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BEYOND THE NATION: A CONCEPTUAL HISTORY OF THE QUR'ANIC TERM *UMMA* IN TAFSIR AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

BY

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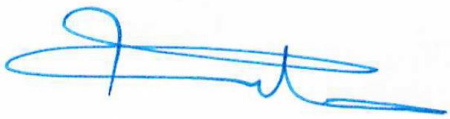

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ABSTRACT

In the Age of a global, yet fragmented world the idea of the *umma* has grown to become a popular imagination that is invoked by everyone although it's meaning is unclear today. What is meant by the *umma* when it is invoked? Who is addressed and what is the framework in which the *umma* operates? This study seeks to trace back the concept of *umma* to its intended original meaning in the Qurʾan and it's understanding in classical Islamic Political Thought. By the use of three selected interrelated dimensions, morality, politics and religiosity the study seeks to illustrate the shifting emphasis within the two genres, Tafsir and Islamic Political Thought. Through the choice of five classical and modern exegetes the study investigates the range of differences within its meaning in Qurʾan exegesis. In addition to that, the analysis of the exegete's understanding of *umma* illustrates how socio-political circumstances have shaped the scholars understanding of *umma* in their historical context and how this in turn has led to a shifting emphasis on the political dimension of the *umma*. By providing a survey of usages of *umma* in pre-modern contexts, it highlights the notion of trans-locality that was present in premodern understandings of *umma*. In light of the wake of colonialism, western modernity, and the spread of nationalistic ideas in the Muslim world this thesis makes an argument about how the meaning of *umma* has transformed since the 19th century by an analysis of Sheikh al-Marsafi's understanding of *umma* in 1881. Salman Sayyid reconceptualization of *umma* in a postcolonial world, goes beyond the nation-state, yet still stresses the importance of its political dimension and could be considered contextual response to the political challenges Muslims are facing at his time. The transhistorical approach of this study offers a way of relating the understanding of concepts of *umma* by early Muslim scholars to that of modern scholars in order to clarify in relation to what these changes happened and what political and social implication they had for the Muslim World.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The Transliteration of Arabic words in this thesis follows the system, which is published by the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES). Any Arabic words will be italicized and fully transliterated, except for words, which are found in Merriam-Webster Dictionary are spelled as they are listed there (e.g., jihad, shaykh, shariʿa). Another exception is for personal names, place names, books titles and articles. They will not be spelled with diacritics, except for ʿayn (ع) and hamza (ء), which will be preserved in all these cases.

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To my parents and my siblings who have always been a mental support for me.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

With the establishment of nation-states in the modern Muslim World, numerous intellectual debates about whether or not the nation-state is compatible with Islam and its moral principles have flourished. Contemporary Muslim Intellectuals explore whether the nation-state has become an inescapable reality or whether there are alternative ways in which communities can organize themselves. A different approach concentrates more on accommodating Islam and Modernity by projecting the framework of the nation-state on that of the concept of the *umma*.

The *umma* is a concept that has a rich history starting from the time of the Qurʾanic revelations until today. It is invoked by everyone starting from academic conferences (Zaim University International Conference on the Muslim *Umma*) and pan-Islamic magazines[1] to religious preachers[2] and humanitarian aid organisations. In other words, the *umma* forms a popular imagination and its usage is widely spread; yet its meaning is very unclear today. What is meant by invoking the *umma*? How can it be defined throughout Islamic Intellectual History? Is the *umma* equivalent to the modern nation-state? And if not, still, how do we define the *umma* in the contemporary context of a Globalized World that is divided and separated by nation-states? And more importantly, who belongs to the *umma*?

[1] ENA Journal in Paris called El-Ouma during the period of pan-Islamist-movements in the 20th century
[2] https://www.al-qaradawi.net/content/132-الدوحة-ومجلة-«الأمة»-مجلة-«

The objective of this study is to offer answers to these questions by first, tracing back the concept of *umma* to its original meaning and second, embedding the concept of *umma* into the socio-political context in which it has been reformulated and its moral dimension geographically restricted. The third object of analysis will be the transitional period, the so-called postcolonial and postmodern world in which the idea of the nation-state seems to lose its space.

