gower Publishing Co. 1991; KESHK, K., “Historiography of an Execution: The Killing of Ḥujr b. ‘Adī,” *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies* 19:1 (2008): 1-35

³⁰ AL-IṢFAHĀNĪ, Abū al-Faraj, *kitāb al-Aghānī*, eds. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, Ibrāhīm al-Sa‘āfīn, Bakr ‘Abbās. Second edition, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2004. 9: 190-191.

³¹ RUBIN, “Prophets and Caliphs” 93.

³² AL-FARAZDAQ, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, ed. Īliyā al-Ḥawī, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1983, 2:536, line 57.

A.H./634-644 C.E.) and of course ‘Uthmān (r. 23-35 AH/ 644-656 C.E.). By showing this linkage, Rubin is trying to argue against Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds’ idea that the Umayyads owed their place (legitimacy) to God and not to the Prophet.³³ We are not interested in adding to the argument; it suffices to say that they both see panegyric poetry as a powerful propaganda tool that was utilized extensively by the Umayyads to cement their claims to the caliphate/rule of the Islamic Empire. We have the example of al-Walīd I who in his attempt to change the order of the succession to the caliphate, sent orders both to his generals and his poets to change the *bay‘ah* after him from his brother Sulaymān to his son ‘Abd al-Azīz.³⁴ This story, which there is no reason to doubt, puts the poets on par with the generals in importance.³⁵ To further illustrate the ‘surgical’ use of panegyric poetry by the Umayyad court poets the following example should suffice:

Several poems by Farazdaq praise the Umayyad caliphs by showing that they are following the *sunnah/sīrah*³⁶ of the second caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (‘Umar I). Why, some may ask would that be a propaganda tool for the Umayyads aimed at an audience, that we have argued above were not aware of the Prophetic *sīrah* and its heroes? The answer is not in the ‘history’ of but in the ‘actions’ of said caliph. Al-Farazdaq, who was well aware of history³⁷ and of his audience, is only alluding to one act, i.e. the *shūrā*, and not to anything else from the biography of ‘Umar I. In fact, we realize how the connection is made from yet another poem, this time in praise of al-Walīd b. Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r.125-126 A.H./743-744 C.E.). Al-Farazdaq tells us that everyone has accepted the Caliphate of the Banū Marwān because they have inherited it from ‘Uthmān, who all became caliphs through the process of the *shūrā*,³⁸ a process that none can criticize.³⁹ In this way, al-Farazdaq

³³ AL-FARAZDAQ, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Farazdaq.*, 89-90.

³⁴ AL-ṬABARĪ, *Tarīkh*, 6:506-507 [1283/2-1284/2]. It was none other than Jarīr who did in fact write a few couplets in favor of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.

³⁵ These were al-Ḥajjāj b. Yusuf and Qutaybah b. Muslim; the latter lost his life because of his obedience to al-Walīd I’s wishes.

³⁶ Technically, a *sunnah* should be understood as a specific example/practice that has religious ramifications, while the *sīrah* should be seen as the history or biography of that said person, encompassing all of his/her actions.

³⁷ We say this because of a certain poem in which al-Farazdaq praises Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik by likening him to a shepherd, praising his ancestors Ḥarb and Abū al-‘Āṣī, and so on. He then makes the very interesting point that for seventy years people have tried in vain to remove them [the Umayyads] from the Caliphate. If one takes the year of Yazīd II’s ascension to power, 101 A.H./720 C.E., and subtracts 70 years from it, the result is 31 A.H./650 C.E. This, interestingly, is 6 years into ‘Uthmān’s reign, exactly the time when all the troubles are supposed to have begun. AL-FARAZDAQ, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Farazdaq*, 2:633, line 41.

³⁸ AL-FARAZDAQ, *Sharḥ dīwān al-Farazdaq*, 1:360-364. This poem is dedicated to Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik, who is likened to a Prophet; al-Farazdaq states that the *shūrā* was the *waṣīyyah* of ‘Umar to which all the Muhājirūn agreed. In another poem in praise of al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik, al-Farazdaq connects al-Walīd’s accession to the Caliphate, which he styles as a process of consultation and not force, to ‘Uthmān’s election. *Ibid.*, 2:402, lines 14-16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:219, 6-7.

reminds his audience and the critics of the Umayyads that none other than ‘Umar I himself was responsible for the Umayyad caliphate; the Umayyads follow Umar’s *sunnah*, but this should not be equated to his *sīrah*.

