A major part of the edifice upon which Shi‘ism has constructed itself is its idiosyncratic portrayal of the early history of Islam. It is especially in its representation of the relationships that existed between ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and the eminent Sahabah like Abu Bakr and Umar that Shi‘ism has acquired a character of its own. Shi‘i historians seemed little troubled by the fact that their own reconstruction of history would inevitably involve the invention of events, or versions of actual events, that would be at variance with standard sources. They seem to have been considerably confident that the emotional appeal of their version of history would override, and indeed obviate the need for a critical comparison of their narratives with those of other historians of repute. Their confidence appears to have been well founded, for a millennium has passed and still there is evidence in abundance of an emphatically emotional and sentimental approach to issues whose historicity needed to have been critically scrutinised in a spirit of emotional detachment. In this belated century that prides itself on the advancement of research methodology and techniques, the anomaly of a methodology that has emotive appeal as its central component stands out like a very sore thumb.
It is this spirit—of emotional prejudice overriding objective scholarship—that Shi‘i propagandists up to this very day insist on "revealing" to their Sunni audiences the "truth" about the "persecution" suffered by the Ahl al-Bayt at the hands of the Sahabah. They can often be found launching into their particular misrepresentations of history, with no respect for standards of historic authenticity, and even less in awe of the way in which they are in actual fact bringing disgrace upon the Family of Rasulullah. Their audiences too, are just as often completely captivated by these "revelations". The last thing on the mind of both propagandist and audience is the grievous contradictions the writer or speaker makes himself guilty of in his emotionally laden corruption of history.

"PERSECUTION" OF THE AHL AL-BAYT

One such case of the invention of history is the "persecution" mentioned by Shi‘i reporters of history to have been meted out to ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and his wife Sayyidah Fatimah immediately after the demise of Rasulullah. The incidents as mentioned by these unscrupulous narrators—

of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab threatening to burn down the house of Fatimah with her and her family inside

of ‘Umar ordering the door of the house to be broken, with Fatimah being wounded and losing her unborn child in the process, and six months later dying from that same injury

and of her husband, the valiant ‘Ali being dragged out of his house like a common criminal to give his oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr

all of these have to the Shi‘i mind become undisputable and incontestible facts of history, no matter how spurious their origin, or how blatantly they clash with authentic historical facts. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar will ever be thought of by the Shi‘ah in terms of the "deeds" of that day, and no true Shi‘i who believes in these stories as factual truth could ever be expected to harbour the merest ounce of goodwill towards Abu Bakr and ‘Umar—let alone the rest of the Sahabah who stood with them and paid allegiance to them.

However, let us take this version of history that weaves itself around the core element of persecution, and its concomitant of mutual hatred between ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and the rest of the Sahabah, and let us compare it with some other facts, the historic authenticity of which is accepted by both Ahl as-Sunnah and Shi‘ah. For example, the fact that ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib himself names three of his sons Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman. (See al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad*, pp. 268-269, where these three sons of ‘Ali are listed as numbers 12, 6 and 10 respectively.) No one, not even the most magnanimous of people, names his son after his enemies who were responsible for the death of his wife. That is why one simply cannot find a Shi‘i today named Abu Bakr, ‘Umar or ‘Uthman. In fact, reports from Iran have it that Shi‘i officials will not allow Iranian Sunnis to give their children these names. (See the article "The Dismal Reality of the Ahlus Sunnah in Iran" at http://www.islam.org.au/articles/24/iran.htm)

Another fact of history which clashes with the alleged persecution of ‘Ali and Fatimah by the Sahabah
is the marriage of Umm Kulthum, the daughter of ‘Ali and Fatimah, to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. This marriage, in which ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib gave this daughter borne to him by Fatimah, in marriage to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab—the very same man whom the Shi‘ah allege caused the death of Fatimah—assails the foundations of Shi‘ism in a way that few issues can. It threw the house of Shi‘ism into violent disorder, and the ‘ulama of the Shi‘ah, reeling under its impact, found themselves lunging at just about any twig in sight. This paper looks at the various Shi‘i responses to the marriage of Umm Kulthum to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, and demonstrates the embarrassment in the Shi‘i camp to which this contradictory cacophony of responses eloquently testifies.

