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**Women and Doom:  
Gender in Early Islamic Discourse on End Times**

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The Qur'an insists that the "hour" of doom is known to God only (7:187); indeed, it is God's "design to keep the hour hidden." (20:15). In spite of its hiddenness, however, Muslims have -from very early times onwards- speculated, if not directly about its precise occurrence, at least about the signs that would accompany the "hour." The Qur'an itself has a full chapter (*Surat ul-Qiyamat*) devoted to signs that accompany that hour: one's sight will be dazed (75:7), the moon will be buried in darkness (75:8), sun and moon will be joined together (75:9),<sup>1</sup> and some faces will beam in brightness (75:22). Other verses in the Qur'an add more signs: the sun will be overthrown and the stars will fall (81:1-2), the moon will be cleft asunder (54:1) and the guilty will be struck dumb with despair (30:12).

More important than those signs accompanying the hour, however, will be those signs that are to precede the actual occurrence of the time of doom; it is from such signs that a Muslim can determine its coming. Whereas the Qur'an itself is comparative quiet on signs that could be taken

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<sup>1</sup> Multiple *hadith* dealing with Muhammad's reactions to eclipses, and the special prayers recited during an eclipse attest to this. Some of the major collections of *hadith* have special chapters devoted to eclipses.

as predictors, *hadith* literature comprehensively fills that perceived void with a vast variety of material pertaining to the portents of the hour. That a majority of such *hadith* material is, as Goldziher, Schacht, and more recently Wansbrough and Cook have pointed out, of rather late vintage need not concern us here. The texts will not be very useful as disinterested witness of an early Muslim history and indeed will not provide us with a perspective “wie es eigentlich gewesen ist;” as we will see, most traditions of this sort are informed by a stark misogyny at great variance with early, Qur’anic attitudes toward women. But *hadith* still can be useful as positional, ideologically constructed material laden with issues concerning the second and third century of the *hijra*; indeed, such hadiths can become very attractive a witness to the development of the construction of communal identity in Umayyad and early Abbasid times.

In this paper, I will sift through a few *hadiths* dealing with the signs of the hour; focusing especially on the way these reports deal with and represent women. I shall suggest that these traditions exhibit clear parallels to reports pertaining to pre-Islamic times and society and their portrayal of women.

Predictors of the coming of the hour of doom are manifold throughout *hadith literature*, in many cases the portents of the hour resemble those signs mentioned in Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature. The sun’s rising from the West (Abu Daud. III, 1199ff), and the appearance of the Anti-Christ (*ad-Dajjal*) (Muslim IV b, 337ff, 355ff.; Abu Daud. III, 1201ff), followed by the appearance of Jesus (Muslim IV b, 340, 357f.; Abu Daud. III, 1202f.) are, together with general descriptions of wars and turmoil, just some of the signs of the coming of doom to be found in both literatures. *Hadiths* thus speak of a vast variety of battles and wars that

will precede the actual coming of the Hour: the Muslims will fight the Turks ( Abu Daud III, 1197), a people with “small eyes, red faces, and flat noses<sup>2</sup> (ibid.), and a “nation wearing hairy shoes.” (Abu Daud III, 1197) Other traditions mention battles with the *Rum* (Byzantines) and Syrians as signs preceding the hour (Muslim IV b, 338f.) The Prophet Muhammad reportedly stated that “the Muslims will soon be besieged up to Medina, so that their most distant frontier outpost will be Salah (which is near Khaybar, about 50 miles north of Medina)” (Abu Da’ud III, 1180). The sacred house, i.e.: the Ka’ba itself will be under attack (Muslim IV b, 329f.)

More important than that, Muslims will fight each other (Muslim IV b, 332), indeed, Muhammad is reported to have said that once the “sword is used among my people, it will not be withdrawn from them till the Day of Resurrection.” (Abu Da’ud III, 1181). Muhammad’s reported prayer that God spare his community from such infighting is not answered by God.

