Created After, From, and For the Man? Development of Premodern Shiʿi Exegetic Discourse on the Creation of Woman*

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Abstract

This article examines the diachronic development of Shiʿi exegetic discourse on the sentence Khalaqakum min nafs wāḥida wa-khalaqa minhā zawjahā *("created you from a single soul and created its mate from it") in the Quranic verse 4:1, customarily read as describing the creation of the first couple, Adam and Eve. Applying feminist discourse analysis and focusing on the Arabic-language commentaries of twelve premodern Imāmī exegetes from the third/ninth to the eleventh/seventeenth century, my study reveals that the medieval commentary material both accumulated and transformed along a hermeneutical trajectory comprising three distinctive discursive stages. The first stage established the lore on Eve's creation in dismissive terms, and the second strengthened these misogynous views to make the potential substance of Eve's creation even more negligible. This concept was further expanded in the third discursive stage, in which the weak woman, inclined toward the material and the corporal, was seen as created to provide service and entertainment for the man. Her creation was thus used to justify gender hierarchy, even the seclusion of women.*

Introduction: The Creation of Woman in the Quran and the Islamic Interpretive Tradition

There is no unitary passage describing the creation of humankind in the Quran. Instead, individual verses in several chapters give hints about the creation of the primordial human beings, Adam (*Ādam*) and his spouse. The Quran describes humankind as created from clay, mud, dust, or fluid,[1] and from a single soul.[2] Five verses also mention the creation of

* I wish to express my gratitude to Ilkka Lindstedt, Mulki Al-Sharmani, and Amina Inloes for their precious comments on an earlier draft of this article.

1. Q 6:2 (clay); 7:12 (clay); 15:26 (clay, mud); 15:28 (clay, mud); 16:4 (drop); 22:5 (dust/drop); 23:12 (clay); 25:54 (water); 32:7 (clay); 35:11 (dust/drop); 38:71 (clay); 40:67 (dust/drop); 55:14 (clay); 76:2 (drop); and 86:6 (water).

2. Q 4:1; 6:98; 7:189; 31:28; and 39:6.

the first human's mate.[3] The best-known one, often understood as the portrayal of human creation, is found in the beginning of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ*, "Chapter of women," which depicts the creation of people from a single soul, *nafs wāḥida*, and the creation from it of its mate, *zawj*, so that they would multiply into numerous men and women.[4] However, none of these passages explicitly address the creation of the first woman, later named as Eve (Arabicized as *Ḥawwāʾ*) in the Islamic interpretive tradition. Furthermore, the Quran does not clarify either the way or the substance from which the first woman was created.

Quranic exegesis, *tafsīr*, developed rapidly during the first centuries of Islam. This interpretive knowledge was constructed from a variety of sources and eventually compiled into literary format by Muslim exegetes (*mufassirūn*). Prophetic traditions, or hadiths, highly valued especially in Sunni Islam, were often used to explain the scripture. In Shiʿi exegesis, the emphasis was first on *taʾwīl*, the shedding of light on the esoteric (*bāṭin*) meaning of the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) part of the scripture; this spiritual exegesis was often sectarian and political. The Imāmī (i.e., Twelver) interpretive tradition imbibed the *tafsīr* style prevalent in Sunni exegesis, and narrations (sg. *khabar*; pl. *akhbār*) from the infallible imams became the core of Shiʿi interpretation.[5] These narrations were used systematically to explain the Quranic message particularly in tradition-based exegesis, *tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr*.[6]

Premodern exegetes kept building upon earlier exegetic knowledge, so the interpretative knowledge both accumulated and transformed in their Quranic commentaries.[7] The lore

3. Q 4:1; 7:189; 30:21; 39:6; and 42:11.

4. "O mankind! Be wary of your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created its mate from it (*khalaqakum min nafs wāḥida wa-khalaqa minhā zawjahā*), and from the two of them, scattered numerous men and women"; Q 4:1 in *The Qurʾān*, trans.ʿAli Qulī Qarāʾī (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2004), 105. The word *nafs*, "soul," in the verse is grammatically feminine, whereas the word *zawj*, "mate," is masculine—so grammatically speaking, God created a feminine soul and from her/it He created her/its masculine mate. For details, see R. Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib? The Woman's Creation Question," *Al-Mushir* 27 (1985): 124–55.

5. M. Pregill, "Exegesis," in *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, ed. H. Berg, 98–125 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 105–9; S. Rizvi, "Twelver Shīʿī Exegesis," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. M. A. Abdel Haleem and M. A. A. Shah, 708–20 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); D. Steigerwald, "Twelver Shīʿī *Taʾwīl*," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾān*, ed. A. Rippin, 372–85 (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006). These narrations were also folded into codices, specifically the compilation known as *al-kutub al-arbaʿa*, "the Four Books." One of these four collections of traditions is *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991), perhaps better known as Ibn Bābawayh. He also wrote *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ wa-l-aḥkām wa-l-asbāb*, which is repeatedly cited in connection with the exegetic accounts examined in this article. For more information, see R. Gleave, "Between *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*: The 'Canonical' Imāmī Collections of *Akhbār*," *Islamic Law and Society* 8 (2001): 350–82. Shiʿi hadiths concerning the creation of woman are comprehensively discussed by A. Inloes in *Women in Shi'ism: Ancient Stories, Modern Ideologies* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2020), 57–136.

6. Steigerwald, "Twelver Shīʿī *Taʾwīl*," 380–82. *Tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr* was also characteristic of Sunni exegesis of the time. This approach represents the first of the two major schools in later Imāmī theology, Akhbārī and Uṣūlī, of which the latter gives more space for *ijtihād*, or personal reasoning (see, e.g., Steigerwald, "Twelver Shīʿī *Taʾwīl*," 380–81). Admittedly, this is a simplification of the origins of *tafsīr* literature, for further discussion on which see, e.g., N. Sinai, "The Qur'anic Commentary of Muqātil b. Sulaymān and the Evolution of Early Tafsīr Literature," in *Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*, ed. A. Görke and J. Pink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 113–43.

7. Pregill, "Exegesis," 108.

of coexisting cultures and religions naturally affected this process. For instance, Muslim scholars seem to have been familiar with biblical narratives, and some details—such as the Hebrew Bible's depiction of the substance of Eve's creation as one of Adam's ribs—were absorbed into the Islamic interpretive tradition.[8] In addition, the selection of traditions in each compilation was determined by individual choices, reflecting the exegete's own context and concerns.

The development of the Islamic interpretive tradition with respect to the creation of woman has been previously studied, although often with only marginal remarks concerning the Shiʿi tradition.[9] Individual premodern Imāmī scholars' exegetic accounts addressing this topic have been referred to in a number of studies,[10] and the matter has been examined focusing on exegetic material outside the *tafsīr* literature.[11] Furthermore, modern Shiʿi exegeses concerning the creation of woman have been addressed sporadically.[12] Eve in Imāmī commentaries has also been dealt with in some studies focusing on the early events

8. See, e.g., K. Bauer, "Room for Interpretation: Qur'anic Exegesis and Gender" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2008), 29–31; C. Bronson, "Imagining the Primal Woman: Islamic Selves of Eve" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012), 124; eadem, "Eve in the Formative Period of Islamic Exegesis: Intertextual Boundaries and Hermeneutic Demarcation," in Görke and Pink, *Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History*, 27–61, at 30–34; Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib"; eadem, "The Issue of Woman-Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition," in *Women's and Men's Liberation*, ed. L. Grob et al., 65–82 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), available at http://riffathassan.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/The_Issue_of_Woman-Man_Equality_in_the_Islamic_Tradition1.pdf; Pregill, "Exegesis," 105–8; R. Tottoli, "The Corpora of *Isrāʾīliyyāt*," in Abdel Haleem and Shah, *Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, 682–92.

9. Bauer, "Room for Interpretation," 24–57; eadem, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān: Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 101–36; Bronson, "Imagining the Primal Woman," 107–57; Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib," 124–55; R. Osman, *Female Personalities in the Qur'an and Sunna: Examining the Major Sources of Imami Shi'i Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 15–42; K. von Schöneman, "'Confine Your Women!': Diachronic Development of Islamic Interpretive Discourse on the Creation of Woman," *Hawwa* (published online ahead of print, October 2020, https://doi.org/10.1163/15692086-BJA10010): 1–45; B. Stowasser, *Women in the Quran: Traditions and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 25–38.

10. H. Arpaguş, "The Position of Woman in the Creation: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Muslima Theology: The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians*, ed. E. Aslan et al., 115–32 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013); Bauer, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 123–29; A. Geissinger, *Gender and Muslim Construction of Exegetical Authority: A Rereading of the Classical Genre of Qur'an Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 39–41; K. Kueny, "Reproducing Power: Qurʾānic Anthropogonies in Comparison," in *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*, ed. P. M. Cobb, 235–60 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); J. Smith and Y. Haddad, "Eve: Islamic Image of Woman," *Women's Studies International Forum* 5 (1992), 135–44. In addition, Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī interpretations have been addressed in K. Bauer, "Spiritual Hierarchy and Gender Hierarchy in Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī Interpretations of the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 14 (2012): 29–46.

11. M. Dhala, "Five Foundational Women in the Qur'an: Reading their Stories from a Shia Female Perspective," *Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology* 5 (2019): 3–26; Z. Hadromi-Allouche, "Creating Eve: Feminine Fertility in Medieval Islamic Narratives of Eve and Adam," in *In the Arms of Biblical Women*, ed. J. Greene and M. Caspi, 27–64 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013); Inloes, *Women in Shi'ism*, 57–136; M. Kister, "Adam: A Study of Some Legends in 'Tafsir' and 'Hadit' Literature," *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993): 113–74, at 143–47; idem, "Legends in *Tafsīr* and *Ḥadīth* Literature: The Creation of Ādam and Related Stories," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, ed. A. Rippin, 82–114 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), 110–14.