THE MARRIAGE OF UMM KULTHUM

Umm Kulthum was the second daughter of ‘Ali and Fatimah, and the youngets of their four children. She was born in about the year 6 AH. She became of marriagable age during the khilafah of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, and the khalifah asked for her hand in marriage. This is recorded by Ibn Sa‘d in his work *Tabaqat al-Kubra* (vol. 8 p. 338, ed. Muhammad ‘Ab al-Qadir ‘Ata, Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut 1990) as follows:

I was informed by Anas ibn ‘Iyad al-Laythi, who reports on the authority of Ja‘far ibn Muhammad [as-Sadiq], and he from his father [Muhammad al-Baqir]—

that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab asked ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib for the hand of Umm Kulthum in marriage. ‘Ali said, "I had kept my daughters for the sons of Ja‘far." ‘Umar said, "Marry her to me, O Abul Hasan, for by Allah, there is no man on the face of the earth who seeks to achieve through her good companionship that which I seek to achieve." ‘Ali said, "I have done so."

Then ‘Umar came to the Muhajirun between the grave [of Rasulullah ﷺ] and the pulpit. They—‘Ali, ‘Uthman, Zubayr, Talhah and ‘Abd ar-Rahman—used to sit there, and whenever a matter used to arrive from the frontiers, ‘Umar used to come to them there and consult with them. He came to them and said, "Congratulate me." They congratulated him, and asked, "With whom are we congratulating you, O Amir al-Mu‘minin?" He replied, "With the daughter of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib."

Then he related to them that the Nabi ﷺ said, "Every tie of kinship, and every association will be cut off on the Day of Qiyamah, except my kinship and my association." ['Umar said,] "I have had the companionship of Rasulullah ﷺ; I would like also to have this [kinship]."

Two children were born from this marriage, namely Zayd and Ruqayyah. After the martyrdom of ‘Umar she was married to her cousin ‘Awn ibn Ja‘far, and after his death to his brother Muhammad ibn Ja‘far. Ultimately she died while married to a third of the sons of Ja‘far, namely ‘Abdullah during the
first half of the fourth decade after the Hijrah. Her son Zayd died on the same day as his mother, and the funeral prayer for mother and son was performed together.

The marriage of Umm Kulthum has been unanimously accepted as a fact of history by all major biographers and historians. Its authenticity has never been contested by anyone—not even the staunchest Shi‘ah—during the first four centuries after the Hijrah. It was only during the fifth century that ash-Shaykh al-Mufid (died 413 AH) appears to have woken up to the threat that the acceptance of this marriage holds for the doctrine of the Shi‘ah and their particular view of history.

At this moment it needs to be noted that the above narration was recorded by Ibn Sa‘d from a man called Anas ibn ‘Iyad al-Laythi, who report directly on the authority of Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq, and he from his father Muhammad al-Baqir. In other words, we have here a purely Shi‘i chain of narration. Anas ibn ‘Iyad al-Laythi is regarded by reputable Shi‘i rija‘l, critics such as an-Najashi and Ibn Mutahhar al-Hilli, as a companion of Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq who was "thiqah, sahih al-hadith" (reliable, a transmitter of authentic hadith). (See al-Ardabili, Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 1 p. 109, Dar al-Adwa, Beirut 1983) Since he narrates directly from the "infallible" Imam, there can be no question about the veracity of his report. Thereupon, his report is corroborated by a wealth of other narrations all of which affirm the historicity of this marriage. Above it all is the fact that for over three centuries this marriage remained uncontested.

In later centuries the marriage of Umm Kulthum would become a major bone of contention for Shi‘i polemists. This marriage as a topic in Shi‘i theology owes its importance to its open contradiction to Shi‘i views of religion and history. This is expressed by the Shi‘i authors Muhammad al-Hassun and Umm ‘Ali Mashkur in their book A‘lam an-Nisa al-Mu‘minat (p. 182) in the following terms:

The marriage of Umm Kulthum to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab is counted amongst the important issues presented to us by Islamic history, and as one of those matters around which debate and research has continued at length—and still continues. Those who regard this marriage as an authentic fact use it to prove the righteousness of her husband ['Umar] and ‘Ali’s acceptance of him. Otherwise, why would he give him his daughter in marriage? As for those who reject the historic occurrence of the marriage, or are of the opinion that it took place under pressure which ‘Umar brought to bear upon ‘Ali use this issue to justify the unrighteousness and viciousness of ‘Umar, and that ‘Ali did not approve of him.

