

1. Defining the Topic and Its Location in Time and Space

Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (b.1935-d.1980) is most commonly known for his political opposition to the Iraqi Ba'ath regime and his subsequent execution ordered by Saddam Hussein. While scholars acknowledge the significance of his two seminal works, *Falsafatuna* 1959 (Our Philosophy) and *Iqtidsaduna* 1961 (Our Economics), his dynamic intellectual activity has not yet been systematically and comprehensively understood. Given that the entirety of his prolific intellectual career exceeds the purview of this study, Sadr's first book, *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh* 1955 (Fadak in History) will be analyzed in the framework of this paper. *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh* depicts a dispute that ensued between the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, and the leaders of the fledgling Islamic community following the Prophet's death. The dispute concerned an orchard and a tract of land known as the Fadak (located in the Arabian Peninsula), which Fatima claimed was bestowed to her by the Prophet before his death.

This study will approach Sadr's interpretation of the historical event from a Shi'i intellectual milieu, while attempting to locate it in the Iraqi political, social, and economic context from 1946-1958. This is a period that has been portrayed as formative to the emergence of an Iraqi intelligentsia and fledgling public sphere. In this nascent Iraqi community of discourse, intellectuals posited their views on a wide range of issues, including the future orientation of the Iraqi state, opposition to the monarchical regime, land laws, women's rights, and a variety of other topics. Therefore an evaluation of Sadr's rendition of the Fadak should both be informed by previous Shi'i intellectual approaches to the topic and be situated within particular Iraqi contexts and the marketplace of ideas.

This study begins in 1946, the year that Sadr moved from Kadhmiyya to Najaf to commence his religious training. Despite his young age, he had already mastered complicated philosophical and legal concepts in his early teens and demonstrated intellectual maturity. Najaf was not a hermetic Shi‘i religious center; it was home to communists, pan-Arabists and Iraqi nationalists, thereby exposing Sadr to a range of political currents that shaped opposition to the Hashemite Monarchy and the national discourse on the struggle for the Iraqi state's future orientation. At the time, Sadr was preoccupied by the inroads of communist ideology and its ability to lure the Shi‘i youth, the educated class, and the professionals, who viewed it as the most viable option for modernization and the most effective vehicle by which to facilitate their integration into the Iraqi state. Various elements within the Shi‘i *‘ulama’* were deeply distraught by this trend and its implications for their status.

Also, in this period, the Iraqi state's attempt to bring all Iraqi citizens under the jurisdiction of a single unified civil code gained momentum. This pursuit, which began in 1933, encountered ardent opposition from Sunni and Shi‘i Iraqi religious scholars alike. The Shi‘i *‘ulama’* objected to this *etatization* of law for a plethora of reasons, but nevertheless, in 1946 the first draft of the Iraqi Civil Code was completed.¹ It was ratified only on September 8, 1951 and went into effect exactly two years later. That Sadr's *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh* (written in 1952 and published in 1955), which contains themes regarding state jurisdiction and inheritance laws, was written amidst the quest for the Iraqi Civil Code will be considered here. This study ends in 1958, the year of Abd al-

¹ J.N.D. Anderson, "A Law of Personal Status for Iraq," *International and Comparative Law*, Vol. 9 (1960), pp. 542-563.

Karim Qasim's overthrow of the Hashemite Monarchy, which ushered in a new chapter in Iraqi history.

2. The Scholarly (Historiographical) Discourse on the Topic

2.1 *The Literature on Sadr-* Although Sadr has been recognized as an influential Shi'ite cleric, noted for his innovative attempts to modernize² Islamic thought and law in a revivalist spirit, a systematic and comprehensive intellectual history has eluded the literature. Instead, the historiographical discourse is first distinguished by various trends unique to the English language and Arabic language literature, with minimal overlap. This is not simply a convenient division; rather the English language literature is characterized primarily by both its placement of Sadr within a political context, and its view of him through the prism of Islamic fundamentalism, which gripped the field of Middle Eastern Studies in the 1980s and 1990s. The Arabic language literature abounds with either political biographies or narrower studies that focus on various aspects of Sadr's philosophy and legal theories.

Numerous scholars have studied Sadr in terms of his involvement with al-Da'wa party and have subsequently concluded that he was the leader of "the radical Shi'ite opposition" in Iraq. His activism has been analyzed through the lenses of the paradigmatic Fundamentalist Project,³ and in many accounts he is seen as the leader of a

² Although the word "modernize" raises a multitude of questions and issues, it is appropriate to describe Sadr's project this way, as he explicitly professed that he sought to not only revitalize Islamic thought and law, but to contend with what he viewed as modern problems.