Such civil strife, featured prominently in *hadith* material pertaining to end-times, assumes a more concrete form given its historical *Sitz im Leben* within the turmoil of the first one and a half centuries of Muslim history. The aura of reality with which these reports are imbued clearly reflects the early struggles for legitimacy in the emerging Islamic empire. Later historiographical recollection will refer to this early time of turmoil as *fitna(h)*; a term that in its Arabic plural *fitan* is utilized by many *Hadith* collectors to describe the turmoils preceding the end of the world. Our present study shall focus on such traditions and their intertwinedness with reports that purport to describe pre-Islamic times, *Jahiliyyah*.

One prominent tradition about End-times, encountered frequently in the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari, the most authoritative of *hadith* collections, lists a variety of “portents” by which the

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<sup>2</sup> This description refers to the Turks. Cf. Abu Da’ud, III, 1198n3737.

coming of the hour can be recognized:

I heard the Prophet saying: “From among the portents of the Hour is that the religious knowledge will be taken away and general ignorance will appear; and the drinking of alcoholic drinks will be very common, and illicit sexual intercourse will prevail, and men will decrease in number while women will increase so much that, for fifty women there will be only one man to look after them. (Bukhari VII, 116; VII, 339; VIII, 524, et al)

This tradition, unlike most others mentioned earlier, describes not simply disconnected events leading to doom, but integrates end-times into a framework of human responsibility. The End of the World, this tradition claims, is going to be the result of wholesale, un-Islamic behavior. The complete<sup>3</sup> forgetting of religious knowledge, and utter violation of basic Islamic principles will result in a destruction of the world<sup>4</sup>. The interpretation of doom thus shifts from an inescapable fate into a fair recompense for a negligence of duties and religion imposed by God. The arrival of doom is predicated on the abandonment of Islam, the End of the world itself becomes dependent on the End of Islam.

Other traditions describing the portents of the hour in a similar fashion conjure images of

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<sup>3</sup> But a few traditions fall out of this clear taxonomy. A tradition related by Muslim (Book 19, Number 4717) insists that the Prophet said: “This religion will continue to exist, and a group of people from the Muslims will continue to fight for its protection until the Hour is established.”

Bukhari (VII, 339) on the other hand relates a tradition that describes the punishment of a group of believers falling prey to some of the vices: “Narrated Abu 'Amir or Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari: that he heard the Prophet saying, `From among my followers there will be some people who will consider illegal sexual intercourse, the wearing of silk, the drinking of alcoholic drinks and the use of musical instruments, as lawful. And there will be some people who will stay near the side of a mountain and in the evening their shepherd will come to them with their sheep and ask them for something, but they will say to him, 'Return to us tomorrow.' Allah will destroy them during the night and will let the mountain fall on them, and He will transform the rest of them into monkeys and pigs and they will remain so till the Day of Resurrection.”

<sup>4</sup> Abu Da'ud's *Sunan* contains a tradition that will become prominent in later Islam, according to which God “will raise for his community at the end of every hundred years the one who will renovate its religion for it.” (III, 1194) This tradition seeks to modify the impact of the more pessimistic traditions of doom; it is not nearly as prevalent as the others.

an abandonment of Islam. Abu Da'ud reports a prophetic tradition that before the doom "time will be short, knowledge will be decreased, civil strife [*fitna*] will appear, niggardness will be cast into people's heart[s], and *harj* [killing] will be prevalent." (Abu Da'ud, III, 1182)

The disappearance of knowledge, '*ilm*, is a prominent feature in many *hadiths* describing the portents of the hour. Indeed, people in receipt of such knowledge ('*ilm*) are obliged to spread it; according to a prophetic hadith "there is no man who retains knowledge and then conceals it, but (that) he would be brought on the Day of Resurrection with a bridle of fire in his mouth." (Ibn Maja, I, 151f.) The centrality that '*ilm* occupies in a Muslim understanding of religion is predicated on the abrogation of an earlier ignorance: Muhammad's prophecy had brought '*ilm* to an Arab people who -according to early Muslim historians- had vegetated in an era ignorance and barbarity<sup>5</sup>, Arabic: *al-Jahiliyyah*.