This research will attempt to detect how the meaning of *umma* has been defined in the Qurʾan, elaborated in the classical Islamic period and restructured in the wake of Nationalism and the onset of Modernity. It will question whether the concept of *umma* can be used synonymously for the nation-state, as many scholars like al-Tahtawi (d. 1873) and al-Marsafi (d. 1890) from the 19th Century onwards have suggested. Classical as well as contemporary scholars have investigated the origins and intended meaning of this Qurʾanic term in order to assert an either universal or at least trans-local Muslim identity and solidarity. This study adopts a postcolonial reading and goes beyond the common trend of merely depicting the conceptual history of the term. Therefore, the examination of the change and ramifications of *umma* is followed by an analysis of the social and political forces that governed that transformation.

The research questions of this study evolve around tracing back the conceptual transformations of the idea of the *umma* in their socio-political context. The first research question attempts to detect (i) what kind of role the religious, moral and political dimension played in the conceptualisation of the *umma* in pre-modern as well as modern scholarly works, the second question examines (ii) how the Qurʾanic concept of *umma* has transformed from the pre-modern to the modern period in the genre of Quran Commentaries

and Islamic Political Thought. The last subchapter (iii) analyses to what extent the selected scholars of the Tafsir-Genre and Islamic Political Thought use the concept of *umma* as a tool to respond to the political turbulences of their time.

The study is divided into two main chapters, *Pre-Modern and Modern Meanings of the Umma Throughout the Tafsir-Genre* and *Pre-Modern and Modern Meanings of Umma in Islamic Political Thought*. The first chapter will provide the etymology of the term and a survey of usages of *umma* in pre-modern Arabic lexicographical works. This will serve as a basis for further discussion. The chapter starts with an insightful illustration of pre-modern lexicographical works that define the *umma* as perceived of the following three old Arabic dictionaries: (1) *Kitab al-ʿAyn* by Khalil ibn Ahmad, the earliest found Arabic dictionary (2nd *hijrī* century); (2) *Muʿjam Maqayis al-Lugha* by Ibn Faris, the second oldest (3rd *hijrī* century); and (3) *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* by Raghib al Isfahani (d.502/ 1008) one of the major classical qurʾanic lexicons (5th *hijrī* century)[3]. The chapter continues with drawing upon the theoretical framework of Al-Shatibi (d.790/1388)[4] and introduces the general understanding and development of the term *umma* from the Mekkan to the Medinan period. The second part of the first Chapter *Pre-modern and Modern Meanings of the Umma Throughout the Tafsir-Genre* explores classical and modern exegetical works, by engaging with four classical exegetes, in order to explore the qurʾanic meanings of *umma*: (1) Al-Tabari (d. 310/923), (2) Al-Razi (d. 606/1210) and (3) Al-Qurtubi (d. 671/1272),

[3] See Muhammad, Yasien. "The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani" in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 6, No.1, Oxford University Press 1995, 51-75; Fakhry, Majid. Ethical Theories in Islam. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994.

[4] Al-Shatibiti (d. 1388) the Andalusian Maliki Scholar and reformer that set up the theory of Quran which based its ground on the idea that the Mekkan verses provide the foundations that include the general meaning and that Medinan verses and ahādith have to be seen in light of the Mekkan period. Thus, he is suggesting that the Quran has to be seen as an integral whole and consequently the Quranic verses and the concepts discussed within are interconnected and need to be examined in relation to each other (Hallaq 1991, 70).

and (4) Al-Tusi (d. 460/ 1067). In the Modern period the Exegetes are chosen are as follows: (1) Muhammad ʿAbduh (d.1973), (2) Sayyid Qutb (d.1960), (3) Fazlur Rahman (d.1988) and (4) Al-Tabatabaʾi (d. 1981). Their works offer a wide range of different approaches reaching from a legal/*fiqhi* to a philosophical approach. At the same time, they represent the two main positions in tafsir interpretation at that time, namely reason-based and tradition based tafsir. Although the discussion will not be limited to these approaches in interpretation, they offer an insight into the dominant branches of tafsir, such as Sunni, Sufi and Shiʿi.

The Second chapter will delve into the genre of Islamic Political Thought and starts with a *fiqhī* approach that focuses on the understanding of *umma* in relation to governance and *siyāsa sharʿiyya* by classical *fiqh* Scholars Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) and al-Mawardi (d.1058). The field of *fiqh* has been of great importance in the classical Islamic period. Thus, it is important to include definitions by these *fuqahāʾ* in order to gain a more authentic understanding of how the concept was used during the pre-modern period in contrast to its contemporary uses in Islamic political theory. Part of this chapter will engage with the actual experience of pre-modern Muslim societies by examining the Constitution of Medina in light of the transformation of the conceptualization of the term *umma* in the modern period, by examining the case of the Egyptian Azhari Scholar al-Sheikh Hussain al-Marsafi (d.1890)[5].