³ See Amatzia Baram, "Two Roads to Revolutionary Shi'ite Fundamentalism in Iraq," in *Accounting for Fundamentalism: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, edited by Martin E. Marty and Scott Appelby, 531-590. (Chicago, 1994), and "Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," in Sivan, Emmanuel and Friedman, Menachem eds. *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*. (New York, 1990).

monolithic, fundamentalist Shi'ite opposition movement.⁴ Even the most sophisticated and nuanced English language study of Sadr is firmly rooted in this context; it posits a dichotomy between Islamic reformists and Islamic fundamentalists,⁵ but is attentive to the multifarious nature of "the Shi'ites of Iraq."⁶

The main disadvantage with this literature is that these studies focus on al-Da'wa and explain Sadr's activism as a fundamentalist expression of cultural rejection of the west and an attempt to preserve Shi'i identity. This portrayal does not account for Sadr's appropriation of Western thought, his conscientious and explicit endorsement of many Western values and methods, and his vigorous attempts to revitalize Shi'i law in accordance with the needs of a modern society. Ironically Sadr's envisioned project would have altered traditional tenets of Shi'i religious and political culture and would have undermined – not preserved- aspects of what can be considered Shi'i identity. Furthermore, while Sadr's worldview was clearly Islamic, he in no advocated a return to fundamentals or roots.

The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1991) is less concerned with the debate on fundamentalism, but similarly focused on Sadr's political activism, and is therefore close to this trend in the discourse. This doctoral thesis, which collates Sadr's views on epistemology, philosophy of history, and political prescriptions from a number of his texts (written in different years) in order to deliver a neatly packaged presentation

⁴ See Joyce Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*. (Colorado, 1993).

⁵ While this dichotomy is helpful, perhaps at times it may be too sharp.

⁶ See Faleh Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*. (London, 2003).

of Sadr's unprofessed political theory, does not constitute a serious attempt at intellectual history. The author deliberately excludes Sadr's religious and juristic works, since he views them as nothing more than "part of his religious obligation to the religious school of grand jurist."⁷ He is not "concerned with...[and does not] refer to any of his activities, publications or his biography prior to the 1958 revolution in Iraq," which according to him marks the ascent of Sadr, the radical political activist, the object of his study.⁸

Sadr clearly emerges from these aforementioned studies as a radical, fundamentalist political opposition leader of Shi'ites. Though these studies do mention his intellectual contributions, Sadr's legacy is clearly determined and obfuscated by his involvement in political opposition. This is perhaps explained by the fact that nearly all of these studies were published within a decade of Sadr's execution and amidst the height of scholarly focus on fundamentalism. Nevertheless, these studies are valuable inasmuch as they explore issues related to Sadr's worldview; they investigate both the degree to which his messages expressed "ecumenical Islamic universalism" or "Shi'ite particularist zeal," and his allegiance to the Iraqi state.⁹ Furthermore, these studies contain exclusive access to various sources and provide a wealth of detail about Iraqi politics and the Shi'i clerics.

The Renewal of Islamic Law: Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr, Najaf and the Shi'i International (1993) stands alone in the English literature discourse as the only form of

⁷ Talib Aziz. "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr." Ph.D. diss. University of Utah, 1991, pp. 11.

⁸ Ibid. pp.13-14.

⁹ Amatzia Baram. "Radical Shi'ite Opposition Movements in Iraq," in Sivan, Emmanuel and Friedman, Menachem eds. *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*. (New York, 1990).

intellectual history on Sadr. It is the most thorough study of Sadr's intellectual production and his impact on the Shi'i world and outlines his contributions to Shi'i thought and law from a distinctly Shi'i intellectual milieu.¹⁰ However, the main objective of this study is to demonstrate Sadr's innovative thought and elucidate his influence on the Iranian political and economic system prior to and following the Islamic Revolution. As such, it focuses on Sadr's legal treatises and political works that he ostensibly wrote in order to enhance the ideological impact of the Islamic Revolution.¹¹ While the author's legal expertise is impressive and his claims are most original, he is mainly concerned with Sadr's texts that directly contributed to the articulation of both the confluence of constitutional politics and religious authority, and Islamic economics in Iran. Sadr's texts on historical and social issues are not discussed, and there is no room in this study for a thorough analysis of the Iraqi contexts in which Sadr operates.