This early Muslim construction of the concept of *Jahiliyyah* as the time that precedes Islam finds its expression in a brief statement, reported in the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq (d. 767 CE), purportedly delivered by an early Muslim, Ja'far b. Abu Talib, to the Christian ruler of Abyssinia. Ja'far is asking the Abyssinian ruler for protection from persecution by the heathens of Mecca:

"O King, we were [a folk who were people of Jahiliyyah], worshiping idols, eating [carrion], committing [sexual] abominations, breaking natural ties, [forgetful of our protections], and our strong devoured our weak. Thus we were until God sent us an apostle . . . ."<sup>6</sup>

It is against such pre-Islamic (*Jahilite*) vices that Ja'far contrast the new religion of Islam. That religion, Ja'far continues, is preached by Muhammad as follows:

He [Muhammad] summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and to

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<sup>5</sup> Goldziher prefers the translation of *Jahiliyyah* as "barbarity."

<sup>6</sup> Guillaume 151; Ibn Hisham 1: 336.

renounce the stones and images that we and our fathers formerly worshiped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and [steadfast in protection], and to refrain [from the forbidden and blood]. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not associate anything with him, and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving, and fasting (enumerating the commands of Islam).<sup>7</sup>

Various *Jahilite* vices of idol-worship, sexual misconduct, violation of proper rules of conduct, and the consumption of forbidden substances are all contrasted to proper Islamic practice as preached by Muhammad. The stark contrast that is painted in Ja'far's speech between pre-Islamic and Islamic practices suggests a dichotomous construction of *Jahiliyyah* and Islam. Islam is represented in Ja'far's speech not merely as a correction of *Jahilite* vices, rather Islam is established as "other" vis-à-vis *Jahiliyyah*.

Traditions about the portents of the hour, utilize, as can readily be seen, similar motifs of attitudes and behaviors diametrically opposed to Islam to describe an utter abandonment and rejection of Islamic belief and practice that will lead to doom. The "consumption of alcoholic drinks" referred to in the above-mentioned tradition of the portents of the hour, for example, is paralleled by a variety of traditions that equate consumption of alcohol with *Jahiliyyah*.<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Guillaume 151f.; Ibn Hisham 1: 336.

— This list of commandments bears some, if only scanty resemblance to the decalogue of the Torah, in that the substance of some of these commandments show some resemblance to the decalogue, and the number of the first set is precisely ten, each connected with the next through a linking *wā*, and framed in the narrative by the prohibition of idolatry at both the beginning and end of that listing. Given the Christian context in which this list is supposed to have been presented, it would be worthwhile to look into Christian parallels more closely; however that is beyond the scope of our present work. Cf. Qur'an 6:151ff. Wansbrough lists further citations on a reading of these verses as decalogue. (*Quranic Studies*, 177n4ff.)

Wansbrough divides this listing into nine different parts, however the division seems arbitrary and some parts appear to include more than one injunction. (*Quranic Studies*, 39)

<sup>8</sup> In the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq, `Umar b. al-Khattab describes his early pagan days in

prevalence of sexual misconduct, likewise, is a sign both of the coming of the hour, as it is also a *Jahilite* vice. In a famous tradition narrated by `A'isha, the favorite wife of Muhammad, a variety of different types of *Jahilite* sexual unions are mentioned, some of which are described as polyandrous relationships. Such marital practices are disapproved by *hadith*.<sup>9</sup> Return to idol worship likewise is regarded both as a sign of the coming of the hour and as a *Jahilite* vice. According to Abu Da'ud, Muhammad predicted that “[T]he last hour will not come before the tribes of my people attach themselves to the polytheists and the tribes of my people worship idols.” (Abu Da'ud, III, 1181.) In another tradition, reported by al-Bukhari, the offensiveness of such reversion to polytheist worship is expressed in terms of women:

The Prophet said: “The hour will not be established till the buttocks of the women of the tribe of Daus move while going round Dhi-al-Khalasa.” Dhi-al-Khalasa was the idol of the Daus tribe which they used to worship in the Pre-Islamic period of *Jahiliyyah*. (Bukhari IX, 178)

The visual image portrayed in these lines deals not only with idol worship, but at the same time it exposes women engaged in such worship in both body and action: the women of Daus not only violate Islam's insistence on monotheism, but at the same time violate Muslim expectations of modesty in dress, and concealment from the public sphere. In the public setting of (idol) worship, they expose their bodily contours.