12. Arpaguş, "Position of Woman," 115–32; S. Hasyim, *Understanding Women in Islam: An Indonesian Perspective* (Jakarta: Solstice, 2006), 25–51.

of humankind after the creation of woman.[13] However, most studies addressing the primal woman and her creation in the Islamic interpretive tradition discuss exclusively the Sunni tradition.[14] The diachronic development of Imāmī exegesis is considered in only a few studies.[15] Of these, Karen Bauer's work provides an important discussion regarding the exegetic trends in Imāmī interpretation.

Material and Methods

This study explores the evolution of the exegetic discourse concerning the creation of woman in premodern Imāmī commentaries on the Quran. I identified a total of thirteen verse-by-verse commentaries, as opposed to works of thematic exegesis, in Arabic that address the sentence *Khalaqakum min nafs wāḥida wa-khalaqa minhā zawjahā* in the first verse of *Sūrat al-Nisāʾ* (Q 4:1). My search spanned the period from the third/ninth to the eleventh/seventeenth century—that is, from the formative period of Shiʿi Islam up to the beginning of the modern era. My primary sources consist of the works of twelve premodern Imāmī scholars: Furāt al-Kūfī (d. early fourth/tenth century), ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. after 307/919), Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 319/932), Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), Abū ʿAlī al-Faḍl al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1153—two separate commentaries), Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. seventh/thirteenth century), Abū al-Fayḍ al-Nākūrī (d. 1004/1595), ʿAbd ʿAlī b. Jumʿa al-ʿArūsī al-Ḥuwayzī (d. between 1080/1669 and 1105/1693),[16] Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680), Hāshim al-Baḥrānī (d. 1107/1696), Nūr al-Dīn al-Kāshānī (d. 1115/1703), and Mīrzā Muḥammad al-Mashhadī (d. 1125/1713). Given the discursive nature of Quranic commentaries, it is justifiable to focus on commentaries in a single language; therefore, I selected only Arabic-language works and excluded premodern Persian commentaries, a few of which exist in verse-by-verse format.[17] I found no verse-by-

13. H. Abugideiri, "Allegorical Gender: The Figure of Eve Revisited," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 13 (1996): 518–36; K. Ruffle, "An Even Better Creation: The Role of Adam and Eve in Shiʿi Narratives about Fatimah al-Zahra," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81 (2013): 791–819.

14. For a concise review on this literature, see von Schöneman, "'Confine Your Women!,'" 14–15.

15. Bauer, "Room for Interpretation" and *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 101–36; Bronson, "Imagining the Primal Woman"; and "Eve in the Formative Period." Bauer examines the commentaries of three Imāmī exegetes and mentions four others in connection with her analyses. Bronson, on the other hand, focuses on formative Sunni exegesis. The most comprehensive excursions into the Shiʿi interpretive tradition concerning the creation of woman are provided by Inloes (*Women in Shi'ism*, 57–136) and Osman (*Female Personalities*, 15–42).

16. Some studies (e.g., those of Bauer and Osman) report a much later date for his death, but my estimate is based on comprehensive research performed by Todd Lawson, reported in his "Akhbārī Shiʿī Approaches to *Tafsīr*," in *Approaches to the Qurʾān*, ed. G. R. Hawting and A. Shareef, 173–210 (London: Routledge, 1993). This detail is significant in evaluating the interrelation between the commentaries in the third discursive stage of my study, since Lawson's dating makes al-Ḥuwayzī's the first commentary in this stage. Bauer ascribes—mistakenly, I believe—to Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī many traditions that seem to have been first presented by al-Ḥuwayzī.

17. Two of them—Abū al-Futūḥ al-Rāzī's (d. sixth/twelfth century) *Rawḍ al-jinān wa-rawḥ al-janān* and Mullā Fatḥ Allāh Kāshānī's (d. 988/1580) *Manhaj al-ṣādiqīn fī ilzām al-mukhālifīn*—have been consulted for reference. However, they do not add much to the specific narrative concerning the creation of woman.

verse Arabic commentary literature representing other branches of Shiʿi Islam from this time period.[18] All translations from Arabic into English provided in the analyses are mine.

The methodological framework of the present study can be defined as feminist discourse analysis, influenced by both poststructuralist and social constructionist thought. According to the latter, the way people understand the categories and concepts of the world is determined by time and place—that is, by their socially constructed cultural context.[19] Gender can be seen as a social construct built through discourse, whether spoken or written.[20] Dominant gender ideologies are formed and sustained within particular communities,[21] including premodern Muslim societies.

In poststructuralist thought, meanings expressed by language are unsettled, so they transform diachronically and in close connection with the social context of their use.[22] The process of meaning-making creates, preserves, and modifies representations of power,[23] presumably in conjunction with gender asymmetry as well. Both contextuality and plasticity are substantial aspects in this article, as it examines literature composed centuries ago in a specific religious community yet based on an interpretive tradition formed over a long period of time. An essential starting point of my analysis is the fact that these exegetic texts were not born in a vacuum. Instead, they were produced in the midst

18. It should be noted that the theme of human creation has also been addressed in some thematic commentaries, not only in the verse-by-verse ones included in this study.

19. V. Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2015), 1–4.

20. J. Sunderland, *Gendered Discourses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11. Feminism as a theory and a method is related to consciousness of patriarchy, sexism, and social justice, in particular. For feminist approaches to the study of religion, in general, see Sue Morgan's thorough review on the topic in "Feminist Approaches," in *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. P. Connolly, 42–72 (London: Continuum, 1999). She defines a feminist approach as a "critical transformation" of theoretical perspectives that introduces gender as a primary analytical category. The critical dimension of such inquiry addresses "religion with its historical perpetuation of unjust, exclusionary practices that have legitimated male superiority in every social domain." Morgan correctly notes that feminism is not a homogenous concept; instead, it comprises a vast range of perspectives. What is common to these approaches, however, is the critique of patriarchy—that is, institutionalized systems of male dominance (Morgan, "Feminist Approaches," 42–43).

21. See, e.g., M. Lazar, "Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis 1," *Critical Discourse Studies* 4 (2007): 141–64, at 147. A feminist approach to examining premodern Islamic texts has been described by Saʿdiyya Shaikh in connection with her study on certain hadiths as one that addresses Muslim religio-cultural texts representing "dominant conceptions of gender and the category of woman" within the premodern Muslim legacy and examines how they later become ideologically useful in determining "religious ideals of gender"; S. Shaikh, "Knowledge, Women and Gender in the Ḥadīth: A Feminist Interpretation," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 15 (2004): 99–108, at 100. In this study, the feminist dimension is about rendering gender ideology transparent and concomitantly providing a forum for feminist hermeneutics, that is, for tracing and deconstructing patriarchy in religious texts by exploring the narratives and discourses used to construct, embody, and sustain gender hierarchy. For feminist hermeneutics in Islamic studies, see, e.g., N. Jeenah, "Towards an Islamic Feminist Hermeneutic," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 21 (2008): 36–70.

22. Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 61–63; N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), 189.

23. N. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004), 9.

of eloquent communication between the Islamic interpretive tradition and lived religion, albeit admittedly among the scholarly elite.

The concept of "discourse" can be defined, for instance, as a way to observe how the world is (re)constructed by language use.[24] Discourse can normalize perceptions of gender by,[25] for example, creating and sustaining inequality or upholding unjust categorizations. Language use is always located in a particular time and space, so discourse is both engendered and construed historically.[26] It is also intertextual by nature.[27] In the present article, I examine these aspects by identifying the evolution of Muslim exegetic discourse as a way of constructing, embodying, and sustaining gender hierarchy in a certain form of language use and a distinctive genre of texts: *tafsīr*.[28]

Discourse analysis is not a fixed approach with concrete analytical utensils. It is better characterized as providing a multidisciplinary framework for exploring discursive praxes influencing or representing social structures. This is done by combining textual analysis with other forms of social studies.[29] The focal point is typically the ways in which power and inequality manifest in and are constituted by the discourse of a given context; thus, discourse analysis may serve as a tool in finding injurious rhetoric concerning gender matters.[30] Power is an important concept in this study, as I seek to identify the exegetic features employed to preserve gender-based social inequality in Muslim scholarly discourse.

The framework of discourse analysis has been recently used in many fields of academia, including religious studies.[31] For instance, it has been utilized to address the way biblical interpretations are formed and discussed in a specific context, as well as the subjectivity of the interpreter.[32] Discourse analysis has also been applied to Quranic studies, particularly in comparing translations that are thought to necessarily represent the translators' interpre-tations,[33] and in research on the Shiʿi interpretive tradition

24. Sunderland, *Gendered Discourses*, 6–7.

25. J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 1.

26. R. Wodak, "What CDA Is About: A Summary of Its History, Important Concepts and Its Developments," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. R. Wodak and M. Meyer, 1–13 (London: Sage, 2001).

27. R. Wodak, *Gender and Discourse* (London: Sage, 1997), 6.

28. Every text is language use, and as such a potential target of discourse-analytic exploration.

29. N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 12–36.

30. Sunderland, *Gendered Discourses*, 11.

31. E.g., T. Hjelm, "Discourse Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. S. Engler and M. Stausberg, 134–50 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

32. T. Warhol, "Gender Constructions and Biblical Exegesis: Lessons from a Divinity School Seminar," in *Language and Religious Identity: Women in Discourse*, ed. A. Jule, 50–72 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 51–52; for an illustrative case study of the phenomenon, see the entire article by Warhol.