This tool although still utilized by the Umayyads after the reign of ‘Umar II, it and the poets themselves had been all but forgotten during the aforementioned ruler’s reign. In fact ‘Umar II’s reign was seen as a ‘disaster’ for those who made their living on panegyric poetry. In fact many of the most famous poets, such as al-Farazdaq, al-Akḥṭal, and Jarīr to name a few, saw ‘Umar II’s reign as the ‘passing of their time’.⁴⁰

4.3 SELECTIVE HISTORY

The Umayyads feared nothing from the teaching of Prophetic *ḥadīths* or the Qur’ān as they were ahistorical. Actually quite the opposite, as they were very adamant about having their children, future caliphs, learn what they regarded as the important sciences: the Qur’ān, poetry, and *ḥadīth*, which all happen to fall in either the category of useful propaganda tools or innocuous (for the regime) religious teachings. There are several anecdotes that speak of this in the sources.⁴¹

It was also the case that each caliph was quite impressive in his knowledge of the above-mentioned sciences. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65-86/685-705) was known for his knowledge in matters of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), which necessitated a good grounding in the *ḥadīth* and the Qur’ān (even at this early date), and most of the sources attest to his having this knowledge.⁴² His son al-Walid I (r. 86-96/705-715) was also known for being a narrator of *ḥadīth*.⁴³ His nephew ‘Umar II is supposed to have been educated under the best *muḥaddiths* in his time (more on him below). The famous traditionist Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) is said to have worked for both ‘Abd al-Malik and ‘Umar II.⁴⁴ He was one of many private secretaries/advisers/companions of the Umayyads who were well known transmitters of *ḥadīth*.⁴⁵ Still, as

⁴⁰ IBN KATHĪR, *al-bidāyah wa-al-nihāyah*, Beirut: Dār al-Rayyān, 1988, 9: 206-212; IBN QUTAYBAH, *al-shi’r wa al-shu’arā* 2nd edition, edit. Aḥmad Shākīr, Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth: 1998, 2:611.

⁴¹ IBN °ASĀKIR, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Sa’īd ‘Umar b. Gharāmah al-‘Amrawī, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995-2000, 37:147-148; IBN BAKKĀR, Al-Zubayr, *Al-Akḥbār al-Mawfaḥyyāt*, 52-53. ‘Abd al-Malik recommends that his children, all future caliphs, learn Qur’ān and poetry.

⁴² AL-TAWḤĪDĪ, Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baṣā’ir wa-al-Dhakhā’ir*, ed. Wadād al-Qādī, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1988, 9:124-125; IBN °ASĀKIR, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 37:114-115. According to one anecdote, the famous scholar, judge and transmitter, ‘Āmir b. Sharāḥīl al-Sha’bī (d. ca. 103-107/ 721-725) said, “I have never been in the company of anyone whose knowledge was superior to mine, except for ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, for whenever I reminded him of a *ḥadīth* or a poem he improved upon it.” Ibid, 124. For more on al-Sha’bī see: AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā’ al-Rijāl*, 4:28-41 [no. 3042].

⁴³ IBN °ASĀKIR, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* 63:165.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 55:294-387; LECKER, M., “al-Zuhrī, Ibn Shihāb”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed; LECKER, M., “Biographical Notes on Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 41 (1996): 21-63.

⁴⁵ Two of the most notable were Qubayṣah b. Dhū’ayb and Rajā’ b. Hayyawah. The former was on the *khātim* (secretary) of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, and he is the one who introduced al-Zuhrī to ‘Abd

will be shown below, *ḥadīth* was not history and was tolerated as a tool for the dispensation of law.⁴⁶ When it came to history (*siyar*) the Umayyads had a genuine aversion to it and to its teaching, especially to their Syrian constituency, until the time of ‘Umar II. They did utilize other forms of ‘history’.