Such exposure of women in public, be it in body, voice, or action, constitutes a common

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terms of addiction to wine. Cf. Guillaume, 157; Ibn Hisham I:346.

<sup>9</sup> Cf.: Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 75, with reference to al-Tarmidi, *Sunan al-Tarmidi*, p.395, B:27, H:1130. Mernissi sums up the prevailing Muslim understanding of *Jahilite* sexuality: “Under *jahiliya* sexuality was promiscuous, lax, and uncontrolled, but under Islam it obeyed rules.” (Mernissi, 46) Mernissi's reading of these descriptions of *Jahilite* practice does not adequately take into consideration their constructedness vis-a-vis a purported Muslim abrogation and improvement.

motif depicting the un-Islamic, *Jahilite* nature not necessarily of women themselves, but the communities they represent. *Jahilite* vices, inscribed on women's actions, reflect negatively on their respective communities. The *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq (d. 767 CE) contains a variety of traditions that are representative of the construction of *Jahilite* vices inscribed on women's actions. A few of these narratives purport to describe the reactions of non-Muslim, *Jahilite* women, who have been bereft of close relatives. One such woman, Hind bt. `Utba, who later will become the mother of the first Umayyad Caliph, had lost her father, paternal uncle, her brother, and her stepson at the Battle of Badr to the Muslim army.<sup>10</sup> At the subsequent Battle of Uhud, Hind, poised for revenge, is reported to have led the polytheist women inciting the non-Muslims in battle<sup>11</sup> Soon after the battle we find Hind and other women mutilating the apostle's dead companions:<sup>12</sup>

According to what Salih b. Kaysan told me, Hind bt. `Utba and the women with her stopped to mutilate the apostle's dead companions. They cut off their ears and noses and Hind made them into anklets and collars and gave her anklets and collars and pendants to Wahshi, the slave of Jubayr b. Mu`tim. She cut out Hamza's liver<sup>13</sup> and chewed it, but she was not able to swallow it and threw it away.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Guillaume 337.

<sup>11</sup> Guillaume 375.

<sup>12</sup> Caskel points out that neither eruptions of vehement passions nor mutilation of fallen warriors are found frequently in the ayyam al-`arab. Indeed, Caskel only knows of one instance in which the quest for revenge exhibits itself in a direct way in the narrative, namely in the mutilation of one man, whose nose is cut off. ("Aijim," 57f.)

<sup>13</sup> The liver in the discourse of the Sura assumes the meaning of something essential. At the battle of Badr, Muhammad exclaims: "This Mecca has thrown you the pieces of its liver." (Guillaume 295) Guillaume explains that Muhammad means "its best men." (Guillaume 295n2) For other occurrences of "liver" in the Sura, see Guillaume 243n3, 245, 255f., 256n1.

<sup>14</sup> Guillaume 385. Geyer reads Hind's role as an extreme form of what he terms

Hamza, paternal uncle of Muhammad, and responsible for the deaths of some of Hind's relatives, becomes her object of revenge. Hind's mutilation of Hamza, and her chewing of Hamza's liver, is one example of non-Muslim women losing their temper. Such bodily involvement in revenge is also a motif in the anecdote of Sulafa<sup>15</sup> bt. Sa`d, who loses two sons and her husband during battle.<sup>16</sup> Upon hearing of these deaths, Sulafa swears to drink wine out of the skull of `Asim, the killer of her two sons, "if God ever let her get the head of `Asim."<sup>17</sup> Ibn Ishaq in this context remarks that it had been `Asim "who had taken God to witness that he would never touch a

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“Schlachtfeldhyänen”, i.e.: hyenas on the battlefield who slay already wounded enemies completely (“Die arabischen Frauen”, 152); however, Hind mutilated warriors already dead; nowhere does the report indicate that she killed enemies.