In the article "Religious Militancy in Contemporary Iraq: Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr and the Sunni-Shia Paradigm," (also written amidst the wave of fundamentalist literature) the author asks to what degree Sadr's thought was motivated by Islamic universalist principles or by Shi'i particularist tendencies. As in other studies, the author concludes that Sadr's message contained Shi'i themes firmly rooted in exclusive Shi'i religious and political culture; a fact that consequently impeded Sadr's ability to lead an

¹⁰ There are Arabic sources in my bibliography that are not available in Israel. In the near future, I will visit the appropriate libraries in order to access them.

¹¹Chibli Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law: Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr, Najaf and the Shi'i International*. (Cambridge, 1993).

Islamic revolution in Iraq.¹² The issue of Islamic universalism vs. Shi‘i particularism, (which arises repeatedly in the discourse), guides the most systematic (30 page) study of Sadr’s thought. Yet, none of the aforementioned studies consider important theoretical frameworks and insights from intellectual history and the sociology of intellectuals and knowledge.¹³

Scholarly work in the Arabic language can be divided into two categories: 1) political biographies, and 2) studies on either Sadr's philosophy or legal theories.¹⁴ The biographical literature on Sadr has mainly been produced by his students (some living in exile), and thus must be approached with caution. Like the biographies written by his students that appear as introductions in the English translations of *Our Philosophy* and *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, they read as eulogies and are uncritical in their representations of Sadr's life and contributions. Despite these shortcomings, they contain valuable observations and details that cannot be gleaned from other sources. However, given the tendency for some of these authors to exaggerate Sadr's genius, these details must also be arduously scrutinized and cross-checked.

Other Arabic language works seem to hone in on one element of Sadr's thought. For example, a recently study focuses on Sadr's conceptual transition from rules and

¹² Chibli Mallat, "Religious Militancy in Contemporary Iraq: Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr and the Sunni-Shia Paradigm," *Third World Quarterly*, (1988), pp. 727-729.

¹³ The aforementioned studies lack discussion regarding reception, authorial intention, the role of intellectuals, and the role of authorial relations, etc.

¹⁴ While I have yet to acquire some of the Arabic sources written on Sadr, I am aware of their existence, and working to obtain them.

provisions of jurisprudence to his theory of jurisprudence.¹⁵ Additional works center on Sadr's philosophy and doctrinal approach.¹⁶ These works are entrenched in hermeneutics and legal and philosophical explication, and do not consider the author's life experiences or the complex Iraqi contexts.

It is clear that whereas preoccupation with fundamentalism and political Islam has dominated the English language literature on Sadr, the Arabic language literature consists of political biographies and narrower studies on his philosophical, legal and economic thought. Together, this body of knowledge forms a solid foundation from which a systematic study of the full corpus of Sadr's intellectual career can be analyzed with the view of explaining the development of his thought and investigating the relationship between his ideas and social experiences in Iraq and in the Shi'ī *hawzas*. In order to execute such an agenda, any study should begin with a focused analysis of his first published work, *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh*. From initial readings of this formative text, it seems as though Sadr integrates numerous issues and themes from the Iraqi national discourse, Shi'ī grievances, an appropriation of Marxist thought, and Shi'ī intellectual trends, the result of which is a unique portrayal of Fatima. Such a study can serve to bridge gaps in the scholarly discourse and begin to posit ideas regarding Sadr and his role as an Iraqi Shi'ī intellectual.

¹⁵ See Sa'ib Abd al-Hamid. *Al-Shahid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr: Min Fiqh al-Ahkam ila Fiqh al-Nazariyat*. (Beirut, 2008).

¹⁶ It should be noted that Aziz, Mallat, and Jabar incorporate few of these studies that were extant at the time of their respective publications.

2.2 The Fadak- A scholarly historiographical discourse on the episode of the Fadak land dispute would undoubtedly be an integral part of this study, yet a critical mass of scholarship on the topic does not exist. Scant references to the event typically appear in footnotes or simply state the fact of the Fadak dispute. However, a few studies have treated its historical utility. Cortese and Caldernini found that in the 10th century, Ismai‘lis employed the concept to convey political usurpation and support contested claims to succession.¹⁷ Other studies noted that the Fadak has been invoked to generally demonstrate injury and injustice in Shi‘ism, or to justify women's rights to inheritance.¹⁸

Within the field of gender studies in Islam, research relating to Fatima does not focus on the role of the Fadak land dispute and Fatima's effort to reclaim it. For example, Fatima Mernissi, who prolifically writes on gender and Islam, does not mention Fatima's claim to the Fadak in her book, *Women's Rebellion and Islamic Memory* (1996). Verena Klemm's article on image formation, which alludes to the episode of the Fadak, addresses Fatima's transformation from a pious woman of virtue to a legendary transcendental hero. She focuses on the usage of literary devices in this transformation and ignores the effects of the author's political and social circumstances in the process. However Mernissi and Cortese and Calderini do briefly note that Ali Shariati – a lay intellectual who is known for adapting and reinterpreting Shi‘i themes in order to mobilize the masses and contribute to revolutionary discourse prior to the Iranian Revolution – invokes the Fadak

¹⁷ Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini. *Women and Fatimids in the World of Islam*. (Edinburg, 2006), pp. 18.