The Umayyads showed a strong aversion toward the *sīrah* of the Prophet even more than toward the *sīrah* of ‘Umar I. In a story transmitted by al-Wāqidi, we are told that Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik went to perform the Ḥajj in the year 82 A.H./702 C.E. When he was in Medina he was in the company of Abbān b. ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān⁴⁷ (amongst others), who acted almost as a tour guide. He showed him all the places the Prophet prayed and some of the battle scenes. Sulaymān was impressed by these stories, which were apparently “new” to him, such that he ordered Abbān to write the ‘*siyar* of the Prophet and his *maghāzī*.’ Abbān informed Sulaymān that indeed he had written them and gave him a copy. Sulaymān was

al-Malik (see following footnote). The latter was a companion of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik and is credited for persuading Sulaymān to appoint his cousin ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as Caliph. For more on Qubayṣah see: AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar A lām al-Nubalā*’, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūt, 2nd ed., Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risālah, 1982, 4:282-283; IBN ‘ASĀKIR, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* 49:250-264. For Rajā’ see: AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar A lām al-Nubalā*’, 4:557-562; IBN ‘ASĀKIR, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* 18:96-116.

⁴⁶ In Ibn ‘Asākīr’s entry for al-Zuhrī, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq* 55:297-303. He writes that al-Zuhrī was introduced to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān by Qubayṣah b. Dhū‘ayb because the former needed someone to confirm his ruling on the inheritance of a concubine from the master by whom she has borne children. There are several versions of the story; one of them has ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān send al-Zuhrī to Medina to acquire more *ḥadīth*. He is said to have gone down there as a *ṭālib al-‘ilm* because he had a good memory, and he was told to visit the Anṣār in their houses to learn *ḥadīth*—he was asked to do this at the order of ‘Abd al-Malik himself. There is no mention of the *sīrah* (p. 303, 322). It was under ‘Umar II that we hear al-Zuhrī praised for his knowledge of the past (p. 344). It is this particular incident that Riḍwān al-Sayyid refers to in his article “Al-Khilāfah wa-al-Mulk: Dirāsah fī al-Ru‘yah al-Umawiyah lil-Sulṭah”, p. 134-135, where he argues against those who have maintained that ‘Abd al-Malik was opposed to the *sīrah* of the Prophet (as we do). According to al-Sayyid, it is known that “al-Zuhrī collected it [Propethic Sīra?] during [‘Abd al-Malik’s] reign and the reigns of al-Walīd and Hishām, and he taught it to the Umayyad Caliphs and their children in the same way that he wrote the *ḥadīth* for them” (p. 135). While it is true that ‘Abd al-Malik sent al-Zuhrī to learn *ḥadīth*, there is no evidence that he asked him to collect the biography (*sīrah*) of the Prophet. This happened only at the time of ‘Umar II. In a conversation in Cairo at the Orient Institute Beirut International Conference: Historiography in its Arabic Age (2/27/2010-3/1/2010) with Professor al-Sayyid, who explained to both authors that the Umayyads did not allow the writing of the Prophetic Sīra until they were more secure in their rule: that is we don’t see its allowance or pursuit until the reign of Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik. There is also the idea that this interest was born out of legal issues concerning the conquests. See: BRUNSCHVIG, Robert, “Ibn Abdelhakam And The Conquest of North Africa”. *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State*, ed. Fred M. Donner, Vermont; Ashgate, 2008, 189-228.

⁴⁷ He was the son of the caliph ‘Uthmān and was reputed to have been well versed in both *ḥadīth* and *sīrah*. He led the ḥajj several times and acted as governor of Medina for ‘Abd al-Malik for a short period. On him see: AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar A lām al-Nubalā*’, 4:351-353; HOROVITZ, Josef, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and their Authors*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad, Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002, especially 6-15.

astonished to read that the Anṣār were so involved with the Prophet and thought that there might either be something wrong with Abbān's document or that his family had taken their right (*ghamaṣū*). Sulaymān decided to ask his father 'Abd al-Malik about this matter before he made several copies of Abbān's work. 'Abd al-Malik was angry and told his son, "Why do you need to bring (*tuqaddim*) a book [in which] we do not have any positive mention? You will make the people of Syria know things we do not want them to know."⁴⁸