Shi‘i writings on the marriage of Umm Kulthum

The same authors then proceed to enumerate a list of five independent books on the marriage of Umm Kulthum written by the ‘ulama of the Shi‘ah from as early as the 4th century, down to as late as the present age. This list is not exhaustive, and excludes discussions of the same issue in other larger works. The works listed are:

*al-Mas’alah al-Muwaddihah ‘an Asbah Nikah Amir al-Mu‘minin*

—by ash-Shaykh al-Mufid (died 413 AH). It is alternatively entitled *Inkah*
Amir al-Mu’minin Ibnatahu min ‘Umar. This book is mentioned by Aqa Buzurg Tehrani in adh-Dhari’ah (vol. 2 p. 396 no. 3641) and a manuscript of it is kept at the library of Ayatullah Mar‘ashi Najafi in Qum.

Jawab as-Su’al ‘an Wajh Tazwij Amir al-Mu’minin Ibnatahu min ‘Umar

—by Sayyid Murtada (died 436 AH). It is also mentioned by Aqa Buzurg Tehrani (vol. 5 p. 183 no. 811) and a copy is preserved at the library of Ayatullah Mar‘ashi Najafi in Qum.

Tazwij ‘Umar li-Umm Kulthum

—by Shaykh Sulayman ibn Abdullah al-Mahuzi (died 1121 AH). It is mentioned by Tehrani in adh-Dhari’ah.

Tazwij Umm Kulthum bint Amir al-Mu’minin wa-Inkar Wuqu‘ihi

—by Shaykh Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi (died 1352AH/1932). It is mentioned by Tehrani at two places in adh-Dhari’ah (vol. 4 p. 172 and vol. 11 p. 146).

an independent treatise by Sayyid Nasir Husayn of Lucknow, India (died 1361AH/1941).

The above clearly demonstrates the attention the marriage of Umm Kulthum has enjoyed with Shi‘i authors, and indicates the strategic importance of this marriage in Sunni-Shi‘i polemics and dialogue.

Chronologically speaking, attitudes amongst the Shi‘ah towards the marriage of Umm Kulthum can be divided into three stages: (1) before the 5th century AH, (2) after the 5th century AH, and (3) after the establishment of the Safavid Empire in the 10th century. Each of these stages will now be dealt with separately.

PRIOR TO THE FIFTH CENTURY

Shi‘i activity during the first century after the Hijrah had been confined to a large extent to revolutionary insurrections, starting from the campaign of the Tawwabun who sought to avenge the murder of Husayn, and continuing in the exploits of people like Mukhtar ath-Thaiqafi and Abu Muslim al-Khurasani. It was only during the latter half of the second century that evidence begins to surface of some sort of intellectual activity amongst the Shi‘ah. However, here too, the scope of that activity was limited to the documentation of the sayings which the Shi‘ah ascribe to their Imams.

The fourth century after the Hijrah witnessed the compilation of Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub al-Kulayni’s monumental work al-Kafi. This work enjoys the following distinctions:

in it the author sought to document the minor compilations of Shi‘i hadith by previous
it was compiled in Baghdad during the Minor Occultation of the Hidden Imam (as stated by Aqa Buzurg Tehrani in *adh-Dhari’ah*, vol. 17 p. 245) at a time when the representative of the Imam resided in that city, which afforded the opportunity for its contents to be scrutinised and ratified by the Imam himself (as stated by Ibn Tawus in his book *Kashf al-Mahajjah*, p. 159) This is in itself proof of the authenticity of the narrations contained in the book (says al-Hurr al-‘Amili in *Wasa’il ash-Shi’ah*, vol. 20 p. 71).

it actually bears the seal of approval of the Hidden Imam himself, and he was the one who named it "*al-Kafi*" (meaning "sufficient") by saying, as reported by al-Khwansari in *Rawdat al-Jannat* (vol. 6 p.116): "*hadha kafin li-shi’atina*" (This is sufficient for our Shi’ah).

In this work the author has documented at least FOUR traditions to the Imams which affirm the marriage of Umm Kulthum to ‘Umar. In fact, he has devoted the 23rd chapter in the Book on Marriage (*Kitab an-Nikah*) in *Furu’ al-Kafi* to the marriage of Umm Kulthum (*bab tazwij Umm Kulthum*). Two of the four traditions are contained in this chapter, while the other two are found in a related chapter on where a widow whose husband has died should spend her waiting period, or *‘iddah* (*bab al-mutawaffa anha zawjuha al-madkhul biha ayna ta‘taddu wa ma yajibu ‘alayha)*.