¹⁸ See Afsaneh Najmabadi. "Women or Wives of the Nation?" *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1/2 (Winter-Spring 1993), pp. 51-71; K.S. Aghaie. *The Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi‘i Islam*. (Austin, 2005); and Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini. *Women and Fatimids in the World of Islam*. (Edinburg, 2006).

in his conception of Fatima as a role model for women. His book, which frequently cites Sadr's *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh*, does treat the Fadak in the context of modern women's need to be aware of and struggle for social and political rights. The present study will be the first to focus on the Fadak and to thoroughly explicate its usage by a modern Shi'i intellectual.

2.3 Intellectual History and its Methodology- Intellectual history as a sub-discipline of history garnered strength in the 1930s and 1940s, and apparently received its impetus from the role of political philosophies and ideology in the World Wars. Within the sub-discipline, scholars worked rather discordantly. Some scholars pursued the history of intellectuals, some worked on any type of mental history, and others focused on the history of ideas. Carl L. Becker and Arthur O. Lovejoy were main contributors to this first wave of writing and were primarily concerned with the history of ideas.

Becker focused on the roots of political assumptions as the key to understanding political philosophies and 'climates of opinion',¹⁹ and Lovejoy is renowned for his formulation of the "unit ideas" method. This method involved an interdisciplinary effort to locate and isolate groupings of "unit ideas," to strip these ideas down to their core essences, and to analyze both their essences and the relationship between them through their location in specific boundaries across time.²⁰ In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars such as Isaiah Berlin and Perry Miller worked in a similar manner, but were more attentive to

¹⁹ See Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (Yale, 1932); and *Modern Democracy* (Yale, 1941).

²⁰ See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936); and , "Reflections on the History of Ideas", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 (1940), pp. 3-23.

bodies of thought and their relationship to social experience across time and space.²¹ Although Ernst Cassirer and others had criticized Lovejoy's method for its neglect of "inner, formative forces" and the role of dominant philosophical issues that "incite" or "control" thought, some continued to work in this textualist spirit.²²

By the late 1960s and early 1970s one can definitively speak of a second wave in intellectual history that is characterized by its attack on prevailing methodologies that interpreted political thought in a de-contextualized manner. This effort was spearheaded by Quentin Skinner, J.G.A. Pocock, and J. Dunn, who laid the foundations of what is referred to as the 'Cambridge School'. This school of thought attributes utmost importance to language and context and advocates a method that discovers authorial intention, applies discourse analysis, incorporates personal biographies, and analyzes performative dimensions of speech.²³ This development occurred concomitantly with the profound currents and new directions in history that emanated from the *Annales School* and the resultant new social history that was linked to the study of *mentalités*.

Finally, a third wave of scholarship influenced by postmodernist thought and the ascent of subaltern studies emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s to inject an acute sense of

²¹ See Isaiah Berlin, "Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century", *Foreign Affairs*, 28 (1950), pp. 351-385; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1953).

²² See Philip P. Wiener, "Some Problems and Methods in the History of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 22 (1961), pp. 531-548; Maurice Mandelbaum, "The History of Ideas, Intellectual History, and the History of Philosophy," *History and Theory*, 64/65 (1965), pp. 33-66; George Boas, *The History of Ideas: An Introduction* (New York, 1969).

²³ See Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8/ 1 (1969), pp. 3-53; J.G.A. Pocock, Ed. *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History*. (Chicago, 1989).

crisis in the field of intellectual history.²⁴ Epistemological doubt, critical theory and post-structuralist analysis that emphasized the autonomy of the text flooded the field. This trend precipitated pessimistic forecasts regarding the field's "obvious and probably irreversible" decline.²⁵ Scholars emphasized different facets of what was identified as intellectual historians' inability to execute an explanatory and interpretive agenda, while maintaining the autonomy of their field vis-à-vis social history and semiotics.

Despite the gloomy forecasts, intellectual historians struck back to arrest the process in which semiotic analysis became the order of the day in intellectual history. For example, John E. Toews and Russell Jacoby criticized the employment of semiotic analysis and noted that it subjects the text to the constraints of the very semiotic theory that is employed. They argued that new intellectual historians' intense scrutiny and concentration on the language of the texts obscures its real significance, rendering the approach itself bankrupt of explanatory power. They pointed out that these scholars ignore their own usage of language, thereby creating a circular relation of analysis.²⁶

²⁴ See Steve Kaplan and Dominick LaCapra, *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Cornell University Press, 1983).