[5] See Delanoue, G., "al-Marṣafī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs; Guth, Stephan. "Concepts that changed the world: waṭan as one of Hussayn al-Marṣafī's 'Eight Words'," in *Representations and Visions of Homeland in Modern Arabic Literature*. Edited by Sebastian Guenther, and Stephan Milich, 75-88. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2016; Mirza, Mansoor Ahmed. *Between 'Umma, Empire and Nation: The Role of the 'Ulama in the 'Urabi Revolt and the Emergence of Egyptian Nationalism.* London: Department of Government of the London School of Economics for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2014.

Modernity alongside colonialism posed challenges for the Muslim World. There was a significant need to develop answers for how to deal with new emerging forms of collective identity, such as nationalism for instance. In an attempt to reconcile the new world order with Islam, many Scholars resorted to the concept of *umma*, which is also a form of collective identity, as it is a multi-layered concept and thus lends itself well to a reconceptualization in light of modern conceptual structures. Despite the fact that the *umma* and 'national identities' have communalities that justify why Muslim Scholars to draw similarities between Islam and the new world order, there are substantial differences between *umma* and nationalism, as nationalism ultimately leads to the formulation of an "other". It consequently can be argued that the idea of nationalism is inherently exclusionary (See Sayyid 2014); (Hallaq 2013); (Chatterjee 1998); (Ho 2002). For this study Al-Marsafi is relevant for exploring the role of Islam in relation to the emergence of nationalism during the ʿUrabi Revolt period (1879 – 1882) in Egypt as one example for how the understanding of *umma* transformed in modern Muslim societies. As mentioned above, the rise of nationalism contests the very idea of the *umma* as a universal community that goes beyond the tribal bound communities at the time of the Prophet. Therefore al-Marsafi provides a useful representative case for analysing how the idea of *umma* shifted within the political context of Egypt at that time, due to nationalist and colonialist aspirations. As an Azhari scholar he has adopted notions of the Islamic tradition, thus it will be interesting to explore how he subconsciously merged his understanding of the Islamic tradition with the influences of modernity, nationalism and colonialism. He is one of the rather unknown Egyptian scholars compared to Mohammad Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1935), and there is barely any literature about him, especially on his last Book *Risalat al-Kalim al-Thaman*. Lastly the study aims to give a short insight into contemporary Islamicate scholars contributions and views on the concept of *umma*. What

has changed in contemporary Islamic political Thought? The last part will engage in current discussions around Salman Sayyids decolonial reconceptualization of the *umma*.

The three interrelated dimensions in relation to the *umma* that I have chosen for my thesis are the moral, the political and the religious dimension. This thesis argues that they are central to the meaning of *umma* as most of the *qurʾanic* verses invoke at least one of the three mentioned dimensions when mentioning the *umma*. Morality relates to the manifestation of the moral teachings of Islam in every aspect of life, whereby all moral doctrines are founded on the premises of the idea of obligation and a sense of responsibility (or moral commitment). This sense of responsibility and moral commitment is premised on ethical values that are rooted in the Quranic revelations, as well as common ethical and universal values that are laid down by a transcendent Divinity (Draz 2008); (Ramadan 2019). The political relates to a way of controlling the new arising conflicts as well as overcoming the new emerging differences, it "is a means of mastering difference but at the same time its condition of possibility is difference itself" (Sayyid 2013). Hence, the political is marking a shift from the organic community (that was presented in the Mekkan verses) to a social society that had to be established in order to manage these differences. (i.e. *ṣafīḥat madīna*). And lastly the religious relates to the consciously theological aspect of what Muslims believe in as well as the connection to divinity (i.e. *taqwā*, *imān*, *tawḥīd*) (Anjum 2007). The interest lies in examining how these three dimensions are emphasised in Tafsir and Islamic Political Thought and how interconnect they are within the framework of the *umma*.

1.2 Literature Review

In debates between Muslim academics in the field of Islamic political thought and theory, the concept of *umma* is a prominent issue. It's appropriate use from a Quranic and Sunnah perspective was extensively discussed by classical and contemporary scholars for their respective societies. However, both the conceptual history of the term and the circumstances of its transformation in the wake of the colonization of the Islamicate world, have not been given the same attention, yet.