However some of these traditions impart a unique flavour to the entire episode, in that now for the first time it becomes presented as a marriage concluded by sheer force and terror, in which ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, for all his nobility and courage, could not protect his young daughter, and was compelled, on threat of physical violence to his person, to give her to the khalifah. The traditions documented in *al-Kafi* are as follows:

‘Ali ibn Ibrahim—from his father—from Ibn Abi ‘Umayr—from Hisham ibn Salim and Hammad—from Zurarah, who narrates that

—Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq said regarding the marriage of Umm Kulthum: "*That was a ‘woman’ who was taken from us by force.*" (*Furu’ al-Kafi*, vol. 5 p. 347, Dar al-Adwa, Beirut 1992)

[The word ‘woman’ here is an attempt from the writer of this article to preserve the honour of the Ahl al-Bayt, since a literal translation of the original Arabic would prove too vulgar.]

Muhammad ibn Abi ‘Umayr—Hisham ibn Salim, who narrates that

—Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq said: "*When ['Umar] proposed to Amir al-Mu’minin, he said, ‘She is a child.’*

asked your nephew for his daughter’s hand in marriage, and he rejected me. Oh, I swear by Allah, I will fill the well of Zamzam with earth, I will destroy every honour that you have, and I will set up two witnesses to testify that he stole, that I may cut off his right hand.’


Humayd ibn Ziyad—Ibn Sama’ah—Muhammad ibn Ziyad—‘Abdullah ibn Sinan—Mu‘awiyah ibn ‘Ammar—Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq:

—[Mu‘awiyah ibn ‘Ammar says:] I asked him about a woman whose husband died: Should she spend her ‘iddah in her house, or where she wants to? He replied, "Where she wants to. When ‘Umar died, ‘Ali came and took Umm Kulthum to his house." (Furu’ al-Kafi, vol. 6 p. 117, Dar al-Adwa, Beirut 1992)

Muhammad ibn Yahya and others—Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa—al-Husayn ibn Sa‘id—an-Nadr ibn Suwayd—Hisham ibn Salim—Sulayman ibn Khalid, who says:

—I asked Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq about the woman whose husband has died: Where should she spend her ‘iddah? In her husband’s house, or where she wants to? He said: "Where she wants to. When ‘Umar died, ‘Ali came, took Umm Kulthum by the hand, and took her to his house." (Furu’ al-Kafi, vol. 6 p. 117, Dar al-Adwa, Beirut 1992)

Authenticity

We have here four chains of narration up to Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq. An investigation into the authenticity of these chains of narration by Shi‘i—and not Sunni—standards reveals that each and every one of them is a highly reliable and accurate chain.

NARRATION 1

al-Kulayni received the reports from Ibn Abi ‘Umayr through his teacher ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Hashim al-Qummi, who is his source for about one third of the material in al-Kafi. ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim is the author of an early Tafsir of the Shi‘ah, and is highly regarded by Shi‘i rijal critics such as an-Najashi and Ibn Mutahhar, who declare him to be "thiqatun fil hadith, thabt, mu’tamad, sahih al-madhhab" (reliable in hadith transmission, reliable dependable, correct in belief.) (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat vol. 1 p. 545)

‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi reports from his father Ibrahim ibn Hashim al-
Qummi. He is reputed to have been the first to spread the hadith of the Shi‘ah from Kufah to Qum. Reports via him abound in al-Kafi, through his son. He has been generally accepted by the Shi‘ah as a reliable narrator. He is even mentioned by Abu Ja‘far at-Tusi as having met the 9th Imam. (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat vol. 1 p. 38) His reliability as a narrator is attested to in a contemporary work on the authority of his son, Ali ibn Ibrahim, Ibn Tawus and al-‘Allamah al-Hilli. (Abu Talib at-Tajlil at-Tabrizi, Mu‘jam ath-Thiqat, p. 5)

Ibrahim ibn Hashim al-Qummi reports on the authority of Muhammad ibn Abi ‘Umayr. This Ibn Abi ‘Umayr is one of the most reliable Shi‘i narrators ever. Abu Ja‘far at-Tusi says of him: "kana min awthaq annas" (he was of the most reliable of people). (al-Fihrist p. 169) More importantly, he was of the elect group of Shi‘i narrators called the Ashab al-Ijma’ (Men of the Consensus). What this means is that when the chain of narration is proven authentic up to one of these men, the rest of the chain up to the Imam may automatically be assumed to be authentic too. (See the details of this consensus in al-Mamaqani, Miqbas al-Hidayah fi ‘Ilm ad-Dirayah, vol. 2 pp. 171-208) The authenticity of this narration is therefore proven on grounds of this consensus.

NARRATION 2

This report also came down to al-Kulayni through ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from Ibn Abi ‘Umayr. The discussion on the first chain of narration is therefore fully applicable to this chain too.