²⁵William J. Bowsma, "Intellectual History in the 1980's: From History of Ideas to History of Meaning," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 12, (1981), pp. 279.

²⁶ Russell Jacoby, "A New Intellectual History?" *The American Historical Review*, 97/2 (1992), pp. 405-424; John Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *American Historical Review*, 92/4 (1987), pp. 879-907; Donald R. Kelley, "What is Happening to the History of Ideas?," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 51 (1990), pp. 3-25; Preston King, *Thinking Past a Problem: Essays on the History of Ideas* (London, 2000); Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt. Eds, *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*. (London, 1999).

The strife induced by the ongoing textualism vs. contextualism debate has prompted concerned scholars to seek a middle ground that can accommodate new issues and problematics raised in the field of intellectual history. This effort culminated in 2004 with the establishment of a new journal, *Modern Intellectual History*, which aims to move past binary and polarizing categories. The editors hold that intellectual historians need not “choose between an ‘idealist’ history of ideas and an approach that reduces ideas to rationales for social interests.” They see no purpose in insisting upon intellectual history’s dividing boundaries from forms of new cultural history. Alternatively, the journal encourages work on the relations between ideas and social experiences.²⁷

2.4 Middle Eastern Intellectual History- Scholars have lamented that intellectual history in Middle Eastern Studies pales in comparison to other types of histories that are pursued in the discipline and in intellectual history of other geographical regions.²⁸ Gershoni observed that typically studies in intellectual history -beginning with the tradition of Orientalist scholarship on what is referred to as the modernist school- have not been influenced by prevailing trends in the general field of intellectual history.²⁹ Moreover, various types of social history and the penetrating impact of political Islam eclipsed intellectual and other histories in the discipline.

²⁷ Editorial. *Modern Intellectual History*, 1/ 1, (2004), pp. 1-2.

²⁸ See Israel Gershoni and Amy Singer. "Introduction: Intellectual History in Middle Eastern Studies," *Journal of Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 28/ 3 (2008), pp. 183-189.

²⁹ See Israel Gershoni, “The Theory of Crisis and the Crisis in a Theory: Intellectual History in the Twentieth-Century Middle Eastern Studies,” in I. Gershoni, A. Singer and Y.H. Erdem (eds), *Middle East Historiographies: Narrating the Twentieth Century* (Seattle, 2006) pp. 131-182.

First, studies on nationalism and then political (and radical) Islam have dominated the majority of efforts in Middle Eastern intellectual history. Scholars have focused on the role of intellectuals in the transition from Ottomanism to Arabism, and finally to the rise of individual territorial nationalisms. This trend has been more or less supplanted by the attention given to intellectuals' articulation of political Islam. In both bodies of literature, the reverberations of Said's Orientalism are prevalent. His and his students' employment of discourse analysis have rectified misleading perspectives on concepts integral to scholarly understanding of Islamic religions and communities. Fundamental legal and political tenets have been reinterpreted, and consequently facilitated a more nuanced understanding of the dynamism and fluidity of various Islamic cultures. A more recent trend in Middle Eastern intellectual history concerns studies on the development of the public sphere, its emergence, and its limitations in Arab countries. These studies *inter alia*, look at both the state's cooptation of intellectuals who contributed to these spheres, and the degree and conditions of intellectual pluralism that existed within them.³⁰

2.5 *Sociology of Intellectuals and Knowledge*³¹- The field of sociology of intellectuals emerged in response to the Dreyfus Affair and World War I. The Dreyfus Affair spawned a sense of collective solidarity amongst intellectuals, but disillusionment and demoralization quickly replaced this in the interwar period, when many intellectuals were

³⁰ For examples of this in the Iraqi context, see Orit Bashkin. *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*. (Stanford, 2009); Peter Wien. *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932-1941*, (New York, 2006); and Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. (Berkeley, 2005).