There was an intriguing endeavour/effort at the International Conference on the Muslim *Umma* in Istanbul (Centre for Islam and Global Affairs, 2017). Leading international Islamicate Scholars were gathered to discuss the rethinking of the meaning of *umma* in our modern societies. In recent years, scholars have however dedicated chapters, books and conferences to the theoretical conceptualization of the Muslim *umma*. The most comprehensive Arabic work by Lebanese philosopher Nasif Nassar is *The Contemporary Conceptions of the Nation: An Analytical Study of the Nation in Modern and Contemporary Arab Thought* (Nassar 2017). Nassar aims to draw a better understanding of Arab nationalist ideological knowledge. His book explores four theoretical conceptions of the nation. Hence, the first part deals with religious conceptions of the nation, the second handles its linguistic conceptions. The third and fourth chapters discuss respectively the nation's regional and political conception. Although his work offers a comprehensive conceptual history, Nassar's focus is not only limited to the Arab world, but also to the unquestioned assumption that *umma* is defined as nation. Since this study is an attempt to contest this definition, I will explore those origins of the concept of *umma* that Nassar neglects.

The Idea of the Muslim World. A Global Intellectual History, written by Turkish historian Cemil Aydin (Aydin 2017), questions the existence of a global Muslim *umma* in its entirety. He challenges the ontological claims to a political unity of Muslims from a historical perspective. Aydin argues that a governing authority under which all Muslims have lived, has never existed. Thus, he concludes, there has never been a united global Muslim *umma*. Another important work, indispensable for the conceptual study of the *umma*, is Abdullah al-Ahsan's *Umma or Nation? Identity Crisis in Contemporary Muslim Societies* (Al-Ahsan 1992). His intellectual project explores the influence of Western and Colonial concepts, such as secularism and the nation-state on the minds of Muslim intellectuals in the post-colonial era. His focus is set on the three Muslim countries: Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan. Furthermore, he gives a detailed historical background to the term *umma* which includes the Qurʾanic conception of *umma* in tafsir works and the practices of the Prophet. Furthermore, he examines the dichotomy between *umma* related identity and national identities. The dimension of universality of the *umma* is not discussed in-depth by Al-Ahsan, as he is more focused towards highlighting the clash between national identities that emerged with the Modern nation-state and the Muslim *umma* identity that goes back to the time of the Prophet.

Tamim al-Barghouti, a Palestinian poet and political scientist, published his book *the Ummah and the Dawla. The Nation-State and the Arab Middle East* (al-Barghouti 2008). Al-Barghouti argues that the current political crisis the Middle East faces is rooted in the implementation of nation-states which were introduced to the Middle East by European colonizers. His main concern is the conceptual history of the terminologies *umma* and *dawla*. Al-Barghouti alludes to the development and transformations that effected the

Modern definition of these concepts. He however does not go into detail on how these factors exactly caused this transformation and influenced Muslim scholars.

Apart from these three important sources, George Decasas work *the Qurʾanic Concept of the Umma and its Functions in the Philippine Muslim Society* provides a very insightful introduction into pre-modern and modern tafsir interpretations of the Qurʾanic verses that discussed the concept of *umma* (Decasa 1999). Besides Decasas work, there is an insightful PhD thesis by Widhiyoga Ganjar: *Understanding the Umma as an Islamic "Global" Society* that discusses the universalist aspiration of the *umma* thoughtfully (Ganjar 2017). Ganjar examines how the concept of society/societal organisation was traditionally bound by tribal structures. He comes to the conclusion that the aspiration to go beyond these tribal structures and gain a "global consciousness" is encouraged by the Islamic concept of *umma*. He further explores how early Muslim societies have developed this "global consciousness" and "global societies" by their relation to the spiritual teachings of the Qurʾan. He comes to the conclusion that the *umma* is a trans-local, rather than global society.

The dimension of political universality has been discussed considerably by Peter Mandaville in *Transnational Muslim Politics. Reimaging the Umma* (Mandaville 2001). This work engages the question of what Islam means to Muslims living under globalized conditions, especially as minorities in Europe. Mandaville attempts to provide a better understanding of Muslim politics through global transformations, by drawing upon an alternative reading of 'Political' Islam. His definition of 'Political' Islam includes the daily experiences of the majority of Muslims. Thus, he examines new political forms, namely trans-local politics that emerged out of the current globalized world. The book positions

the Muslim diaspora that lives in the West within a wider framework of post-national and trans-local politics.