Sulaymān left his father's presence and went to see Qubayṣah b. Dhu'ayb,⁴⁹ who was surprised by 'Abd al-Malik's reaction and informed Sulaymān that it would have been good to read this work, for:

the portion (*ḥazz*) of the Commander of the Faithful in it is quite extensive, the household of the Commander of the Faithful has the most [of all the households] that witnessed Badr: sixteen men from banū 'Abd Shams witnessed it. They were from the clan itself and their allies (*ḥulaḥā'ahum*) and their *mawālī*, and the ally of a tribe is a part of that tribe and a *mawlā* of a tribe is part of that tribe. The Prophet, peace be upon him and his household, died and his governors (*'ummāluh*) from banū Umayyah were four: 'Attāb b. Asīd was in charge of Mecca, Abbān b. Sa'īd of Bahrain, Khālid b. Sa'īd of al-Yaman, and Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb of Najrān.⁵⁰

Sulaymān tried again to persuade his father, but to no avail, and the matter was apparently dropped.

Other than the obvious, 'Abd al-Malik's aversion to the *sīrah*, the above story conveys three important issues: The *sīrah/maghazī* literature was available in written form at the time of 'Abd al-Malik; the *sīrah* had some dangerous implications for the Umayyads; and finally, *ḥadīth* and *sīrah* were already differentiated, at least in the eyes of the Umayyads, who supported the former but not the latter. The first and last issues are beyond the scope of this paper and will not be discussed; the second is the most pertinent to our argument, and we shall now take up its discussion.

Sulaymān was very surprised that there was a whole other history with regards to a group of people who had been enemies of the regime not so long ago. Both Abbān and Qubayṣah spoke to this fact. First, Abbān told Sulaymān: "The act they perpetrated against the unjustly-killed martyr ['Uthmān] does not prevent us from speaking the truth: they [the Anṣār] were as we described in this book of ours."⁵¹ Abbān's remarks carry with them several important points: 1) the Anṣār contributed greatly to the

⁴⁸ IBN BAKKĀR, Al-Zubayr, *Al-Akhhār al-Mawfaqiyyāt*, 276.

⁴⁹ For more on him see above, n. 45.

⁵⁰ IBN BAKKĀR, Al-Zubayr, *al-Akhhār al-Mawfaqiyyāt*, 276.

⁵¹ The exact words are, "[...] *lā yamna'nā mā ṣana'ū bi-al-shāhīd al-maẓlūm min khudhlānahu, inna al-qawl bi-al-ḥaqq: humma 'alā mā waṣafnā la-ka fī kitābinā ḥadhā.*" IBN BAKKĀR, Al-Zubayr, *Al-Akhhār al-Mawfaqiyyāt*, 275.

Prophet; 2) the Umayyads' right to rule is not diminished in any way by the previous point; 3) the Anṣār also "betrayed" 'Uthmān; 4) the "truth" needs to be told.

Qubayṣah's remarks are even more direct with regards to the Anṣār and their efforts with the Prophet. He told Sulaymān that members of the Umayyad clan, albeit through their tribal relations, were involved in Badr and that the Prophet used them as governors. It seems that Qubayṣah was already anticipating the effect of the *sīrah* on the regime—delegitimization—and he therefore pointed out to two important legitimizing factors: Badr and the Prophet. Badr was the first battle, after all, and it was one of the markers used by 'Umar I to assess one's precedent in Islam. The other is of course the Prophet, and his appointment of officials legitimized the Umayyads' position vis-à-vis rule. But Qubayṣah's words were all for naught. This is for two reasons. For one, these could be words inserted by the narrator[s] or historian[s] in order to enhance and authenticate this anecdote by putting the "correct" argument in the mouth of a pro-Umayyad, namely Qubayṣah. More important is the second reason, which is 'Abd al-Malik's reaction even after Qubayṣah talked to him about the matter again, with the implication that he used the same argument stated above. 'Abd al-Malik was not persuaded and told them both that he could only maintain the status quo.⁵²