<sup>15</sup> According to Hawting either Sulafa herself or a co-wife of hers was holding the key to the Ka`ba at the conquest of Mecca. (“Sacred Offices”, 65n50) Out of this and one other occurrence, Ahmed concludes that women were “keepers, in some unclear capacity, of the holy shrine in Mecca. . . .” (Women, 62.) In an earlier article she expressly states that “no other woman [besides Sulafa and Hubba] is mentioned as the keeper of the key.” (“Women and the Advent of Islam,” 686.) Abbott already had criticized such a reading by Lammens and Stern, pointing out that “the traditions make `Uthman b. Talhah, a descendant of Qusayy through his son `Abd al-Dar, the one who really held the office of the guardianship. According to some, he seems to intrusted the key to his mother, Sulafah, for safekeeping. It was from him that Mohammed demanded the key and it was him, `Uthman, who handed it over to Mohammed.” (“Eve of Islam,” 265.)

<sup>16</sup> Guillaume 377. Al-Waqidi, who also relates this story in his Maghazi, differs in some details. According to his report, only Musafi` is killed by `Asim, while al-Julus is killed by Talha b. `Ubaydullah. (Wellhausen, 110) When relating the bee miracle, however, al-Waqidi maintains that two of Sulafa's sons had been killed by `Asim. (Wellhausen, 157f.)

<sup>17</sup> Guillaume 377. Drinking wine is -of course- disapproved of in the Sira. `Umar b. al-Khattab describes himself as a winebibber in the heathen period (Guillaume 157). Wahshi, the slayer of Hamza b. `Abdu'l-Muttalib, is also described as “a man much addicted to wine” (Guillaume 375) in the time of `Umar; a report that can be read as either trying to discredit Wahshi's character, or alternatively could be read as an expression of his struggle with the immense guilt he has to deal with after his killing Hamza.

polytheist or let one touch him."<sup>18</sup> Through this remark, Ibn Ishaq sets up in dramatic fashion the "stage" for the second act of this drama.

When `Asim is killed shortly after the Battle of Uhud, the men who killed him want to sell his skull to Sulafa, but a miracle of bees and a subsequent flooding of a wadi protect `Asim's bodily integrity.<sup>19</sup>

The excessiveness of irrational revenge of these non-Muslim women, portrayed as "out of control," stands in direct opposition to the controlled, quietist attitude with which Muslim women react to the death of their loved ones.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Guillaume 377.

<sup>19</sup> Guillaume 426f. See also Sellheim, "Prophet, Chalif und Geschichte," 69.

A third story involving a bereaved woman out for revenge revolves around Zaynab d. al-Harith, wife of Sallam b. Mishkam, who tries to kill Muhammad with a poisoned lamb. (Watt, Muhammad at Medina, 234, has a poisoned fish instead of the lamb without citing sources) Muhammad however miraculously knows of the poison, and even forgives Zaynab after she explains: "You know what you have done to my people. I said to myself, If he is a king I shall ease myself of him and if he is a prophet he will be informed (of what I have done)." (Guillaume 516) Al-Waqidi relates in more detail that her father, uncle, and husband had been killed by the Muslims. (Wellhausen, 280).

A mourning woman is also the subject of a narrative in connection with the battle of Badr. Ibn Ishaq reports that al-Aswad b. Al-Muttalib, who had lost three of his sons at Badr, wanted to bewail them, however lamentation had been forbidden by Quraysh. Whereas he thus overcomes his desire to bewail his sons, an anonymous woman, apparently not being able to control herself, is bewailing the mere loss of a camel. (Guillaume 311)

<sup>20</sup> Stetkevych comments on this excessiveness: "Hind's excess seems to represent what Islam perceived as the *jahl* in Jahiliyya -a fortitude and impetuosity that stirred both admiration and horror, an abomination that generated a cycle of destruction and self-destruction. So strong was the rule of *jahl* that even God's Prophet was tempted by it, and only Islam could abrogate it." (Stetkevych, Mute Immortals, 205.) The admiration is in all likelihood just Stetkevych's own, but not necessarily that of the early Muslim community. The rule of *jahl* in these narratives is not necessarily primarily a representation of historical reality, but rather a construction of such "reality" against which Islam can be counterposed.