³¹ Though the sociology of intellectuals and the sociology of knowledge could be seen as two distinct fields, they share coterminous discussions. Moreover, in the literature of the two fields, one can point to a sometimes interchangeable and vacillating usage of the terms.

engaged in a process of de-identification that resulted from prevailing "anti-intellectual" sentiment.³² In the 1920's, three main approaches emerged regarding the question of how the intellectual's social location shapes the production of knowledge and his/her role in society. Karl Mannheim, one of the main founders of this field, posited that intellectuals are potentially class-less in his magnum opus, *Ideology and Utopia* 1929. He maintained that their higher education and exposure to "opposing tendencies in social reality" rendered them the only individuals capable of transcending their class.³³ The intellectual "can choose from a multitude of points of view, and is able to consciously reject certain ones, after having first grasped them through empathic understanding (*Einfühlung*)."³⁴

Mannheim's approach opposed that of Julien Benda, who believed that intellectuals constitute a class-in-themselves. Benda contrasted intellectuals, whose pursuits he viewed to be free of material interests, with laymen who primarily pursued material interests. It followed that because intellectuals were unconcerned with material interests, their interests represented those of society. In his famous book, *La Trahison des Clercs*, (The Treason of Intellectuals) 1927, he criticized intellectuals for failing to uphold their status as an "anti-class," and falling prey to political impulses.

The third main approach to the question of intellectuals and social location, the class-bound approach, was formulated by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci in his

³² Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens. "The Sociology of Intellectuals," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 28, (2002), pp.64.

³³ Karl Mannheim. *Ideology and Utopia*. [1929]Trans. L Wirth, E. Shils, San Diego, 1985,pp. 156.

³⁴ Karl Mannheim, [1923] "The Sociology of Intellectuals," *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 10, (1993), pp. 77.

Selections from the Prison Notebooks (translated and edited 1971). Gramsci asserted that each social group produces its own “organic” intellectuals; through the group’s linkage to the means of production, the organic intellectual articulates the social groups’ economic, social and political functions. These three approaches have served as the basis for further studies and have fundamentally shaped the development of the sociology of intellectuals.

Kurzman and Owens pointed out that the field witnessed a second wave of interest in the 1950s, when western governments enlisted the expertise of intellectuals to administer welfare state programs, intellectuals led independence movements and took the helm of nascent states throughout the world, and student movements attracted scholarly attention to the role of intellectuals in facilitating social change.³⁵ In this wave, the class-less approach was the most prevalent and was articulated by Edward Shils. He found that in developing and post-colonial countries, specifically India, intellectuals were the best equipped to act as vessels of modernity. However, Shils and other scholars observed that in India and other countries such as the United States, where intellectuals were integrated into the state administration, over involvement caused the loss of the intellectuals’ ability to act as social critics.³⁶ During this wave of scholarly interest, Gramsci’s class-bound approach was further elaborated by Michel Foucault, who formulated a class-bound theory for the post-modern era, whereas Benda’s class-in-themselves approach was largely relegated to the sidelines, with some exceptions.

The sociology of intellectuals received renewed attention towards the end of the 20th century, but in this third wave of scholarly interest, the three guiding approaches to

³⁵ Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens. “The Sociology of Intellectuals,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 28, (2002), pp. 67.

³⁶ *Ibid.* pp.68.

the field seemed to have lost their rigidity, but not their efficacy.³⁷ Some scholars have shifted their focus from the role of intellectuals in society to their roles within the intellectual world or field.³⁸ Another aspect of this shift relates to questions concerning both how social organization and intellectual hierarchies structure patterns of knowledge, how structures of knowledge enforce social hierarchies, and how various practices and ways of knowing emerge.³⁹ Most notably, these lines of inquiry have produced a theoretical focus on authority relations within institutions and organizations, within intellectual networks and communities, and between hegemonic institutions or foci of power (such as the state and the media) and society. Another byproduct of this shift is observable in the outgrowth of collective memory studies, media studies and research on how nations commemorate.

These themes are central to studies on nationalism, and have been industriously incorporated into the field of Middle Eastern History. Still, other scholars have remained within the realm of the three general approaches, but have asked new questions, such as, "under what conditions do intellectuals aspire to organicity; what does it mean for an intellectual to be "organic" in a community; and can intellectuals construct the

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 73.

³⁸ See Ahmad Sadri. *Max Weber's Sociology of Intellectuals*. (New York, 1992); Pierre Bourdieu. "The Specificity of the Scientific Field and the Social Conditions of the Progress of Reason," *Social Science Information*, 14/ 9 (1975), pp.19–47; and "An interview with Pierre Bourdieu: For a Socio-analysis of Intellectuals: On *Homo Academicus*," Transl. L.J.D. Wacquant. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 34, (1989), pp.1-29.; and "The Intellectual Field: A World Apart," in *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Trans. M. Adamson, (Stanford, 1990), pp. 140-149.; and "The Corporatism of the Universal: The Role of Intellectuals in the Modern World," *Telos* 81, (1989), pp.99–110; and. R.J. Brym. "The Political Sociology of Intellectuals: A Critique and Proposal," in Gagnon, A.G. *Intellectuals in Liberal Democracies*. (New York, 1987), pp. 199-209.