NARRATION 3

al-Kulayni reports this narration from his teacher Humayd ibn Ziyad. This Humayd is graded by the Shi‘i rijal critics as "‘alim jalil al-qadr, wasi‘ al-‘ilm, kathir at-tasnif, thiqah" (a learned scholar, of great status, wide knowledge, a prolific author, reliable) (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 1 p. 284)

Ibn Sama‘ah is properly known as al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Sama‘ah. He was one of the foremost Shi‘i fuqaha of Kufah, and is described as "kathir al-hadith, faqihun thiqah" (a prolific narrator of hadith, a jurist, reliable). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 1 p. 225)

Muhammad ibn Ziyad is properly known as Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Ziyad al-‘Attar. He is described as "thiqah" (reliable). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 2 p. 91)

‘Abdullah ibn Sinan was an eminent Imami Shi‘i of Kufah about whom it is stated: "thiqatun min ashabina, la yut‘anu ‘alayhi fi shay’" (one of our reliable associates against whom no criticism whatsoever can be levelled).
Mu‘awiyyah ibn ‘Ammar was an eminent and leading Shi‘i narrator of Kufah who narrates from Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq. His Shi‘i biographers have documented about him that he was "wajhan min ashabina muqaddaman, kabir ash-shan, azim al-mahall, thiqah" (a leading figure amongst our associates, pre-eminent, great in status, exalted in position, reliable). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 2 p. 239)

The opinions of the Shi‘i critics of hadith regarding the narrators of this report as reproduced here unequivocally indicate that what we have here is a authentic report.

NARRATION 4

al-Kulayni recorded this report on the authority of his several of his teachers, one of whom is Muhammad ibn Yahya al‘Attar al-Qumi. He was regarded as "shaykh ashabina fi zamanihi, thiqah, ‘ayn, kathir al-hadith" (the shaykh of our associates in his time, reliable, an outstanding personality, a prolific narrator of hadith). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 2 p. 213)

Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa al-Qumi was "shaykh al-Qummiyyin, wa-wajhuhum, wa-faqihuhum, ghayra mudafa’" (the shaykh of the people of Qum, and their undisputed leader and jurist). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 1 p. 69) Abu Ja‘far at-Tusi and al-‘Allamah al-Hilli have unequivocally declared him "thiqah" (reliable). (ar-Rijal p. 366; and al-Khulasah p. 13)

al-Husayn ibn Sa‘id is described as "‘ayn, jalil al-qadr" (an outstanding personality of great stature) and"thiqah" (reliable). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 1 p. 241)

an-Nadr ibn Suwayd is rated as "Kufi,thiqah, sahih al-hadith" (a reliable Kufan who transmits authentic hadith). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 2 p. 292)

Hisham ibn Salim is credited with having been a student of Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq. His reliability as a transmitter of hadith is attested to by the emphatic statement of al-‘Allamah and an-Najashi: "thiqatun thiqah" (reliable, and once again reliable). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 2 p. 315)

Sulayman ibn Khalid is mentioned as having been a student of Imam al-Baqir. His death is recorded to have caused Imam Ja‘far extreme grief. He is universally acclaimed as "thiqah" (reliable). (Jami‘ ar-Ruwat, vol. 1 p. 378)

This investigation concludes that each of the narrators of the four narrations affirming the marriage of Umm Kulthum documented in al-Kafi was a reliable Imami Shi‘i transmitter with whose abilities and trustworthiness in hadith transmission the Shi‘i authorities have expressed their satisfaction. The
significance of this fact will come to light when we discuss the turnabout that occurred after the development of Shi‘i kalam (scholastic theology) at the hands of ash-Shaykh al-Mufid in the fifth century.

Besides al-Kulayni, there were during this time other Shi‘i authors too who affirmed the marriage of Umm Kulthum in a way much similar to that of al-Kulayni. One of these was Abul Qasim al-Kufi (died 352 AH). He devoted a number of pages in his book al-Istighathah fi Bida‘ ath-Thalathah to the marriage of Umm Kulthum, and after presenting several arguments and counter arguments, he concludes the following:

Rasulullah Ṣentrusted upon ‘Ali Ṣ all that he needed at the time of his death. He informed him of everything that will be done to him by his Ummah, mentioning the usurpers one by one. ‘Ali Ṣ said, "What do you command me to do?" and Rasulullah Ṣ answered, "Have patience and forbearance until the people return to you of their own volition. At that time you must fight the breakers of oaths, the unjust and those who out of the fold. Do not oppose any of the Three, for thereby you will bring about your own destruction, and the people will go from hypocrisy to disunity."