33. E.g., D. T. Bazargani, "A comparative Study on Two Translations of the Holy Qur'an: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach," *Translation Studies* 12 (2015): 49–64; A. Sideeg, "Traces of Ideology in Translating the Qurān into English: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Six Cases across Twenty Versions," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 4 (2015): 214–26.

outside the genre of *tafsīr*.[34] *Tafsīr* has in fact been characterized as discourse analysis by its very nature.[35]

Aiming to evaluate the diachronic development of the exegetic discourse identifiable in Quranic commentaries, my study also benefits from a genealogical approach. This use of the concept of genealogy was introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche and later made famous in reconstructing historical trajectories by Michel Foucault.[36] Genealogy tackles the role of power in shaping human understanding, further improving the discourse-analytic framework when applied to historical literary sources, in particular.[37] Every new text is affected by other texts cultivated before it. *Tafsīr* has been described as an inherently genealogical tradition,[38] and genealogical discourse analysis has been used to examine both Sunni Islamic and Jewish interpretive traditions.[39] It is thus reasonable to assume that it would be useful also for investigating the evolution of Imāmī discourse on the creation of woman.

This study strives to demonstrate the all-encompassing patriarchal ethos of the premodern interpretive tradition by pointing out notions that represent and generate the gender-based hegemony prevalent in the exegetes' context. First, I uncover the content and linguistic features of the interpretative accounts likely to portray gender aspects and attitudes. Second, as a particular account is naturally a product of material selection, I discuss the narrations chosen by the exegetes in conjunction with preceding commentaries, carefully noting their individual opinions. Third, I track the accrual of misogynous details during the development of the interpretive discourse on the creation of woman. Importantly, my study develops the previous application of genealogical and discourse-analytic methodology by Omaima Abou-Bakr in connection with another Quranic verse.[40] I have elsewhere applied this approach to Sunni and Jewish exegetic discourses regarding

34. E.g., S. Rizwan, "Religion, Ideology and Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Majlis-e-Hussain," *Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Multidisciplinary Studies* 1 (2011): 1–35; F. Jawad and N. Othman, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Risalat al-Huquq of Imam Ali al-Sajjad," *Majallat al-ʿulūm al-insāniyya* 24 (2017): 50–69.

35. M. Nordin, "'Ilm al-Tafsir and Critical Discourse Analysis: A Methodological Comparison," *Journal of Language Studies* 15 (2015): 129–42.

36. M. Saar, "Genealogy and Subjectivity," *European Journal of Philosophy* 10 (2002): 231–45, at 231–33; Gary Gutting, *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 50–58.

37. S. Anaïs, "Genealogy and Critical Discourse Analysis in Conversation: Texts, Discourse, Critique," *Critical Discourse Studies* 10 (2013): 123–35.

38. W. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qur'ān Commentary of al-Thaʿlabī* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 14–16.

39. O. Abou-Bakr, "The Interpretive Legacy of Qiwamah as Exegetical Construct," in *Men in Charge? Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition*, ed. M. Al-Sharmani et al., 44–64 (Oxford: Oneworld, 2015); von Schöneman, "'Confine Your Women!'"; eadem, "Evolution of Rabbinic Discourse on the Creation of Woman in Late Antiquity" (MA thesis, University of Helsinki, 2019), available at https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/306271.

40. Abou-Bakr, "Interpretive Legacy." Abou-Bakr examines the accumulation of gender notions in exegeses on the first part of the Quranic verse 4:34 and the evolution of the original term *qawwāmūn* into the patriarchal construct of *qiwāma* within the evolving chronological context of Quranic commentaries representing different *tafsīr* approaches.

the creation of woman.[41] I will demonstrate the significance of this methodology in highlighting the genealogical character of the Imāmī exegetic discourse—that is, the ways in which layers of interpretation are built upon one another and shifts and additions take place within the boundaries of the interpretive community.

Analysis: Development of Imāmī Exegetic Discourse

1. Setting the Scene: Constituting the Imāmī Tradition Corpus (Third–Fourth/Ninth–Tenth Centuries)

The development of Imāmī exegesis concerning the creation of woman can be roughly divided into three distinct discursive stages defined, respectively, by the constituting of the Shiʿi exegetic corpus, reassertion of the interpretive tradition, and affluent hermeneutics and augmentations. The first stage represents the formative, "preclassical" period of Imāmī *tafsīr*, and it is preserved in the compilations of the second-generation exegetes, who lived in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. The three pre-Buyid exegetes, who exemplify this first discursive stage, are Furāt al-Kūfī, ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, and Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī. They transmitted traditions from the disciples of the infallible imams of Twelver Shiʿi Islam, generally without adding their own comments.

The first discursive stage established the core of Imāmī interpretations of the Quranic verse at issue. In his commentary, al-Kūfī offers a singular interpretation of Q 4:1 that reflects the efforts at the time to establish the identity of the Imāmī community. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, by contrast, presents only the view known mainly from the Sunni interpretive tradition: Eve was created from the lowest rib of Adam. Finally, al-ʿAyyāshī explains the same passage with reference to several traditions according to which Eve was created in diminutive terms either from Adam's smallest rib or from a leftover portion of the clay used to fashion him. She was created from Adam, which makes her hanker after men. This is, for al-ʿAyyāshī, the reason to keep women indoors. In what follows, I will elaborate on the interpretations of each exegete.

1.1. Abū al-Qāsim Furāt b. Ibrāhīm b. Furāt al-Kūfī (d. Early Fourth/Tenth Century)

The compilation known as *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī* represents tradition-based exegesis: its narrations generally go back to the fifth and sixth imams as well as the disciples of the first imam, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661).[42] It was authored at the end of the third/ninth century by Furāt al-Kūfī, an important Shiʿi hadith scholar and exegete, albeit apparently the least known of the commentators from this discursive stage.[43] The commentary reflects the author's association with esoteric mysticism, which is evident in the following account as well.

41. Von Schöneman, "'Confine Your Women!'"; eadem, "Evolution of Rabbinic Discourse."

42. M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami-Shiism* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 29–32.

43. M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "Furāt b. Furāt al-Kūfī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. K. Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill Online).

Furāt al-Kūfī presents one long tradition with a thorough *isnād* (chain of transmitters) concerning Q 4:1. It begins with a narration allegedly transmitted from the sixth imam, Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), and originally attributed to no less than the Prophet himself: "God created me and the people of my house from a piece of clay" (*khalaqanī wa-ahl baytī min ṭīna*). It further describes this *ahl al-bayt*, here referring to the Shiʿa, as illuminating the world with the light they have preserved since the creation. The tradition then warns the faithful against going astray and reminds them of the reward in the hereafter.[44]

This interpretation is a remarkable deviation from those presented in other Quranic commentaries of the time, particularly in that it does not connect the original verse with the creation of the primordial couple, Adam and Eve. Instead, it associates the passage with the creation of *ahl al-bayt*, apparently reflecting the author's context, which was dominated by the formation of the concept of *imāmiyya* between the minor and major occultations of the twelfth imam (264–329/874–941) and the central role of al-Kūfī's home city of Kufa as a firm Imāmī stronghold with a distinctive religious literature.[45] Al-Kūfī does not, however, elaborate on this theme explicitly. Instead, his account—and the discussion that follows it—connects the creation with righteousness, guidance, and salvation. Furthermore, it mentions the substance of human creation as "clay" (*ṭīna*).[46] However, al-Kūfī does not distinguish between different phases of human creation, and he thus does not address the creation of woman specifically.

1.2. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. after 307/919)

ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī was a multitalented scholar who authored about a dozen books, the most important one being his tradition-based exegesis. Al-Qummī's interpretation of Q 4:1 is brief, as is his *tafsīr* in general. He laconically states that *khalaqakum min nafs wāḥida* refers to the creation of Adam, whereas *khalaqa minhā zawjahā* refers to that of Eve, and that the latter was created from the former's lowest rib (*min asfal aḍlāʿihi*).[47] The terminology chosen resembles that of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/938), a contemporary Sunni commentator, who also specified that the rib in question was the lowest one.[48] It is remarkable that by tracing Eve to Adam's rib, al-Qummī diverges from most other Imāmī sources, which opt for "clay" as the origin of woman, as I will show below. In fact, it seems

44. Furāt al-Kūfī, *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī*, ed. M. al-Kāẓim (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2011), 1:101–2. In this edition, the traditions have been organized according to Quranic verses.

45. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis*, 6–9; for an extensive introduction to the time period and the pre-Buyid exegetes representing the era, see the entire study.

46. Interestingly, this tradition evokes the well-known Imāmī conception of the different locations of clay—represented by the Quranic terms *ʿilliyyūn* and *sijjīn*—used for the creation of the imams and their enemies; see, e.g., M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 38–41.

47. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, ed. Ṭ. al-Mūsawī al-Jazāʾirī (Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-Najaf, 1966), 1:130.