³⁹ See Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: An Historical Survey of Education and Stratification*. (New York, 1979).; and *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998).

community in which they claim to be organic?"⁴⁰ In the Middle Eastern context, these questions have translated to an investigation the intellectuals' "authenticity," and are particularly beneficial to the analysis of the intellectual's role in social movements. While the core of theoretical debates in the sociology of intellectuals and knowledge has been influenced by Western intellectual traditions and sometimes appears to be less applicable to the Middle Eastern context, nevertheless, the field has posited useful questions and directions of inquiry for Middle Eastern intellectual history.

3. Research Questions and Fundamental Assumptions

1) How was Sadr's view on the episode of the Fadak influenced by national Iraqi trends and the discourse on the orientation of the Iraqi state? The assumption that underlies this question is that Sadr was attentive to political debates about opposition to the monarchical regime prior to the 1958 revolution. The answer to this question will both enhance our understanding of Sadr's position regarding the Iraqi state, and broaden scholarly perceptions of the discourse within the Iraqi public sphere concerning the future direction of the Iraqi state. Many studies viewed this as a struggle solely between Iraqi nationalists and pan-Arabists and thereby neglect religious Shi'i voices.

2) How does Sadr's portrayal of Fatima's role in the Fadak dispute differ from other Shi'i representations of this historic episode? This question assumes that elements of Shi'i intellectual tradition (including structures of hierarchy within the *hawzas*), Western

⁴⁰ Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens. "The Sociology of Intellectuals," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 28, (2002), pp. 74.

thought, and political, social, and economic currents in Iraq decisively influenced Sadr's depiction of Fatima and the meaning of the Fadak dispute.

3) How does Sadr represent the multifarious dimensions of the Shi'ite experience in Iraq through his text and what can be learned about his view of the condition of the strata of Iraqi Shi'ites? The fundamental assumption that underlies this question is that Sadr was distraught by the plight of Shi'ites in the Iraqi state. The answer to this question will represent one view of the Iraqi Shi'i condition from the Shi'i *hawzas* and will shed light on Sadr's goals for the role of the Shi'i '*ulama*' and for all Shi'ites of Iraq. Moreover, it will elucidate his social position vis-à-vis Iraqi society and various Iraqi Shi'i communities.

4) Considering theoretical frameworks from the sociological literature on intellectuals, how can Sadr's role as an intellectual be perceived? This question assumes that *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh* relates to Sadr's contemporary Iraq and that it was written within a particular intellectual milieu that bore its own norms and hierarchical dimensions. Determining how Sadr's role as an intellectual found expression in this text and in his experiences can shed light on both trends in the '*ulama*'s mode of opposition and Sadr's, and the relationship between them.

4. Possible Answers

1) It seems as though Sadr's thought was influenced by the discourse on opposition to the monarchical regime and the debate on the future orientation of the Iraqi state. He seems to have been aware of and in dialogue with the competing discourses of Arab nationalism, communism and Iraqi nationalism, which is *inter alia* exemplified by his employment of

Marxist terminology and concepts. In addition to the general theme of political usurpation, Sadr relates the historical subject of his book to current Iraqi events and issues such as martial law, nationalization, women's rights, and land rights.

2) Sadr's language is decidedly revolutionary. From a preliminary look at Shi'i writing on Fatima and the story of the Fadak, it seems as though there is an important shift in the portrayal of her effort to reclaim the Fadak. In Sadr's text, she is transformed from an injured, victimized, and helpless woman, to a revolutionary and fearless heroine. From what can be observed thus far, only, later writers and contemporary discourse on Fatima have portrayed her in a similar vein. Ali Shariati, known for his salient impact on revolutionary discourse in Iran, cites Sadr's book extensively, and his discussion of Fatima as a role model bears a striking resemblance to Sadr's depiction of her.

3) From an analysis of *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh*, it seems as though Sadr is attempting to constitute a revitalized Shi'i community and Shi'i communal identity, at a time when Shi'i professionals, merchants, youth, junior 'ulama', and disenchanting tribesmen squatting in the slums on the outskirts of Baghdad were increasingly swayed by the lure of communist ideology and Arab nationalism. Although Sadr does not share the same social experience with all Iraqi Shi'ites, he refers to various events and issues in Iraqi history that seem to have resonated with certain sectors of Iraqi Shi'ites. He directs the reader's attention to issues that most Shi'ites could identify with, due to the economic, political and social significance associated with them. *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh* is laden with messages for all Iraqi Shi'ites of his day -including the 'ulama'- and contains an underlining call for Shi'ites to unite around a unified activist Shi'i leadership.