‘Ali Ṣ was thus keeping this covenant, protecting thereby the oppressed Muslims, and preserving the Religion, so that people would not return to open Jahiliyyah, with tribes seeking to stir up sedition by settling old scores.

Thus, when ‘Umar asked for the hand of Umm Kulthum, ‘Ali Ṣ thought to himself: "If I say no, he will want to kill me, and if he tries to kill me I will protect myself, and that would mean breaking the covenant with Rasulullah Ṣ and going against his command. Should that happen, that thing would come to pass which Rasulullah Ṣ tried to prevent, and for which reason he asked me to exercise patience, which is that people will fall into apostasy." It was better to hand over Umm Kulthum to him than to kill him. He thus handed her over to him, knowing fully well that what the man had usurped of the wealth of the Muslims and of their government, and what he had perpetrated by denying his (‘Ali’s) right and sitting on the place of the Prophet Ṣ, and his changes to and corruption of the laws and ordinances of Allah were far more terrible and dreadful than his forcible possession of his daughter. He handed her over, and resigned himself to patience, just like the Prophet Ṣ had ordered him to do.

In doing so he placed his daughter in a position similar to that of Asiyah bint Muzahim, the wife of Fir‘awn, since Allah mentions her in the words: "She said: O my Lord, build for me a house by you in Paradise, and save me from Fir‘awn and his doings, and save me from the unjust people." Indeed, what Fir‘awn had wreaked upon Bani Isra’il—killing their infants and raping their women—in his search for Musa was much more ghastlier than his forcible possession of his wife Asiyah, and his marriage to her. She is a believing woman and of the people of Paradise, as attested to by
Abul Qasim al-Kufi seems not to spare a moment’s thought for the fact that this was not just any woman. This was the daughter of ‘Ali and Fatimah. This was the granddaughter of Rasulullah \( r \). This was the sister of Hasan and Husayn. What the Shi’ah here seek to subject their Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib to is unspeakable. Which father would sit by idly while his daughter is being forcibly taken by an abominable enemy? This is the extent to which their twisting and corruption of history has led them—that they are prepared to place upon their Imams the kind of shame that even the simplest ones amongst themselves would never bear. *And the evil plot only entraps its own people.* (al-Fatir:43)

In addition, this attempt by Abul Qasim al-Kufi to explain the marriage of Umm Kulthum is full of discrepancies, some of which we will make mention of hereunder:

The comparison between Umm Kulthum and Asiyah is unjustified. Asiyah was not the daughter of a Nabi who was forced to hand her over in marriage to a tyrant. She was married to him even before Musa was born. Her marriage to Fir’awn was not concluded under threat and compulsion, neither could it have been caused her father (whoever he was) any sort of embarrassment.

Abul Qasim’s report speaks of Rasulullah \( r \) informing ‘Ali of exactly what would be done to him by each of the three khulafa. He must therefore have known that ‘Umar will demand his daughter. Yet when the time comes to pass he refuses the marriage on grounds that she is too young (see the second narration from *al-Kafi*), and even Abul Qasim’s own report mentions him weighing his options. Someone who knows what is coming has no need to weigh his options.

The reason for preserving the peace with the three khulafa is given as the fear that people will revert into apostasy. Yet in a narration from Imam al-Baqir documented in *al-Kafi*, apostasy is mentioned to have set in immediately after the death of Rasulullah \( r \) : "*Kana n-nasu ahla riddatin ba‘da Rasulillahi r ‘illa thalathah"* (After the death of Rasulullah \( r \) the people were apostates, except three.) (Rawdat al-Kafi, vol. 8 p. 167, no. 341) If they were thus already apostate, what reason did he have to sacrifice his own daughter’s honour and chastity in order to preserve the
However, despite all Abul Qasim al-Kufi’s effort in working out a logical explanation of why ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib gave his daughter in marriage to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, later Shi‘i scholars like al-Mufid could find no place for his arguments within their recension of Shi‘i doctrines.

**AFTER THE FIFTH CENTURY**

With the ascendancy of the Shi‘i Buyids at Baghdad during the latter half of the fourth century, Shi‘i scholarship gained the patronage it required, and there developed under ash-Shaykh al-Mufid a school of Shi‘i theology that was to leave its lasting upon Shi‘ism. This school took full advantage of the methods and techniques of the existing schools of theology, especially the rationalist approach of the Mu‘tazilah. It adopted and appropriated Mu‘tazili methods to its own advantage, and rationalised much of what had earlier been left to the domain of textual authority.