48. Cf. Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, ed. A. M. al-Ṭayyib (Mecca: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1999), 3:852.

that his understanding of this Quranic verse is mainly influenced by Sunni conceptions of its meaning. Unlike his contemporary al-Kūfī, al-Qummī does not use his explication of this particular passage to promote the development of Imāmī identity. However, in many other parts of his commentary, al-Qummī emphasizes the superiority of the Prophet's family and his descendants, as well as the infallible imams, hence affirming the core of Imāmī ideology.[49]

1.3. Abū al-Naḍr Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 319/932)

The third exegete of this discursive stage, Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī, made important contributions to Imāmī jurisprudence and hadith studies as well as Arabic literature. His most famous work, extensively cited by later exegetes, is his *Tafsīr*, which was written during the early fourth/tenth century.[50] His agenda is characterized by polemics against rational, or opinion-based, interpretation of the Quran (*tafsīr bi-l-raʾy*).[51] The style of *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* clearly follows tradition-based exegesis and has much in common with the exegesis of the legendary Sunni scholar of the time, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). The main difference lies in the chains of transmitters: al-ʿAyyāshī's seem to be sect-selective, pointing to the emergence of this feature already at such an early stage of Islamic history.

In the beginning of his interpretation of the passage, al-ʿAyyāshī cites a tradition ascribed to Imam ʿAlī. According to this tradition, Eve was created from a tiny rib in Adam's side (*quṣayrā janb Ādam*), which was actually the smallest rib (*al-ḍilʿ al-aṣghar*), when he was resting.[52] Both the term *quṣayrā*, a diminutive form of *qaṣīr* ("short"), and the idea of Adam sleeping while Eve is being formed are also present in al-Ṭabarī's commentary on the same Quranic passage.[53] Adding diminutive elements to the narrative clearly presents Eve as an inferior being as compared to Adam. This tradition also appends details from the biblical Garden of Eden narrative, which was quite common among contemporary Sunni commentators, indicating that scholarly works circulated freely and widely at this point of sectarian development.

Al-ʿAyyāshī then cites the sixth imam, Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq: "God created Adam from water and clay, so the zeal (*himma*) of his son is in water and clay. God created Eve from Adam, so men are the zeal of women (*fa-himmat al-nisāʾ al-rijāl*). So, fortify them [fem.] in the[ir] homes (*ḥaṣṣinūhunna fī al-buyūt*)!"[54] Notably, this narration resembles

49. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis*, 39–45.

50. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis*, 56–63.

51. J. McAuliffe, "Quranic Hermeneutics: The Views of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr," in Rippin, *Approaches to the History*, 46–62, at 48.

52. Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-ʿAyyāshī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, ed. H. Rasūlī Maḥallātī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī, 1991), 1:241.

53. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Dār Hijr, 2001), 6:341.

54. *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, 1:241. Cf. Bauer's translation in *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 124. The zeal of men for water and clay possibly refers to agriculture.

a tradition that was probably initiated in early classical Sunni exegesis by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and that reappears more than 400 years later in the influential commentaries of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), which recommend keeping women indoors on the basis of similar reasoning.[55] It is also repeated in the Shiʿi tradition after al-ʿAyyāshī by, for example, al-Ḥuwayzī, Muḥsin al-Fayḍ, and al-Baḥrānī in the eleventh/seventeenth century, as will be seen below.

The next two traditions cited in al-ʿAyyāshī's work, which consolidate the understanding of Q 4:1 in connection with human creation and the primordial beings, depict an ideal of marriage, often seen as one between first cousins. Although the vivid stories about the respective marriages of Adam's sons with a houri and a jinn and the subsequent marriage between the respective offspring of the two unions do not add details on the matter of female creation, they reveal a major endeavor of the Imāmī exegetic corpus on this particular Quranic verse: to solve the logical puzzle concerning the procreation of Adam's children. The matter was further elaborated upon in subsequent Shiʿi commentaries, but this topic lies outside the focus of my article and is thus not discussed here.

The final tradition al-ʿAyyāshī's commentary introduces is an alternative view, attributed to the fifth imam, Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir (d. 114/732), concerning the material from which Eve was created. The imam is quoted as saying that when people say that God created her from one of Adam's ribs (*min ḍilʿ min aḍlāʿ Ādam*), they are lying. The Imam marvels at the claim: as if God were incapable of creating her from anything but a rib! A similar speculation was later presented by the Sunni commentator Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) in his *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, arguing that since God is capable of creating Adam from dust, He must be capable of creating Eve from dust as well,[56] but this argument was not commonly reproduced in later Sunni commentaries. In the Shiʿi interpretive tradition, however, it was widely known and has been often repeated since.

Al-ʿAyyāshī goes on to quote a statement from the Prophet, transmitted by Imam al-Bāqir from a member of *ahl al-bayt*: "God, Blessed and High, took a handful of clay and mixed it with His right hand—and both of His hands are right [hands]—and created Adam from it. And there was some leftover clay (*faḍalat faḍla min al-ṭīn*), from which He created Eve."[57]

Al-ʿAyyāshī's interpretation of Q 4:1 represents the beginning of a long-lasting tension in Imāmī exegesis between two incompatible views, each supported by traditions attributed to the imams: Eve was created from a rib or from the same clay as Adam. Although some

55. Cf. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr*, 3:852; ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl b. Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, ed. M. S. Muḥammad et al. (Cairo: Muʾassasat Qurṭuba, 2000), 3:333; and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr fī tafsīr al-maʾthūr*, ed. ʿA. M. al-Turkī (Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥajr, 2003), 4:209. Osman cites an editorial note from a Shiʿi hadith collection according to which this might have been meant allegorically: "houses" actually mean "husbands"—women should be made safe through marriage so that their inborn zeal toward men would not lead them away from the right path (Osman, *Female Personalities*, 28). Inloes gives an insightful summary of the features of this tradition in her *Women in Shi'ism*, 81.

56. Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr wa-mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 9:167. It is possible that al-Rāzī was influenced by Shiʿi thought, which his commentary may also reflect.

57. *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, 1:242. Cf. Bauer's translation of a similar passage in *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 124.

individual exegetes endorsed one or the other of these views, Imāmī commentators generally remained silent on the matter until the eleventh/seventeenth century.[58] Meanwhile, the Sunni interpretive tradition stuck firmly to the view that the initial soul was Adam and the mate made from it was Eve, created from Adam's rib.[59] It is tempting to speculate that the Imāmī exegetes who opted for the clay explanation—instead of the rib theory favored by the Sunnis—sought deliberately to distinguish Imāmī exegesis from its Sunni counterpart. This position may have been part of the distinct Imāmī identity that took shape in the period between the occultations of the twelfth imam.

2. Reasserting the Interpretive Tradition (Fifth–Seventh/Eleventh–Thirteenth Centuries)

The classical period of Imāmī exegesis, represented by the third generation of exegetes, encompasses the span from the fifth/eleventh to the seventh/thirteenth century. Shiʿi commentators—including the three exegetes studied from this period, namely, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, Abū ʿAlī al-Faḍl al-Ṭabrisī, and Muḥammad al-Shaybānī—drew on previous traditions, Sunni and Shiʿi alike, in their work.[60] This phase constitutes the second discursive stage of Imāmī exegesis on the creation of woman, and it is defined by efforts to entrench the views on the matter articulated in the first stage. The scholars of this period worked in an environment that can be seen as the golden age of the Shiʿa, during and after the reigns of the Buyid (322–447/934–1062) and Fatimid (297–555/909–1171) dynasties, and it is plausible that they felt quite free to express their doctrinal beliefs in their scholarly works. Nevertheless, in their writings the tiny rib allegedly used for the creation of woman is not only the lowest and smallest one, as in the preceding stage, but sinister and the farthest one as well. In addition, the rib is further described as crooked, and its crookedness symbolizes the wariness with which men should deal with women. The following sections elucidate the details of each commentary's account.

2.1. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067)

Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī is one of the most influential Shiʿi scholars of all time. Besides being a prolific writer, he is also considered the founder of Imāmī jurisprudence. He worked under the Shiʿi-favoring Buyid dynasty and authored two of the four most famous Imāmī hadith collections.[61] In his Quranic commentary, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, al-Ṭūsī starts his explication on verse Q 4:1 with matters pertaining to the latter part of the verse. He then proceeds to the passage of interest here, asserting that according to all commentators, God created His creation from a single soul, and this soul was Adam.

58. Bauer, "Room for Interpretation," 39; eadem, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 125.

59. E.g., von Schöneman, "'Confine Your Women!'"

60. Ayoub, "The Speaking Qurʾān and the Silent Qurʾān: A Study of the Principles and Development of Imāmī *Tafsīr*," in Rippin, *Approaches to the History*, 177–98, at 185. For a thorough introduction to the era and the context of these exegetes, see C. Baker, *Medieval Islamic Sectarianism* (Amsterdam: Arc Humanities Press, 2019).

61. I.e., *al-kutub al-arbaʿa*; M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "Al-Ṭūsī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. J. Bearman et al., 10:745–46 (Leiden: Brill, 1954–2009). For an introduction to the Buyid dynasty, see Baker, *Medieval Islamic Sectarianism*, 1–15.

Al-Ṭūsī goes on to say that God's saying *khalaqa minhā zawjahā* refers to Eve, and he claims that most commentators subscribe to the view that she was created from one of Adam's ribs.[62] Interestingly, al-Ṭūsī appeals to an existing scholarly consensus, possibly encompassing Sunni as well as Shiʿi commentators, which may seem surprising given his Imāmī-majority context.

Next, al-Ṭūsī quotes a tradition from Imam al-Bāqir: God created woman from a leftover of the clay from which He had created Adam. He then argues that although the term "soul" is grammatically feminine, its meaning here is masculine, and the masculine form of the phrase—*nafs wāḥid*—would be correct, as well.[63] Al-Ṭūsī thus seems to settle on the interpretation that the woman, too, was created from clay, albeit only a leftover portion of it. The concept of leftover material was already introduced in al-ʿAyyāshī's interpretation, but al-Ṭūsī confirms this Imāmī conception by allowing potential alterations to the grammatical structure of the Quranic text, concomitantly emphasizing the primacy of a male being.