Numerous other scholars have written extensively on the *umma* from different perspectives: while Ahmed Manzooruddin has offered a political dimension on *umma* as a universal community with his article *Umma: The Idea of a Universal Community* (Manzooruddin 1975). Heba Ezzat Raouf provides a socio-political approach with her article *the umma: from global civil society to global public sphere* where she stresses the social and spiritual trans-territoriality of the *umma* and calls for Islamic political scholars to rethink the concept of the *umma* in an applicable and operational manner that is based on the system of justice (Raouf 2011).

1.3 Research Significance

Although the studies mentioned above have discussed the concept of *umma* from political, historical, spiritual, moral and global perspectives, I argue that this study is nevertheless crucial. First, it uses primary sources to offer a survey of usages of the term *umma* in early Islamic Civilization. This study thereby contributes to the academic exploration of the development and history of Islamic political thought and conceptual history. Second, it attempts to offer a trans-historical approach that relates the understanding of concepts by early Muslim scholars to the interpretation of their modern counterparts. This is done in order to investigate which changes have taken place (and for what reason). Hence, this study is a humble attempt to argue that the concept of *umma*, due to its abstract nature in the Qurʾan, allows for thinking about new paradigms of governance that go beyond the limitations of the nation-state.

Chapter One: Pre-Modern and Modern Meaning of the *Umma* throughout the Tafsir-Genre

2.1 Etymology of the *Umma*

There are two dominant positions regarding the origin of the word *umma*. According to the majority of Classical Muslim scholars, *umma* is derived from the Arabic root *ʾamma, yaʾummu* (to lead/intend something) and *ʾumm* the mother or the origin/source of everything (Ibn Faris 1979, 21-23); (Al-Isfahani 2009, 85-86). This position is also documented in significant classical dictionaries, such as *Muʿjam Maqayis al-Lugha, Kitab al-ʿAin and Mufradat Alfaz al-Qurʾan*. Western scholars from the 20th century do not disagree completely with the classical position, but argue that due to recent scholarship it can be proven that *umma* does not stem from *ʾamma* but from the Hebrew *uma* or *ēm*, which means mother, stock, race or community and both go back to the Aramaic term *umetha* (Denny 1975, 37); (Horovitz 1925, 190-191). The German orientalist Josef Horovitz for instance, argues that *umma* is a loan- word that is cognate with the Hebrew word *uma* (community/nation) and can be traced back to the Proto-Semitic root *ʾmm which is either Aramean or Akkadian origin *umetha* as community. For both Scholars *umma* does not necessarily have a connection with the words *ummī* and *imām* (Horovitz, 1925, 190-191).

This Study will follow the classical view that argues for the interrelation of *umma, ʾumm and ʾamma/yaʾummu*, as the argument of Orientalists for legitimizing their conclusion of foreign words in the Qurʾan is regarded as illogical in itself by various renowned scholars for several reasons. First of all, it is not realistic that a native scholar is capable of solving

all the linguistic riddles of his native language, just because it is his mother tongue. Neither is the subsequent idea that the failure to do so would lead us to the conclusion that therefore we would also never be able to solve the linguistic riddles (Saleh 2010, 651). Jeffery's idea that Scholars would have to investigate in foreign languages in order to explain the words of the Qurʾan if there is no existing unanimity among native scholars around the meaning of the word, would consequently mean most of the vocabulary of the Qurʾan is foreign (Saleh 2010, 652). Yet, as will become clearer throughout the chapter Lexicography and Qurʾanic studies are indispensable to each other and complementary, hence for a proper philological investigation it is important to study all the available sources on the given term, not limit it to its philological context only (Saleh 2010, 659). The majority of pre-modern and Modern Muslim Scholars and philologists as Abu al-Husayn Ibn Faris (d.395/1004) have advocated the position that it is not possible that the Quran includes foreign words. This argument was mostly based on the idea that the language in which the Quran was revealed is perfect and does not need to borrow from different language to explain the words of God (Jeffery 2006, 6-11); (Al-Ahsan 1986, 606-616). Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 911/ 1505) defended a more nuanced position where he argues that for those words that belonged to other languages originally and where adapted by the ancient Arabs through trade or traveling general, were Arabicized and thus belong to the Arabic language. Hence, the formulation *qurʾan ʿarabī mubīn* refers to the Qurʾan as a whole and not to the individual words in it (Jeffery 2006, 10-11). *Muʿjam Maqayis al-Lugha* reflects the position Al-Suyuti highlights as the semantic link to the root meaning of the word in his Dictionary in which he mainly depends on the writings of the well-known Arab Philologist al-Khalil bin Ahmad al-Farahidi (d. 173 / 789) (Leaman 2006). According to Ibn Faris the word *umma* is derived from the letters *hamza* and *mīm* and consist of four sections: 1- origin, 2- source, 3- group/community, 4- religion. He argues however, that it can be traced back to

three original meanings which are a) the stature (*al-qāmma*) b) the time (*al-ḥīn*) and c) the intention (*al-qaṣd*) (Ibn Faris 1925, 27).