The marriage of Umm Kulthum did not escape this process of rationalisation. When this issue was discovered to run against the grain of Shi‘i theology—a theology that has its roots in a particular perspective of history—there was but one of two options open to the rationalisers. They could choose the way of Abul Qasim al-Kufi, al-Kulayni and other traditionists, and accept the marriage as a union achieved by force and threats of violence. But this option, instead of solving the problem, created another problem. The other option left open to them was to do a complete turnabout and deny that this marriage ever took place.

**Ash-Shaykh al-Mufid**

The lead was taken by ash-Shaykh al-Mufid himself. He wrote an independent treatise about the marriage of Umm Kulthum, and discussed it in his other works as well, most notably *al-Masa’il as-Sarawiyyah*. The tenth question in this books deal with the marriage of Umm Kulthum. It reads as follows:

**TENTH QUESTION: What is his (al-Mufid’s) view regarding Amir al-Mu’minin marrying his daughter Umm Kulthum to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, and regarding the Nabi marrying his daughters Zaynab (sic) and Ruqayyah to ‘Uthman?**

**ANSWER: The report speaking of Amir al-Mu’minin marrying his daughter to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab so unfounded. It is narrated via Zubayr ibn Bakkar, and its chain of narration is well known. He was untrustworthy in transmission. There is suspicion on him in what he mentions. He used to hate Amir al-Mu’minin. What ‘Ali ibn Hashim claims to narrate from him is untrustworthy. This hadith was included by Abu Muhammad al-Hasan**
ibn Yahya in his book on genealogy, and account of that people thought it to be true, thinking that it is narrated by an ‘Alawi (descendant of ‘Ali). However, the fact is that he narrates it from Zubayr ibn Bakkar.

The hadith in itself is a forgery. It is sometimes narrated that Amir al-Mu‘minin himself performed the ceremony, and sometimes it is narrated that it was ‘Abbas who performed it. Sometimes it is narrated that the marriage took place only after menacing by ‘Umar and threats against Banu Hashim; and sometimes it is mentioned that the marriage took place freely and voluntarily. The some narrators claim that a child named Zayd was born from this marriage, while others claim he was killed before consummating the marriage. Some say Zayd ibn ‘Umar left offspring, while others say he was killed without leaving children. Some say he and his mother were killed, and some say his mother lived after him. Some say ‘Umar gave Umm Kulthum a dowry of 40 000 dirhams, others claim it was 4000 dirhams, and yet others claim her dowry was 5000 dirhams. The origin of this claim, as well as the amount of contradiction in it renders the hadith null, so it is of no consequence.

At this point the benefit of investigating the authenticity of the four reports in al-Kafi will become apparent. It can be seen here that al-Mufid places the responsibility for inventing the marriage of Umm Kulthum on the shoulders of the historian Zubayr ibn Bakkar. However, even a cursory comparison with the narrations in al-Kafi and the one quoted earlier from Tabaqat Ibn Sa‘d (all of which are but a drop in the ocean) demonstrates clearly that Zubayr ibn Bakkar features nowhere in any of those chains of narration. Each of the narrators of those reports was a Shi‘i about whose trustworthiness the ‘ulama of the Shi‘ah were fully satisfied. Not a single one of those reports originated with Zubayr ibn Bakkar. On the contrary, each one of them is traced back to Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq. Al-Mufid’s protestations are thus completely bereft of substance. If anything, it shows the man’s desperation for finding some grounds, no matter how flimsy or spurious, on which to dismiss the marriage of Umm Kulthum.

Aside from trying to make Zubayr ibn Bakkar responsible for the invention of the marriage of Umm Kulthum, al-Mufid tries to dismiss the incident by drawing attention to the discrepancies regarding certain lesser details. A simple response to this is that when a multitude of reports all share one common element, the common element cannot be dismissed because of differences negligible details. An objective scholar who is not prejudiced by his idiosyncratic notion of what history should actually be like will never stoop to the level al-Mufid has. Objectivity here would require thoroughly sifting through the available historical material and accepting the version that fulfils the criteria of authenticity, such as have been demonstratd in the case of al-Kulayni’s narrations in al-Kafi. If an historical incident could be denied for a reason as flimsy as discrepancies in minor details, one could well reject the battle of Badr on grounds of the fact that there are differences regarding the exact date on which it took place, or differences in the amount of combatants, or even the amount of persons killed and taken captive. Here we are once again treated to the spectacle of a scholar’s desperation to superimpose the idiosyncracies of his theology over the facts of history, even if it means he has to discard the most basic standards of objectivity.