2.2. Abū ʿAlī al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1153)

Al-Ṭabrisī is perhaps the best known premodern Shiʿi exegete. Although his main teacher was a student of al-Ṭūsī, he was also taught by Sunni scholars. Al-Ṭabrisī wrote two commentaries, of which the briefer one is called *Jawāmiʿ al-jāmiʿ fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-majīd.* Concerning Q 4:1, the commentary addresses the soul, *nafs*, which God brought into being from soil, subsequently creating Eve from one of its ribs. Al-Ṭabrisī also quotes a saying by the Prophet, according to which God created people from Adam's soul and then created their mother, Eve, from it.[64] It is noteworthy that al-Ṭabrisī uses a feminine suffix (*-hā*) for "it," most likely referring to the feminine noun *nafs*.

The more comprehensive of al-Ṭabrisī's Quran commentaries, *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, is probably the most authoritative premodern Imāmī commentary.[65] After elaborating at length on other parts of verse Q 4:1, following quite closely the commentary of al-Ṭūsī, al-Ṭabrisī presents a tradition explicating the passage *khalaqakum min nafs wāḥida.* He states that according to all interpreters, the "soul" denotes Adam, despite the feminine form of the word, and as evidence he quotes the words of a poet:

> Your father is a successor whom another bore (*abūka khalīfa waladathu ukhrā*),
> and you are the successor of that perfection (*wa-anta khalīfat dhāka al-kamāl*).[66]

62. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. A. Sh. al-Amīn and A. Ḥ. Qaṣīr (Najaf: Maktabat al-Amīn, 1989), 3:99.

63. Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, 3:99; cf. *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, 1:242. Correspondingly in Sunni *tafsīr*, e.g., al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 6:339–40.

64. Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī, *Jawāmiʿ al-jāmiʿ fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-majīd* (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 2003), 1:368.

65. E. Kohlberg, "Al-Ṭabrisī (Ṭabarsī), Amīn al-Dīn," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 10:40–41. For extensive information both on *Majmaʿ al-bayān* and on its author, see B. Fudge, *Qur'anic Hermeneutics: Al-Tabrisi and the Craft of Commentary* (London: Routledge, 2012).

66. Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Murtaḍā, 2006), 3:7.

The feminine-looking noun for "successor," *khalīfa*,[67] is used in connection with the grammatically masculine "father," *abū*, and the masculine second-person pronoun *anta.* That the addressee is masculine is confirmed by the use of the masculine suffix *-hu* in the first sentence.[68] Like al-Ṭūsī, al-Ṭabrisī points out that a masculine attribute, *wāḥid*, for the single soul would have been correct as well.[69]

Al-Ṭabrisī then asserts that most commentators agree that *khalaqa minhā zawjahā* means that Eve was created from one of Adam's ribs. This interpretation, he claims, is further supported by a saying of the Prophet: "The woman was created from a rib (*khuliqat al-marʾa min ḍilʿ*). If you straighten it, you break her, but if you leave her crooked, you will find her pleasant (*istamtaʿta bihā*)."[70] This narration is remarkably similar to that repeated in Sunni commentaries in that al-Ṭabrisī's exegesis also contains modified versions of some Sunni hadiths whose reliability and soundness, however, have been heavily criticized by the Muslim feminist scholar Riffat Hassan.[71] The tradition depicts women as disconsolately crooked, perhaps even as persons with contorted morality.

In sum, although al-Ṭabrisī follows his predecessor al-Ṭūsī quite closely, he ends with a statement indicating that the substance of Eve's creation was the lowest rib of Adam.[72] It is noteworthy that although al-Ṭabrisī was working in an environment shaped by Shiʿi domination in Iran, he concludes his explication of Q 4:1 with this apparently Sunni claim. This marks as a clear shift in the conception of the primordial couple's creation, and it contributes to the consolidation of the image of woman as derivative and subordinate. It is possible that this shift reflects the supposed "Sunni revival" that followed the so-called Shiʿi century,[73] and that the political environment of Sunni resurgence might have pushed Imāmī exegetes to take Sunni conceptions more emphatically into account.

67. Feminine-looking since it concludes in a *tāʾ marbūṭa*.

68. In fact, the first part of the poem is also cited by Sunni exegetes in support of similar reasoning; see, e.g., al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 6:339–40; Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076), *Tafsīr al-basīṭ* (Riyadh: Wizārat al-Taʿlīm al-ʿĀlī, 2010), 6:281; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 9:166.

69. Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:7; cf. al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, 3:99.

70. Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:7. For similar passages in Sunni exegeses of the time, see, e.g., al-Wāḥidī, *Tafsīr al-basīṭ*, 6:282; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 9:167. A comparable tradition, which notes that the woman is "like a rib," can also be found among Shiʿi traditions, albeit not in connection with the creation. For example, Abū Jaʿfar al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941) and Ibn Bābawayh attribute this comment to the Prophet as reported by the sixth imam: Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1947), 5:513; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābāwayh al-Qummī, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh* (Qum: Jamāʿat al-Mudarrisīn fī al-Ḥawza al-ʿIlmiyya, 1885), 3:439–40. Interestingly, as Inloes notes (*Women in Shi'ism*, 62), Ibn Bābawayh expresses doubt in the report's soundness .

71. Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib"; cf. al-Wāḥidī, *Tafsīr al-basīṭ*, 6:281; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 9:167; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: al-Risāla, 2000), 6:6. Osman argues that the view of woman as irredeemably crooked is fundamentally against the Quran and its verse 95:4, which says that humans have been created *fī aḥsan taqwīm*, "in the best of forms" (Osman, *Female Personalities*, 27–28).

72. Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, 3:7; cf. al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, 3:99.

73. For a concise introduction to these somewhat debated concepts, see Baker, *Medieval Islamic Sectarianism*, 1–15. For the broader debate regarding the concept of a "Sunni revival," see S. Mulder, *The Shrines of the 'Alids in Medieval Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 16, n. 16.

2.3. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. seventh/thirteenth century)

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī is a little-celebrated character among premodern Shiʿi exegetes. In fact, the manuscript attributed to him does not mention his name at all. However, his name and his authorship of the book bearing the title *Nahj al-bayān ʿan kashf maʿānī al-Qurʾān* is given in another contemporary work.[74] In his Quranic commentary, al-Shaybānī interprets the passage in question rather briefly. He first states, citing Imam al-Ṣādiq, that *khalaqakum min nafs wāḥida* means that humankind was created "from Adam," who was thus named because he was created from the surface of the earth (*adīm al-arḍ*).[75] Next, al-Shaybānī interprets *khalaqa minhā zawjahā* as referring to Eve. She was named Ḥawwāʾ because she was created from a living thing (*ḥayy*). According to al-Shaybānī, God created her from a rib on Adam's left side (*ḍilʿ al-yasār*), and this tiny rib was among the last ones (*al-quṣayrā ākhir al-aḍlāʿ*). Furthermore, Eve was called "a woman" (*imraʾa*) because she was created from the man (*al-marʾ*).[76]

The diminutive term *quṣayrā* in al-Shaybānī's account was also used by al-ʿAyyāshī a few hundred years earlier; in addition, it is frequently repeated in medieval Sunni commentaries. By contrast, al-Shaybānī's use of *yasār* is not replicated in any other commentary analyzed here. This is thus the first, but not the last, account to specify that the tiny rib from which Eve was created came from Adam's left side and to describe it in sinister and negative terms. Furthermore, the rib's being one of the last ones, *ākhir al-aḍlāʿ*, is a novel elaboration, although many other dismissive attributes have already been applied by this stage of the interpretive discourse. Notably, both the Arabic term used for "woman" and Eve's proper name are explained by her derivative creation from the man. Together, these discursive features serve to consolidate an understanding of women as fundamentally reliant on and subservient to men. This view could reflect the Sunni shift in Middle Eastern power relations in this period after the transient success of Shiʿi thought among the leaders.

3. Blossoming of the Lore: An Affluence of Hermeneutics (Tenth–Eleventh/Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries)

The concept of Eve's creation is elaborated and expanded on in the third discursive stage of Imāmī exegetic discourse, examined here through the explications of Abū al-Fayḍ al-Nākūrī, ʿAbd ʿAlī b. Jumʿa al-ʿArūsī al-Ḥuwayzī, Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, Nūr al-Dīn al-Kāshānī, and Mīrzā Muḥammad al-Mashhadī, most of whom worked under the rising Safavid dynasty, which adopted Imāmī doctrine as the state religion. The commentaries produced in this majority context are often polemical, accentuating sectarian

74. Ḥ. Dargāhī, introduction to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, *Nahj al-bayān ʿan kashf maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, ed. Ḥ. Dargāhī (Qum: Nashr al-Hādī, 1958–99), 1:*ḥāʾ*.