Al-Khalil who was one of the earliest and most important linguists of his time with his lexicographical work: *Kitab al-ʿAin* (the first Arabic dictionary), defines *umma* as religion (*dīn)*. A supporting statement is the Comment of Abu Zaid to the qurʾanic verse (43:22) in which he states: "*lā umma lahu ay lā dīn lahu"* which means there is no *umma* for him, means there is no religion for him (Ibn Faris 1925, 27). Moreover, Ibn Faris argues that a Hadith of the Prophet narrated trough Zaid bin Amr bin Nafil states: "*yubʿathu umma wāḥida*" (One religion has been sent). According to his interpretation, anyone who is following the true religion and objecting to all the other religions is the *umma*, or part of the *umma* (Ibn Faris 1925, 27). Al-Khalil moreover defines the meaning of *umma* in pre-Islamic times as the stature. He argues further that the Arabs used this term to describe a person who is of tall stature: "*inna filān la-ṭawīl al-umma*" (This person is of long stature). Pre-Islamic poetry is necessary and helpful, to better measure how the term was used in 7th century Mecca. Unfortunately, the word *umma* rarely occurs in pre-Islamic poetry (according to both Muslim and Western Scholars). A poetry line from al-Nabigha al-Dhubyani from the end of 6th century addressed to the king of his time, proves useful, as it comes from a non-Muslim Arab: "*wa hal yaʾthumanna dhū umma wa hūwwa ṭāʾiʿ"* (How can someone be regarded as sinful/mistaken while he is (possessor of *umma*) someone who is on good deeds and steadfast on the right path/religion and obedient). In this verse, the famous Christian Arab poet, tried to convey to the King that he is a good person. Therefore, his apology should be accepted. In the sentences preceding this piece, Ibn Faris mentioned the meaning of *umma* as *dīn* and righteous deeds. This can be counted as another example of the same meaning (Ibn Faris 1925, 27-28).

A third important work that has defined the *umma* in the Qurʾan is *Mufradat fi Gharib Al-Qurʾan*, a dictionary of Qurʾanic terms written by Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 502/ 1108) an eleventh century Muslim Scholar who focused on linguistics, ethics and philosophy. His work offers a summary of terms and concepts revealed in the Qurʾan. Al-Isfahani confirms Ibn Faris's and al-Khalil's view that *umma* stems from the root *ʾumm*, signifying the origin of anything; whether of mankind or creatures. According to Al-Isfahani, *umma* is every community that is bound by one religion, one period, or one place. *Umma* applies, regardless of the community being born out of choice, selection or oppression. A noticeable observation at this point is that neither of the two aforementioned dictionaries mentions the word *umma* in relation to 'place' or territory. One Territory (*makān wāḥid*) however, does not allude to strict border policies and the idea of intentional exclusion that is usually assumed by a contemporary reader that has the structure of nation-states in mind (Al-Isfahani 2009, 86); (Benhabib 2004,17-18;74). Apart from these three broader categories al-Isfahani points out several meanings of the term *umma* within the Quran: "And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you" (6.38). Each species has its own innate (built-in) system fashioned by Allah, for example, some are weaving web houses like spiders, and some build homes like silkworm; some store food like ants, and some rely on instant (daily) food provision like birds and pigeons; and other species with different methods/qualities unique to each of them (Al-Isfahani 2009, 85-88). Similarly, the Persian 9th century Ismaili philosopher Abu Hatim al-Razi (d.322/ 934) has argued in *Kitab al-Zina* that the origin of the *umma* is a group of people or livestock, or birds, and other creatures that stem from the same class thus each class has their own *umma*, the people have an *umma* and the birds have a *umma* by themselves. However, he argues that *ummam mithlakum* means that each species has their own sustenance and structure just as the human being has. Some other scholars argue

further that *mithlakum* means *mithlakum fi al-din* which denotes that each species is worshipping God just as Human beings do (Al-Razi 1981, 415-419).