On the Muslim side, the topos of loss in battle finds its foremost expression in the story of

Hamna bt. Jahsh:

Then the apostle went back on his way to Medina and there met him Hamna bt. Jahsh, so I have been told. As she met the army she was told of the death of her brother `Abdullah and she exclaimed, `We belong to God and to God we return,' and asked for forgiveness for him. Then she was told of the death of her maternal uncle Hamza, and uttered the same words...<sup>21</sup>

Almost immediately after this report follows a second report of an anonymous woman<sup>22</sup> in a similar situation:

[T]he apostle passed by a woman of the B. Dinar whose husband, brother, and father had been killed at Uhud, and when she was told of their death she asked what had happened to the apostle, and when they replied thanks to God he was safe, she asked that she might see him for herself. When he was pointed out to her she said, `Every misfortune now that you are safe is negligible.'<sup>23</sup>

Both these reports on women receiving news about the deaths of loved ones in battle are in stark contrast to the examples of non-believing women in similar situations.<sup>24</sup> Instead of an

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<sup>21</sup> Guillaume 389.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Waqidi has two similar reports involving different women. In a first report a woman identified by as Hind bt. `Amr b. Haram meets `A'isha as she is trying to transport the three corpses of her husband, her brother, and her son on a camel to Medina for burial. But the camel, guided by higher powers returns with the corpses to the battlefield. (Wellhausen, 125) In a second, shorter tradition, a woman identified as al-Sumayra bt. Qays is leading her camel, carrying her two dead sons, to Medina and meets `A'isha on the way. (Wellhausen, 135).

<sup>23</sup> Guillaume 389.

<sup>24</sup> A further tradition of a bereaved woman involves Safiyya d. Huyayy b. Akhtab, wife of Muhammad. Having only recently become Muslim, and having lost close relatives in battle to Muhammad, Abu Ayyub Khalid b. Zayd is afraid for the safety of Muhammad and guards the apostle during the night that Muhammad consummates the marriage, reasoning: "I was afraid for you with this woman for you have killed her father, her husband, and her people, and till recently she was in unbelief, so I was afraid for you on her account." (Guillaume 517)

outraged anger and search for revenge, both Hamna and the woman of the B. Dinar remain calm, composed, and take refuge in God and his apostle. Unlike their *Jahilite* counterparts, these Muslim women do not even bewail their lost menfolk. Womens' wailing for the dead, traditionally associated with a ripping of one's clothes, is condemned in later *hadith* as "a practice of *Jahiliyyah*. Verily, the woman who laments will, when she dies without repenting, be dressed in shirts of tar and coats of flame on the day of resurrection." (Ibn Maja, II, 436f.) Instead of wailing, *hadiths* recommend the proper Islamic attitude and practice, namely an unshattered endurance in calamity, and a recitation of the verse: "We are from God and to him we return." (Ibn Maja, II, 446f.)

What comes to the fore in this contrasting reading is, on a first level, the otherness of Muslim women from their predecessors, that is, their non-believing sisters. Both "types" of women receive their defining strength through the other; neither the Muslim model nor the pre-Islamic (or *Jahilite*) model would carry its force without the other. The strong contrast that is utilized in the depiction points to a binary construction of an ideal type of Muslim womanhood "othered" against an equally constructed *Jahilite* womanhood. Whereas the *Jahilite* woman is "out of control," driven by her own desire of revenge, the ideal Muslim woman is not only in control of her own emotions, but she is guided by Islam, the Prophet and God; ultimately, she is under male control. In practical terms, such control is wielded by the husband. Ibn Maja reports a tradition, found with some variation in other *hadith* collections as well, that has Muhammad saying:

If I were to command anyone to prostrate before anyone, I would have commanded the woman to prostrate before her husband and if a man commands his wife to carry stones from a red mountain to a black mountain or from a black mountain to a red mountain her

duty is to comply with his command.<sup>25</sup> (Ibn Maja, III, 118)

In Islam, according to these traditions, women are to be controlled by their male guardians; indeed, a woman's dedication and subservience to her husband is to parallel that of a Muslim man to God. Such utter control of Muslim women stands in stark contrast to the autonomy of the *Jahilite* model.