75. Al-Shaybānī, *Nahj al-bayān*, 2:108.

76. Al-Shaybānī, *Nahj al-bayān*, 2:108. The word *imraʾa*, translated as "woman," can be read as a derivative of the word *marʾ* used, in this sentence, for "man." This tradition is also presented by the Sunni exegete Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī in his *Baḥr al-ʿulūm*, ed. ʿA. M. Muʿawwad et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993), 1:328–29. The reasoning resembles that seen in Genesis 2:23, in which the primal man names the newly born female creature a "woman" (Heb. *ishsha*) because she was taken from "man" (Heb. *ish*).

elements. The accounts of the creation of woman presented by these exegetes frequently develop the previously constructed narrative further, mainly by introducing misogynous conclusions concerning the status of women. They also add dismissive attributes to the rib they portray as Eve's origin and assert that she was made to satisfy Adam's diverse desires—to provide him with entertainment, service, and sexual favors. Moreover, Muḥsin al-Fayḍ reconciles the competing views regarding the substance of Eve's creation by pointing out that the respective essences of men and women are fundamentally different, hence probably strengthening the late Safavid tendency toward gender segregation. Details regarding Eve's creation from an interior and sinister part of Adam are used to justify the gendered duties and rights of women and men. The following sections analyze the interpretations provided by the six exegetes from this discursive stage in detail.

3.1. Abū al-Fayḍ al-Fayḍī al-Nākūrī (d. 1004/1595)

Al-Nākūrī was an Indian polymath who made diverse contributions to politics, poetry, study of history, and exegetics.[77] His Quranic commentary, called *Sawāṭiʿ al-ilhām fī tafsīr kalām al-malik al-ʿallām*, comments on the relevant Quranic passage quite briefly. Al-Nākūrī states that *khalaqakum* means "He formed you" (*ṣawwarakum*), and *min nafs wāḥida* means that people have a single origin, "your father Adam." *Khalaqa minhā zawjahā*, according to al-Nākūrī, indicates that Adam's spouse is "your mother Eve," and she was born of Adam's shoulder blade, *milāṭ Ādam.*[78] Al-Nākūrī's specification of a shoulder blade as Eve's origin is a remarkable deviation from all other traditions, which claim she was fashioned from a rib, but it, too, traces Eve's substance to one of Adam's bones. The shoulder blade claim does not, to my knowledge, have a parallel in the texts of any Abrahamic religion. However, this peculiar detail is not repeated in later exegetic accounts. It is possible that it reflects the context of the author, who lived in the borderland of Islamic civilization.

3.2. ʿAbd ʿAlī b. Jumʿa al-ʿArūsī al-Ḥuwayzī (d. between 1080/1669 and 1105/1693)

ʿAbd ʿAlī al-Ḥuwayzī was a hadith scholar and exegete who was based in Shiraz, a major Iranian city under Safavid rule.[79] He held the view that traditions are essential to understanding the meaning of the Quran, and he is believed to have initiated the Akhbārī method of *tafsīr*.[80] Thus, al-Ḥuwayzī inaugurates a series of several exegetes identified as representatives of the so-called Akhbārī school of exegesis.[81] His *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, completed by 1065/1655, contains a vast variety of traditions, including several on the

77. M. al-Shīrāzī, introduction to Abū al-Fayḍ al-Nākūrī, *Sawāṭiʿ al-ilhām fī tafsīr kalām al-malik al-ʿallām*, ed. M. al-Shīrāzī (Iran: n.p., 1996), 1:113–17.

78. Al-Nākūrī, *Sawāṭiʿ al-ilhām*, 2:6.

79. For an extensive introduction to the Safavid dynasty, see A. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

80. Lawson, "Akhbārī Shiʿī Approaches to *Tafsīr*," 178–80.

81. R. Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shīʿī School* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 154.

matter of human creation as discussed in Q 4:1. It is the most meticulous of the premodern Shiʿi commentaries analyzed in this study.

Al-Ḥuwayzī begins his discussion with a tradition claiming that the name of Eve as well as the Arabic word for woman (*imraʾa*) are dependent on her derivative creation, as already argued by al-Shaybānī hundreds of years earlier,[82] and that women were called "women" (*nisāʾ*) because there was no intimacy (*uns*) for Adam except for Eve.[83] Like many other exegetes, al-Ḥuwayzī repeats earlier traditions from *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* and elaborates at length on the procreation of the first couple's children, mainly providing evidence against the possibility that sibling marriage was involved. Returning to the details of human creation, al-Ḥuwayzī adds new attributes to the rib from which Eve was made via a narration ascribed to Imam al-Ṣādiq: Eve was created from Adam's *farthest* left-hand rib (*ḍilʿ Ādam al-yusrā al-aqṣā*).[84] With the added attribute *aqṣā*, the first woman becomes even more marginal. Notably, al-Ḥuwayzī also uses the attribute *yusrā*, which is usually interpreted and translated as "left" but which also has a potential negative connotation as sinister.[85] In the narration, the Imam goes on to criticize theologians who insinuate that God did not have the ability to create a spouse for Adam from anything but his rib—which implies that Adam married a part of himself.[86] Instead, the Imam describes Eve's creation thus:

> When God—blessed and exalted be He—created Adam from clay, He asked the angels [to prostrate before Adam], so they prostrated before him. God cast a slumber upon him, and then He contrived (*ibtadaʿa*) a creation for him [Adam], making her in the hole between his knees (*jaʿalahā fī mawḍiʿ al-nuqra allatī bayna rukbatayhi*). This is why the woman is subordinate to the man (*tabaʿ li-l-rajul*).[87]

The verb *jaʿala* in this passage can be understood to denote the creation of something from a preexisting thing, so a reader may get the impression that the first woman was extracted from the man, further strengthening the idea of male primality, even supremacy.[88] Most importantly, the narration adds new details: the first woman was made in a mysterious

82. ʿAbd ʿAlī al-Ḥuwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn*, ed. H. al-Rasūlī al-Maḥallātī (Qum: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿIlmiyya, 1980), 1:429; cf. al-Shaybānī, *Nahj al-bayān*, 2:108.

83. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:430; the words "women" and "intimacy" share two consonants, *nūn* and *sīn*.

84. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:430.

85. For the negative connotation, see Q 90:8–20.

86. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:430; cf. *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, 1:242. Elsewhere in his commentary al-Ḥuwayzī suggests that the rib narrative is weak, as noted by Osman (*Female Personalities*, 17).

87. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:430–31. Cf. Bauer's translation of a similar passage from Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's commentary in *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 126.

88. See A. Wadud, *Qurʾan and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18–19. Osman seems to disagree on the basis of another meaning of *jaʿala*, "to change something from its previous state" (Osman, *Female Personalities*, 38, n. 35). However, Zohar Hadromi-Allouche reads a similar passage, also attributed to Imam al-Ṣādiq, in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī's (d. 573/1177) *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* to mean that the creation of Eve was a totally new creation (Hadromi-Allouche, "Creating Eve," 38).

place associated with the man, and this origin is closely connected to her position in society. The creation of the first woman is thus used to justify the oppression of all women. The peculiar narration goes on to describe Adam and Eve meeting one another and the purpose of her creation:

> Adam said thereupon: O Lord, who is this good creation, who kept me company and whom I look at? God said: O Adam, this is my servant (*amatī*) Eve; would you like her to be with you so that she may entertain you (*tuʾnisuka*), speak with you, and carry out your command (*taʾtamiru li-amrika*)? [Adam] said: Yes, Lord, and for that I owe You thanks and praise. God, Glorious and Almighty, said: Ask me for her hand as she is my servant, and she is also suitable for you as a spouse for [your] desire[s] (*zawja li-l-shahwa*). Then God set desire in him, and before that He had taught Adam the knowledge.[89]

The purpose of the creation of woman thus seems to be to provide entertainment and service for the man. She is the object of the man's lust, and she lacks knowledge. According to Rawand Osman, this distinction has given rise to the view that Adam is the higher soul and Eve is the lower one. This interpretation, Osman argues, is contrary to the original Quranic meaning of *nafs*. She further proposes that the depiction of the spouses in this narrative does not represent the Quranic meaning of *zawj*, which refers to an equal spouse.[90]

The story continues:

> [Adam] said: O Lord, I ask You for her hand. And what is Your wish (*riḍāka*) concerning this? [God] said: My wish is that you teach her the characteristics of my religion. [Adam] said: I owe You that if You wish that, O Lord! [God] said: I wished it and I married her to you, so she is joined to you. [Adam] said: Come to me! She said: No; you come to me! So God, Glorious and Almighty, ordered Adam to go to her and he went. Had he not done it, the women would go to ask [for men's] hand[s] for themselves.[91]

Eve's insistence that Adam go to her matches the conventional practice of patriarchal traditions, in which it is generally the man who goes to the woman to propose marriage. At the same time, this detail provides a rationale for the customs of its context: women are not to initiate matrimonial proposals, purely because of the events during the creation. In addition, this tradition contains the key elements of an Islamic marriage—a dower

89. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:431. Cf. Bauer, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 126. The eleventh/seventeenth-century Imāmī scholar al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1698) gives a similar account in his monumental collection of Imāmī traditions, most likely influencing subsequent Quranic interpretations, although with some differences: God created Eve in Adam's shape and showed her to him when he was asleep—this was the first dream on earth. When Adam woke up, Eve was sitting close to his head. When he asked who she was, God identified her as the person Adam had seen in his dream. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār: al-Jāmiʿa li-durar akhbār al-aʾimma al-aṭhār* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1983), 11:115.

90. Osman, *Female Personalities*, 25. In addition, Inloes argues that the terminology clearly connects Eve to slavery (*Women in Shiʾism*, 87).

91. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:431. Cf. Bauer, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 126.

(teaching religion) and a guardian (God). The presence of elements reflecting gender hierarchy in this tradition prompted Amina Inloes to characterize it as an instance of "ʿAbbāsid-style slave-wife barter."[92] It is indeed surprising that this tradition, attributed to one of the most frequently cited imams, is not taken into account in any of the previous commentaries.