The second meaning is found in the verse (2:213) and alludes according to al-Isfahani to the theme of oneness; the *umma* is thus seen as one form of a community that follows one method of error or disbelief (*umma wāhida)*. The third meaning then is mentioned in *al-Hud*, 118. Al-Isfahani points to *umma* being one community of believers (*umma qāmma ʿala al-imān*). The fourth meaning that he stresses is *umma* as a group or community that chooses knowledge and good deeds and is a model for others (3:104). Thereafter, in al-Zakhaf, 22 he points to the fifth meaning that alludes to *umma* as one united religion. The sixth meaning is referring to *umma* as a specific time or forgetfulness (*nisyān*) (12:45). After that follows the meaning of *umma* in a metaphorical sense for a person representing a whole community/nation "*qā'iman maqāma jamāʿa fī ʿibāda Allah*" (Ibn Faris 1925, 27-28); (Al-Isfahani 2009, 85-88). Ibn Faris and Al-Isfahani argue here that "*inna ibrāhīma kana ummatin*" (Ibrahim was an *umma* by himself) means he was an *Imām* (A leader) that guides the people and is the reason for their gathering (Ibn Faris 1925, 27-28), (Al-Isfahani 2009, 85-86). In Al-ʿImran, 113 *umma* signifies being part or a group out of the community that is upright. In this context, it is particularly referring to the People of the Book as al-Isfahani argues (al-Isfahani 2009, 85-86).

Western Scholarship on the other hand argues that there is no connection between *umma* and ʾ*umm* in the Qurʾan. Serjeant stresses this point by alluding to the idea that *umma* is a religio-communal concept that is deeply rooted in the Arab consciousness and thereby existent even before the Prophet's mission. (Denny 1975, 38-39). Denny divides the meaning of *umma* in the Qurʾan therefore in three main categories: One- *Umma* as a

religious community. During the pre-Islamic era, it alluded generally to religious communities. From the beginning of Islam especially from the time of the *hijra* to Medina it alluded to Muslims only, according to him. Two- *Umma* as a fixed term or time (11:8) and three- *umma* as a paragon/ ideal (16:120). It is important to notice that once examining the Medinan verses on the *umma* it can be observed clearly that *umma* is not exclusively used for Muslims (e.g. 5:66). Rudi Paret suggests that Abraham embodied a specific religious community, which was the prototype of the true Muslim community (Denny 1975, 38-39).To sum up, *umma* is defined by the aforementioned scholars and philologists as either religion, a time, a role model or an ideal, a righteous and virtuous community, a *milla* or the origin of something. All of these categories are premised on the basis that this group of people are gathered because of at least one uniting factor or case (Al-Razi 1981, 415-416). Although the factor of territory or place was mentioned by one scholar, namely al-Isfahani it seems to have not been the dominant connection to the meaning of *umma.*

In the modern period the definition of *umma* changes slightly and develops into a more political meaning. At the beginning of the 19th Century, the age of nationalism and the peak of modernity, the term *umma* in modern Arabic language is known as a synonym for nation-state. Throughout the middle ages as aforementioned, *umma* has been continuously conceived as a religious or more specifically Islamic community (Ibn Faris 1925, 27). Although this was its definition, the term was used in the wider sense to address non-Muslim religious communities as *al-umma faransāwiya* or *al-umma al-iṭāliyāniya* in private Egyptian press for example (Rebhan 1986, 24). In 1929 the translation of *al-umma* as nation was mentioned in the German-Arabic dictionary of Bocthors (Rebhan 1986, 25). The al-Ghany dictionary indicates that the *umma* is a group of people that are united by a similar history that includes a uniting factor either language-wise, religion or economic-

wise. Further the dictionary explains that this group of people has the same objectives in terms of either, *ʿaqīda*, or politics or economy (as an example the "Arab *umma*" is mentioned (Abu al-ʿAzm 2013). *Muʿjam al-Raʾid* goes beyond the aforementioned by stating that the *umma* is a group of people that originates from one origin and that they are united by shared inherited characteristics. This definition implies a natural and perhaps blood tied bond between the members of the *umma*. Lastly the definition includes a restriction to three uniting factors, either religion, or time-period or territory (Masʿud 1992, 123). In light of these definitions a tacit transformation from *umma* expressing any community to *umma* being more dominantly used for describing the modern nation-state becomes apparent. This study aims at tracing back the moment of that epistemic transformation and its socio-political background by examining two major genres within the Islamic tradition.