'Abd al-Malik knew that once the *sīrah* became public knowledge, no amount of persuasive argument would be able to convince the general public of the legitimacy of the Umayyads. They were after all the clan from which Abū Sufyān hailed, the head of the opposition to Muḥammad. People's emotions could be easily swayed against them, especially by a talented story-teller,⁵³ and no amount of evidence (even if it were truthful, as Qubayṣah's speech was) could convince them otherwise. In fact, upon first reading Qubayṣah's speech, one wonders if it was not simply put there by an apologist for the Umayyads, though most probably it was not. Yet, the account sounds "defensive" because those who disliked the Umayyads and thought they had usurped their position had produced the *sīrah*. The *sīrah*/history became a very effective propaganda tool that fared much better than poetry, the Umayyads' propaganda tool. It was also 'Umar II who was responsible for the demise of this effective 'black-out' by allowing the dissemination of the prophetic *sīrah* and of other stories to do with the early community. In fact 'Umar II knew very well the 'ill' effects of this to the Dynasty and how much the Marwānids disliked its use and dissemination. 'Umar II When instructing 'Āṣim to teach and disseminate the *sīrah/maghāzī* said,

⁵² IBN BAKKĀR, Al-Zubayr, *Al-Akhbār al-Mawfaqiyyāt*, 277. The exact phrase is "wa-Allāh mā aqdar 'alā ghayr dhālik, fa-d'ūnā min dhikrahum, fa-askat al-qawm."

⁵³ For an illustration of such a case see KESHK, "Historiography of an Execution."

The Banū Marwān used to hate this (teaching of the Maghāzī of the Prophet and the Manāqib of his Companions) and thus prohibited it, [...] ([...] *wa-qāla: inna banū Marwān kānū yakrahūna hādihā wa yanhawna ‘anhu, [...]*).⁵⁴

It is not an exaggeration, as this paper has shown, to state that the dissemination and utilization of the *sīrah* in the hands of the enemies of the Umayyads has been an extremely effective tool. To see how effective this has been, one need only read history. Even though it was under the Umayyads that the most rapid expansion of the Islamic Empire took place, and it was also under the Umayyads that much of the foundation for a majority of the social, intellectual, and religious movements that made vast contributions to Islamic civilization took place, they were seen as non-religious pariahs who usurped their position. It could be said that it was not until modern scholarship that we started to find that the above if not untrue, was at least illogical; still we are inundated with works that still strongly believe in the discourse that was established by the enemies of the Umayyads.⁵⁵

‘Abd al-Malik and ‘Umar II were the only ones who realized the long-term effects of the *sīrah*, with the former fearing its negative effects and the latter wanting to utilize its positive aspects. ‘Umar II thought that by allowing the *sīrah* to become popular, Islamic society would be pushed to emulate the early community in their piety and devotion to Islam. ‘Umar II was also counting on the Umayyads to emulate the early community by accepting his other reforms, especially vis-à-vis the new converts. ‘Abd al-Malik knew the limitations of his family and the powerful propaganda tool the *sīrah* represented, especially in the hands of the enemies of the Umayyads. After all, as indeed happened, all of the Umayyads’ contributions to Islam were easily overshadowed by their early enmity to Islam’s Prophet.

A man came to ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and said: “Oh! Commander of the Faithful, I am so and so son of so and so, my father witnessed Badr, Uḥud, al-Khandaq and Ḥunayn-and he kept repeating the battles (*mashāhid*)- and I have not worn silk, I have not ridden and I have not married.” ‘Umar said, “By God! battles which neither Marj Rāhiṭ nor Dayr al-Jammājim can compare to. By God! I will grant you clothe to wear; a wife to marry; and a beast to ride.” So he clothed him, got him married, and gave him a ride and put his name in the pension honor roll, and said, “If the needy are like this, then let them ask us.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ IBN SA‘D, *kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Umar, Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001, 7:416; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 25:277.

⁵⁵ This point is best illustrated if one looks at such modern scholarships as MADEELUNG, Wilferd: *The Succession to Muḥammad: A Study of the early Caliphate*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Madelung is a perfect mirror of the excellent ‘propaganda’ of ‘history.’ Madelung’s failings are best summarized in Michael Morony’s book review of Madelung’s work in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 59 (2000), 153-156. Morony writes, “In general, Madelung seems more interested in what should have happened than in the significance of what did happen.” 156.

⁵⁶ AL-TAWḤĪDĪ, Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baṣā‘ir wa-al-dhakhā‘ir*, 9:123.