At the end al-Mufid’s nonchalance failed to convince anyone—including himself. Therefore, two
paragraphs after denying the occurrence of Umm Kulthum’s marriage he comes back to fall into the
queue of traditional Shi’i scholarship behind people like al-Kulayni and Abul Qasim al-Kufi, and writes:

Amir al-Mu’minin was coerced to marry his daughter to the man, because he was threatening and menacing him. There can thus be no argument against Amir al-Mu’minin because he was forced into it for his own safety and that of his Shi’ah. He therefore complied under duress, just as we say that duress allows for even the pronunciation of Kufr. Allah says: "Except him who is forced, but his heart is content in faith."

There is no end to one’s amazement at seeing how this man would place the safety of the Shi’ah ("for his own safety and that of his Shi’ah") over the chastity and honour of his Imam’s daughter, and the granddaughter of Rasulullah ﷺ.

After al-Mufid

The first explanation produced by al-Mufid—that of denying the historicity of the marriage—was so ludicrous that he failed to convince even himself. His own student, the eminent Sayyid Murtada (died 436 AH), brother of the compiler of *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sayyid Radi, was even less impressed by his teacher’s artifices. He solemnly stuck to the line of traditional Shi’i scholarship, insisting that the marriage was one of coercion and force. He dealt with the marriage of Umm Kulthum in two of his books. In the book *ash-Shafi* he discussed it at considerable length, the gist of which he later incorporated into his other book *Tanzih al-Ambiya wal-A’immah*, where he writes:

As for giving his daughter in marriage, we have mentioned the answer to this in the book *ash-Shafi* in detail, and that he only consented to give his daughter after he had been threatened and menaced and after there had been altercations at length.

After Sayyid Murtada, Abu ‘Ali al-Fadl ibn Hasan at-Tabarsi, the Shi‘i mufassir of the 6th century (died 502 AH) stuck to the same line. He writes in his book *I’lam al-Wara bi-A’lam al-Huda* (p. 204):

As for Umm Kulthum, she is the one whom ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab married. Our associates say that he (‘Ali) only married her to him after putting up a lot of resistance, severe refusals and finding excuses. Ultimately he was forced by circumstances to turn her matter over to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib who married her off.

A later Shi‘i scholar, Shaykh ‘Abd an-Nabi al-Kazimi, writes in his book *Takmilat ar-Rijal*:

The well known view of our associates, and the well known narrations are that ‘Umar married her by force, as Sayyid Murtada emphatically insists in his treatise on the issue. In light of the narrations this is the more correct view. These narrations remove whatever doubt there might have been regarding how Amir al-Mu’minin could marry his daughter to him, when according to what the Shi‘ah believe it is not supposed to be permissible to
have marital ties with him, since forcible possession and duress render everything permissible. The same applies to the objection regarding how he could have borne this forcible taking of his daughter when the very Hashimite spirit and Arab sense of honour would not tolerate such utter humiliation and insult. These texts settle the matter completely.

Having found this niche of the "forced taking" of Umm Kulthum, these ‘ulama of the Shi‘ah took refuge in it from the torrent of questions and the utter indignation of anyone who witnesses the way in which they have shed their own shame and dishonour upon the memory of Sayyiduna ‘Ali, Sayyidah Fatima, and their daughter Umm Kulthum, the granddaughter of Rasulullah ﷺ. Year in and year out they wail and lament the death of Sayyiduna Husayn, but for the honour of his sister Umm Kulthum they have not the slightest sympathy, blithely asserting that she was "forcibly taken" by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. Wouldn‘t it be simpler, easier and indeed more honourable and truthful just to accept the course of history as it was? But no, to them that would mean the destruction of this edifice of theirs called Shi‘ism. So it is better for them to sacrifice the honour of the granddaughter of Rasulullah ﷺ than to forgo the doctrines which their own minds fashioned. As al-Mufid indicated, rather secure the safety of the Shi‘ah than protect the honour of Umm Kulthum bint ‘Ali.

AFTER THE FOUNDING

OF THE SAFAVID EMPIRE

The founding of the Safavid empire in Iran at the dawn of the 16th century CE opened a new chapter in Shi‘i history. Shi‘i scholarship in particular benefitted from the patronage of the Safavid monarchs who invited them to fill the void left by the extermination and exile of the Sunni ‘ulama of Iran. Though at first reluctant, they soon flowed into Iran in large numbers from Iraq, Bahrain and Syria, to fill posts created by the newly established Shi‘i state, and to spread their faith amongst the people of Iran, the vast majority of whom were at that stage still Sunni.

The establishment of a Shi‘i state did not bring discussion around the marriage of Umm Kulthum to an end.
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