4) Any analysis of Sadr's role as an intellectual (in the period under question)⁴¹ should be located on two methodological planes: 1) in the milieu of the *hawzas*; and 2) in the context of Iraqi Shi'ites and their social experiences. While certain approaches to the sociology of intellectuals would first identify Sadr with a given social group and/or groups, due to the stratified nature of Iraqi Shi'ites and the dubious categorization of the 'ulama' as a social group, this requires methodological measure requires judicious caution. In contrast to a recent study that uncritically applies Gramscian conceptions of hegemony and roles for intellectuals in Iraqi society,⁴² an assessment that underpins this study rejects the notion that the 'ulama' acts as "organic intellectuals," and questions the very assumption that the collection of religious scholars in the *hawzas* even constitutes a unified and distinct social group. It seems as though Manheim's conception of the intellectual's role in society may provide a more suitable foundation to construct a theoretical framework by which to analyze generally, intellectuals in Iraqi society, and specifically Sadr's role and impact as an intellectual.

5. Sources of the Research

Primary Sources

The primary sources of this study are comprised of Sadr's *Fadak fi al-Ta'rikh*, other Shi'i works on the Fadak and Fatima, and selected items from the Iraqi press. Sadr's text is clearly most integral to this study. Its major shortcoming is that it is difficult to ascertain

⁴¹ One may argue that in later periods, his cooperation with Sunnis could warrant an evaluation of his role as an intellectual who spoke on behalf of all Iraqis.

⁴² Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. (Berkeley, 2005).

the exact scope of its readership at the time. However, what is known thus far provides telling clues about the book's reception. For example, the book was republished in 1970 and in 1980 (also translated in 2002) amidst renewed tensions between Shi'ites and the state (in Iran and Iraq). Iranian revolutionary lay intellectuals such as Ali Shariati cited it extensively. Al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallāh, Sadr's student and the first intellectual and theological leader of the Lebanese Hizbollah, borrowed interpretive methods and conclusions from *Fadak fī al-Ta'rikh* in his argumentation on Shi'i historiography with Al-Sayyid Ja'far Murtadā al-'Amilī and employed themes such as women's involvement in political and social life in his attempt to sway not only his co-religionists, but also nationalists and communists.⁴³ More over, even Sunni writers use Sadr's text in their discussions of Fatima. Finally, today, the impact of this book and its claims can be observed in various internet websites.

The second type of primary source includes other Shi'i representations of the Fadak. Although another shortcoming is that some of these works are English translations of Persian texts, these will allow for a comparison of Sadr's portrayal of the event. Together with the other primary sources, they will help locate Sadr's text within both the Iraqi national discourse and the Shi'i intellectual milieu. These sources will contribute to the uncovering of the meaning that Sadr bestowed upon the Fadak in his contemporary context.

⁴³ Stephan Rosiny. "The Tragedy of Fātima al-Zahrā'," in Brunner, Rainer and Ende, Werner. Eds. *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*. (Leiden, 2001), pp. 216.

The third main type of primary source, articles from the Iraqi press, will contribute to the understanding of the Iraqi Civil Code and its reception, and will elucidate the discourse of opposition to the Hashemite Monarchy.

Secondary Sources (The Historiographical Literature on Sadr)

Many Arabic language works on Sadr have been written by his students and followers. This fact poses questions regarding these works' credibility. Some students aim to idealize or eulogize him and may exaggerate aspects of his contributions and the extent of his impact; indeed some of this literature resembles hagiographic studies. Also, most of the Arabic language works on Sadr have been published outside of Iraq, and most likely express the views of individuals who are not objective, are overly sympathetic to the Shi'i communities of Iraq, and/or are hostile to the various Iraqi regimes. However, these texts as well as those written by his students are also advantageous inasmuch as they supply important details and insight that may not be gleaned from other sources.

The most important sources from the English language historiographical literature that directly treat Sadr, his thought, and activity are Mallat's book and two articles, and Jabar's monograph and edited book. These sources not only provide a wealth of detail and information, but they are also less subject to the suspicion and problems involved with sources written by his students. These authors combine academic standards with their expertise and intimacy with the subject. Other works on the historiography of modern Iraq, the Iraqi public sphere, Shi'i communities of Iraq, and Shi'i intellectual history inform the background and infrastructure of this study.

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⁴⁴Aziz has a few other articles relating to Sadr and his role in political activism; however the content of his articles is fully covered in his doctoral dissertation.

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