A bit later in his commentary, al-Ḥuwayzī quotes a prophetic tradition according to which the Messenger of God was asked whether Adam was created from Eve or Eve from Adam, and he responded:

> Eve was created from Adam; had Adam been created from Eve, divorce would be in the hands of women, not of men. So, was she created from his entirety or from some [part] of him? From some [part] of him; had she been created from his entirety, women could be punished like men are. And from his exterior or his interior? From the interior; had she been created from his exterior, the women would be unveiled like the men are. Therefore, women became covered. And from his right or his left (*shimālihi*)? From his left; had she been created from his right, the female's part of the inheritance would be like that of the male. Therefore, it became a portion for women and two portions for men. And the testimony of two women is like that of one man. So from what was she created? He said: From the clay that was left over from his left-hand rib (*min al-ṭīna allatī faḍalat min ḍilʿihi al-aysar*).[93]

Al-Ḥuwayzī is the first commentator thus far to use the word *shimāl* for the left side.[94] He also uses the word *aysar*, which can be translated to mean "left" as well as "more negligible"; the latter translation adds a negative nuance to the depiction of women. Significantly, this narration also seems to justify the hierarchical duties and rights of men and women, which may be considered the very basis of gender inequality. It also further diminishes the substance of Eve's creation: it is here the leftover clay from the creation of Adam's left-hand rib, not the whole of Adam. This tradition, like the next one, encapsulates the Imāmī views on the creation of woman by encompassing the key elements of the clay, the rib, and the secondary creation of the woman.[95] In fact, it has been suggested that being created from such leftovers can be read as worse than being created from a rib.[96]

According to a tradition attributed to Imam ʿAlī, men were created from the earth, so they are interested in the earth, whereas women were created from men, so their interest is in men. ʿAlī thus declares: "Imprison your women, O community of men!" (*fa-iḥbisū nisāʾakum yā maʿāshir al-rijāl*). Some earlier Imāmī commentaries already conveyed a similar command, but al-Ḥuwayzī's is the first Imāmī commentary to use the same verb,

92. Inloes, *Women in Shi'ism*, 69; see also her summary of the tradition's misogynous elements at 74–75. For Bauer's discussion on a similar passage, see "Room for Interpretation," 43; *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 127.

93. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:434.

94. At least one Sunni commentator uses the same term; see Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *Tafsīr al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, ed. A. ʿAbd al-Mawjūd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001), 3:163.

95. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:434.

96. Inloes, *Women in Shi'ism*, 128.

ḥabasa, that appears in several Sunni commentaries.[97] The overlap may indicate the fluidity of exegetic networks, which may have been less sect-selective than we tend to assume. Invoking an alternative version of an earlier tradition calling for the seclusion of women may also reflect the observed trend toward the imposition of more restrictions on women during the second half of the Safavid era, possibly because of increasing urbanization and clericalization.[98]

3.3. Muḥammad b. Murtaḍā Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680)

Mullā Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī is a well-known religious scholar of Safavid Iran. He was also the son-in-law of the influential Imāmī philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1635), who may have influenced Mullā Muḥsin's conceptions of gender. He studied various Islamic disciplines and later produced a wide variety of religious literature, including a multivolume Quranic commentary called *Kitāb al-Ṣāfī fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, which he completed in 1075/1664.[99] His interpretation of the relevant sentence in Q 4:1 starts with the assertion that *min nafs wāḥida* means Adam, and *khalaqa minhā zawjahā* means Eve. Muḥsin then invokes a long list of previous traditions on the matter, including contradictory traditions mentioning either a rib or leftover clay as the substance of female creation.[100] Many of these accounts echo the Hebrew Bible, which seems to have influenced the Islamic—including Shiʿi—interpretive tradition in relation to the story of human creation.[101] Muḥsin al-Fayḍ also reproduces a long narration very similar to that previously provided by al-Ḥuwayzī in which God creates Eve in the hole between Adam's hips (*bayna warkayhi*) to serve and entertain Adam.[102] Although the location of the hole in Muḥsin al-Fayḍ's account differs

97. Al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:434; cf. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr*, 3:852; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 3:333; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 4:209. This tradition, with the same verb, can already be found in the fourth/tenth-century compilation *al-Kāfī*, but somewhat surprisingly it does not appear in Imāmī exegetic material before al-Ḥuwayzī.

98. R. Matthee, "From the Battlefield to the Harem: Did Women's Seclusion Increase from Early to Late Safavid Times?," in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*, ed. C. Mitchell, 99–120 (London: Routledge, 2010), 110. However, Matthee notes that the conventional conception of women's diminishing public role during this period should be revisited and the complexity of the issue acknowledged.

99. W. C. Chittick, "Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 7:475–76.

100. Muḥammad b. Murtaḍā al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Kitāb al-Ṣāfī fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. M. al-Ḥusaynī al-Amīnī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1998), 2:175–76.

101. In fact, the biblical garden narrative is even more clearly present in a Persian commentary on Q 4:1, in which Mullā Fatḥ Allāh Kāshānī (d. 988/1580) explains that "When God Most High created Adam and brought him to Paradise, he did not have, in the midst of emptiness, anyone of the same species with whom to socialize, although there were houris and servant boys of clean disposition in Paradise. He asked God Most High for someone of the same species. God put him into a deep sleep and commanded Gabriel to take out a bone from his left side. And He created Eve out of this bone." Fatḥ Allāh Kāshānī, *Manhaj al-ṣādiqīn fī ilzām al-mukhālifīn* (Tehran: Čāpkhāna-yi Muḥammad Ḥasan ʿIlmī, 1917), 2:416; translation by Ilkka Lindstedt. Adam's loneliness and his apparent need for a woman—as well as the process of her making—are here depicted in a way that resembles the biblical creation narrative (Genesis 2:18–22). However, here Gabriel acts as a mediator of the "bone," which Kāshānī identifies as a rib earlier in his explication, and in this account there were other human-like creatures with Adam before the creation of woman.

102. Muḥsin al-Fayḍ, *al-Ṣāfī*, 2:176; cf. al-Ḥuwayzī, *Nūr*, 1:430–31.

slightly from that in al-Ḥuwayzī's, both convey the idea that the woman is inferior to the man because of her derivative creation.

However, Mullā Muḥsin also provides his own opinions and editorial comments on the traditions he cites. He quotes the abovementioned tradition according to which Eve was created from Adam's insides on the left side and from the clay that was left over from the creation of his left-hand rib. Interestingly, he concludes that this explains why men have one rib fewer than women do.[103] As is nowadays known, this claim is in fact false, but its inclusion in the commentary demonstrates Bauer's point that exegeses are firmly dependent on the knowledge of their time.[104] Furthermore, in order to harmonize the somewhat contradictory views regarding the origin of the first woman and the substance of her creation, Muḥsin al-Fayḍ finally—and uniquely—gives his own opinion on the matter:

> I say: What has been reported to us—that she was created from his left-hand rib—is an indication that the bodily, animalistic tendency (*al-jiha al-jusmāniyya al-ḥayawāniyya*) is stronger in women than it is in men, and the spiritual, angelic tendency (*al-jiha al-rūḥāniyya al-malakiyya*) is contrary to it. This is because "the right" alludes to the spiritual, heavenly world, and "the left" alludes to the bodily realm. The "clay" is an expression of the corporeal substance, and "the right" is an expression of the spiritual substance, and there is no corporeal world (*mulk*) without a spiritual world (*malakūt*). This is the meaning of his [the imam's] saying "Both of His hands are right [hands]." So the left-hand rib missing from Adam is a metaphor for some of the desires that grow from bodily dominance, which is [typically] from the physical world (*khalq*), and they are the leftover clay extracted from his [Adam's] interior, which became the substance of Eve's creation. It is pointed out in the tradition that in men the side of spirituality and command is stronger than the side of corporeality and physicality, unlike in women. So what is apparent is a sign of what is hidden, and this is the secret of the deficiency in male bodies in relation to women. God's secrets are not achieved except by the people of the secret [i.e., the enlightened], so disbelief in the words of the infallible [imams]—peace be upon them—is due to the understanding of the Sunnis (*al-ʿāmma*), which is based on the apparent [meaning] and disregards the origin of the tradition.[105]

Muḥsin al-Fayḍ may be acknowledged for his effort to reconcile the somewhat contradictory claims regarding the substance from which the first woman was created.[106] However, his

103. Muḥsin al-Fayḍ, *al-Ṣāfī*, 2:177–78. There is also another tradition in the Imāmī hadith corpus that suggests that men have fewer ribs than women do; see Inloes, *Women in Shi'ism*, 129–30.

104. Bauer, "Room for Interpretation," 52; eadem, *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 127.

105. Muḥsin al-Fayḍ, *al-Ṣāfī*, 2:178. Cf. Bauer's translation of the same passage in *Gender Hierarchy in the Qurʾān*, 128–29. Similarly, in Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī interpretations, the creation of Adam and Eve is understood metaphorically, as described by Bauer, "Spiritual Hierarchy."