Reports about women thus serve in early Islamic discourse to delimit Islam against its two "others," namely a pre-Islamic *Jahiliyyah* and a post-Islamic End of Times. Pre-Islamic vices, breaking to the surface again when they no longer can be held at bay, are mediated through women. Whether it be in polytheism returning with full force, the abandonment of religious knowledge, or the increase of illicit sexual relations, women are inscribed as forces of chaos in the Muslim narrative literature of End-times.

Women's uncontrolled actions, their exposure in the public sphere, and ultimately their mere presence thus become in the construction of communal identity threatening forces identified with the "other" of Islam. Muslim men would have "their" women under control, out of sight; but ultimately speaking, such control is constantly threatened by demonic forces. In the end, woman is uncontrollable, she is herself a gateway to *fitna(h)*, that is: turmoil and seduction.

In a famous *hadith*, Muhammad is reported to have said: "After me I have not left any affliction (*fitnah*) more harmful to men than women."<sup>26</sup> (Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 33)

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<sup>25</sup> Cf.: Abu Da'ud, *Sunan* II, 574.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Mernissi, 43. Other prophetic traditions mention women's "crookedness:" "The Prophet said, 'Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt (trouble) his neighbor. And I advise you to take care of the women, for they are created from a rib and the most crooked portion of the rib is its upper part; if you try to straighten it, it will break, and if you

In the end, then, woman herself is the *fitna(h)* that will bring about the demise of the world; indeed, according to Muhammad, she “advances in the form of a devil.”<sup>27</sup> (Abu Da’ud, II, 576). Such evil nature, imputed on women, of necessity leads to the observation attributed to Muhammad: “I looked into paradise and the majority of its people were poor, and I looked into the fire and the majority of its people were women.” (BU. VIII, 362, cf: Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 124,126 .)

Muslim historiography, or salvation history- that constructs Islamic identity against an abrogated *Jahiliyya*, and at the same time presents itself within a wider, universal perspective as both the continuation and culmination of a long series of revelations sent by God, in claiming Muhammad to be the last, the seal of Prophethood, cannot but come to the conclusion that a loss of religion will lead to the destruction of creation. Earlier losses of religion could be accommodated by ever new prophetic reminders, but since there is not to be a Prophet after Muhammad, the demise of Islam must mean the demise of the world.

It is under this aspect of a loss of Islam, that is: a post-Islamic time that is envisioned, that reports about the End of the world are to be read. In this respect, reports about “post-Islamic” endings exhibit clear parallels to reports dealing with pre-Islamic beginnings: both deal with the

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leave it, it will remain crooked, so I urge you to take care of the women.” Bukhari, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 114. In another tradition, Eve is explicitly mentioned as the origin of distrust between husband and wife: “The Prophet said, `Were it not for Bani Israel, meat would not decay; and were it not for Eve, no woman would ever betray her husband.’” (Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 611)

<sup>27</sup> “The Prophet saw a woman, so he entered upon Zaynab, daughter of Jahsh, and had intercourse with her. He then came out to his companions and said to them: `A woman advances in the form of a devil. When one of you finds that, he should go to his wife (and have intercourse with her) for that will repel what he is feeling.” (Abu Da’ud, *Sunan* II, 576.)

absentia of Islam and thus attempt to characterize a chaotic world and savage societal reality without Islam. Absentia of Islam, in the narrative construction of Muslim identity, is characterized by the prevalence of women: Just like the prevalence of uncontrolled women of pre-Islamic times, the end of the world will be brought about by a massive presence of women. The last of the “portents of the hour” mentioned earlier posits that “men will decrease in number while women will increase so much that, for fifty women there will be only one man to look after them.” (Bukhari VII, 116; VII, 339; VIII, 524, et al) Such indeed must be apocalyptic for the later, discursive *hadith* traditions that regards Islamic order as one in which women must be under the control of men.

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