106. Another kind of harmonizing effort is evident in al-Majlisī's collection of traditions (*Biḥār al-anwār*, 11:116), which suggests that Imāmī scholars endorsed the idea that woman was created from a rib only as an expression of *taqiyya*, precautionary dissimulation permitted to evade persecution. In fact, al-Majlisī identifies the rib narrative as a Sunni tradition, though he notes that it is also present in "our tradition" (*Biḥār al-anwār*, 11:222). Al-Majlisī may have played a direct role in the trend toward greater gender segregation in the late

elucidation serves to confirm the presumptions of the time: men are strong, whereas women are weak; men are spiritual, whereas women are profane, even mundane. Other potential views on the matter are presented in sectarian terms. Besides emphasizing sectarian distinctions, Mullā Muḥsin's explanation of Q 4:1 thus also provides evidence in support of gender segregation—women are simply the other, fundamentally different from men. This perspective is very much in line with societal developments at the time, as the visibility of women in society clearly shrank. As Osman points out, it is nearly preposterous that the same tale that the imams had strongly rejected could suddenly be seen as a calculated metaphor,[107] but apparently it served well the interests of the author—or those of the elite around him.

3.4. Hāshim b. Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī (d. 1107/1696)

Hāshim al-Baḥrānī is known as an Akhbārī-affiliated commentator. In his *al-Burhān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, completed in 1094/1683 and closely based on traditions, he repeats many of the narrations already provided in ʿAbd ʿAlī al-Ḥuwayzī's *Nūr al-thaqalayn* and Muḥsin al-Fayḍ's *al-Ṣāfī*, though he generally cites them without further discussion.[108] This is also the approach he adopts in connection with the passage of interest in this study. For example, al-Baḥrānī presents traditions according to which the name of Eve and the word for "woman" are derivative of man, in one way or another.[109] He also reproduces the already mentioned traditions about women's intrinsic lust for men, which justifies women's seclusion, and the contriving of a female creature for Adam in the hole between his hips, which established the woman as subordinate to the man.[110] Nevertheless, as with all exegetes, the personal selection of the traditions to include constitutes a form of interpretation and an editorial statement.

3.5. Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Murtaḍā al-Kāshānī (d. 1115/1703)

Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Kāshānī was a pupil of Muḥsin al-Fayḍ.[111] However, his Akhbārī-style *Tafsīr al-muʿīn* discusses the passage in question only briefly. Like many other commentaries, it affirms that *khalaqakum min nafs wāḥida* means Adam, and *khalaqa minhā zawjahā* means Eve. However, unlike some others, Nūr al-Dīn's commentary does not present any alternative interpretations of the substance of Eve's creation: he states that Eve was created from the leftover clay of Adam and that she is consequently dependent on him.[112]

Safavid period, as noted by Matthee, "From the Battlefield to the Harem," 98, citing earlier literature.

107. Osman, *Female Personalities*, 27.

108. Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 226; Lawson, "Akhbārī Shiʿī Approaches to *Tafsīr*," 187–88.

109. Hāshim b. Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī, *al-Burhān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī, 2006), 3:153.

110. Al-Baḥrānī, *al-Burhān*, 3:154–56.

111. Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 170.

112. Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-muʿīn*, ed. Ḥ. Dargāhī (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-ʿUẓmā al-Marʿashī, n.d.), 1:204.

3.6. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Qummī al-Mashhadī (d. 1125/1713)

Mīrzā Muḥammad al-Mashhadī's Quranic commentary *Kanz al-daqāʾiq wa-baḥr al-gharāʾib* was possibly completed in the middle of the eleventh/seventeenth century. He was a student of Mullā Muḥsin al-Fayḍ, which explains why most of the traditions he includes come from the latter's *al-Ṣāfī*. However, not much is known about Mīrzā Muḥammad himself.[113] His discussion of Q 4:1 begins by identifying the subject of *khalaqakum min nafs wāḥida* as Adam. He then gives two possible explanations for *wa-khalaqa minhā zawjahā*: either God created humanity from a single person (*min shakhṣ wāḥid*) and Eve from the leftover clay of the soul, or she was created from the single soul from which God created its mate. Both the terminology and the idea seem similar to those of al-Ṭabrisī half a millennium earlier.[114] However, the expression "from a single person" is unique. It may reflect the author's understanding of the first person, Adam, as being the soul and simultaneously serving as the origin of human creation. Mīrzā Muḥammad further cites several other traditions quoted by the Imāmī exegetes discussed above.[115] In fact, certain narrations are repeated by almost all the exegetes of this discursive stage, and they seem to constitute the main innovation in their commentaries. Mīrzā Muḥammad is not an exception. He mainly lists earlier narrations on the topic without providing his own interpretation.

The third discursive stage is characterized by numerous elaborations on the lore concerning Eve's creation, emphasizing the otherness of women and the need for their seclusion, in particular. This tendency is likely to represent societal developments in the Safavid period, which saw women's visibility diminish and restrictions on their freedom expand. In addition to invoking the gendered characteristics and duties of women, the commentaries frequently bring up sectarian elements, thus reflecting the political environment of their authors.

Conclusion

This study has examined the evolution of the Twelver Shiʿi interpretive tradition, which largely relies on the lore ascribed to the infallible imams. Its focus was the Quranic verse almost invariably understood as describing the creation of the primordial couple, Adam and Eve. I analyzed the diachronic development of the Imāmī exegetic discourse within the theoretical framework of feminist discourse analysis, which is aimed at uncovering power structures, especially gender hierarchies. My gender-sensitive analysis highlighted several misogynous elements and identified the patriarchal ethos apparent at every stage of the interpretive trajectory, in the course of which the creation of woman was first conceptualized as occurring after and from the man, later also for the man. Importantly, I showed that the construction of gender ideology in the interpretive tradition can be explicated through a genealogical methodology that traces the beginning, developments,

113. Bauer, "Room for Interpretation," 209.

114. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Qummī al-Mashhadī, *Tafsīr kanz al-daqāʾiq wa-baḥr al-gharāʾib*, ed. Ḥ. Dargāhī (Tehran: Shams al-Ḍuḥā, 1968), 3:315; cf. al-Ṭabrisī, *Jawāmiʿ al-jāmiʿ*, 1:368.

115. Mīrzā Muḥammad, *Kanz al-daqāʾiq*, 3:316–18.

and shifts of the discourse, hence giving us a more systematic perspective on Imāmī exegesis. Interestingly, the discursive stages identified in this study are not directly dependent on the religious tradition, sect, or Quranic verse,[116] although the features of Imāmī exegeses within each stage seem to reflect the political and sectarian circumstances of the exegetes as well as their doctrinal beliefs.

The first discursive stage in the development of Imāmī exegetic discourse on the creation of woman took shape in the formative period of Shiʿi *tafsīr* during the third–fourth/ninth–tenth centuries and reflected the formation of a distinct Imāmī identity in this period. This stage was defined by the establishment of the corpus of traditions on the matter. Eve's creation was defined in dismissive terms: she was born of either Adam's smallest and lowest rib or leftover clay from his creation. Because of her derivative creation, these traditions argued, the woman is so promiscuous that she has to be kept indoors. The second discursive stage coincided with the classical period of Imāmī exegesis between the fifth/eleventh and seventh/thirteenth centuries—that is, during and shortly after the Shiʿi golden age, when scholars were free to express Imāmī doctrines. In this stage, the standard views on Eve were consolidated, and the prominence of the claimed substance of her creation, Adam's rib, was further minimized. In addition, the already insignificant rib was described as crooked, implying the obliquity of women themselves. This dismissive view of Eve's creation was expanded on during the third discursive stage of Imāmī exegetic discourse in the tenth/sixteenth to eleventh/seventeenth centuries under the flourishing Safavid dynasty. This broader political context may explain the fact that the exegetes of this stage often highlight sectarian elements in their interpretations. Speculation over the pejorative attributes of the rib or over Eve's possible alternative (though still derivative) origins was widespread, and the woman was depicted as weak, inclined toward the material and the corporal, and made *for* the man, to serve him in various ways. The circumstances of her creation were used to justify gender hierarchy, even the seclusion of women, a practice that seems to have grown in popularity in late Safavid society.

The content of Imāmī exegesis regarding the creation of woman diverges from the Sunni interpretive tradition to some extent,[117] although the commentaries offer evidence of the wide circulation of scholarly writings: Twelver Shiʿi commentators frequently refer to Sunni traditions and conceptions or at least to a putative transsectarian consensus. Many of the Imāmī exegetes claim that most scholars—by which they probably mean also Sunni ones—opt for Adam's rib as the substance from which the first woman was created; most of these Imāmī exegetes even seem to consider this primarily Sunni tradition correct. The rib theory may have been so dominant in the intellectual context of these scholars that it simply could not be ignored, and it is likely that contextual phenomena sometimes forced the exegetes to take Sunni views into account more centrally than they might have otherwise done. Almost all of the commentators discussed here also bring up an alternative tradition attributed to the fifth imam, Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir, according to which the material of Eve's

116. Cf. von Schöneman, "Evolution of Rabbinic Discourse"; eadem, "'Confine Your Women!'"; and Abou-Bakr, "Interpretive Legacy of Qiwamah," respectively.

117. Cf. von Schöneman, "'Confine Your Women!'"

creation was not a rib but clay left over from Adam's creation, an explanation that seems to be particular to the Shiʿi interpretive tradition. From a gender-sensitive perspective, however, the difference between the two theories is limited: in both, the woman is a by-product of the man. Furthermore, a narration from the sixth imam, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣādiq, reduces the material even further, specifying that Eve was made of a leftover portion from the creation of Adam's rib. Thus, regardless of the details, the implications of the various accounts for the status of women are remarkably similar: women are derivative, dependent, subordinate, and comprehensively problematic. Moreover, the diachronic development of this discourse points to a corresponding genealogical trajectory: the core of the traditions on the matter of woman's creation was defined, then sustained and strengthened, and finally embroidered with novel, imaginative elements. Whether this process mainly reflects contextual factors or is characteristic of religious interpretive traditions in general remains to be determined.

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