2.2 *Umma* in the Chronology of the Qurʾan

The term *umma* was mentioned in the Quran 62 times, 49 times *umma*, 2 times *ummatikum* and 11 times the plural *ummam* according to Denny as well as *The Lexical Index for Qurʾanic Terms* (*Al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li-Alfaẓ al-Qurʾan al-Karim*) (ʿAbd-al-Baqi 1945, 80). Whereas The Lexical Index defines 16 out of the 62 times that *umma* is mentioned as Medinan, Noeldeke's Chronology and other Western approaches differ with various verses (Denny 2012). In this part I am following ʿAbd al-Baqis classification (premised on the Islamic Tradition) of the verses that include *umma* in Medinan and Mekkan time:

Umma- Mekkan verses:

6:108; 7:34; 7:38; 7:159; 7:181; 10:19; 10:47; 10:49; 11:8; 11:118; 12:45; 15:5; 16:36; 16:84; 16:89; 16:92; 16:93; 16:120; 21:92; 23:43; 23:44; 23:52; 27:83; 28:23; 28:75; 35:24; 40:5; 42:8; 43:22; 43:23; 43:33; 45:28

Umma - Medinan verses:

2:128; 2:134; 2:141; 2:143; 2:213; 3:104; 3:110; 3:113; 4:41; 5:48; 5:66; 7:164; 7:168; 13:30; 22:34; 22:67

Ummatikum - Mekkan verses:

21:92; 23:52

Ummam - Mekkan Verses:

6:38; 6:42; 7:38; 11:48; 16:63; 29:18; 35:42; 41:25; 46:18

*Umma*m – Medinan Verses:

13:30

2.2.1 Umma in the Mekkan Verses

In the Mekkan context, the usage of the term *umma* in the Qurʾan was most frequently in a general and abstract framework that addressed a 'collective' or communities[6] (6:38). The idea of each species being a community (*umma)* and originating from a single source (*ʾumm)* just as the whole humanity was created as an *umma* that originated from Adam and Eve was predominant (Al-Ahsan 1986, 607). Denny's definition goes in line with this definition by arguing that *umma* in the Mekkan context starts as a community under judgement, because the Qurʾan explicitly emphasizes that all communities will be under

[6] It is important here to mark the difference between a society or nation which is based on a contractual relationship between citizens and the state and a community where the relationship is rather premised on an imagined sense of belonging, a shared identity and the sense of responsibility towards other members of that community regardless of a specific territory and whether there is a contract or not. I am basing my explanation here on Buzans definition of both terminologies (Buzan 2004).

judgement (Denny 1975, 44). Al-Razi mentions Qaffals[7] (d. 976) definition of *umma* in his *tafsīr* as the community or group of people that are united over the same thing and emulate of one another. He argues then that the word *umma* is derived from *al-iʾtimām* which can be translated as Consensus (Al-Razi 1981, 11). It noticeable at this point that there is no definite factor of unity as religion, descendant or language for instance. Several themes have been present in the usage of the term *umma* in the Mekkan period. Some themes were pointed out in the Mekkan period, starting with the most general using of the term which is the oneness of the *umma* (10:19, 11:118, 21:92, 23:52, 42:8, 43:33, 16:93) (Decasa 1999; Denny 1975; Al-Ahsan 1986). The theme of the Oneness of all communities implies a certain human unity (43:33) (Decasa 1999, 15-16); (Denny 1975, 45-48). This motif also indicates a moral-religious dimension of that term, that will become clearer and stronger in the Medinan period, as the foundation of the term is not material but spiritual (faith). Moreover, the term *umma* occurred in relation to a fixed term and time for judgement (7:34, 7:38, 27:83) as well as in the context of a Messenger that was sent to each *umma* (35:24, 53:42 and 10:47) to guide them to the right path. These Messengers will appear on the Day of Judgement as witnesses (28:75, 16:84 and 16:89). Each *umma* is brought to Judgement day (27:83) and many of them are going to be in hell (7:38) whereas only a few within the other *umam* will follow Gods guidance through his messenger (16:36). While the early Mekkan verses address the term in a rather general sense, the *umma* develops into several specific religious communities (*Ahl al-kitāb)* towards the end of the Mekkan period. A last appearance of the *umma* is in relation to the prophet Abraham as the embodiment of a whole community.

[7] A leading early Shafiʿi jurist credited with spreading the Shafiʿi school in Transoxania. See the Oxford International Encyclopedia of Legal History.

The historical context of Mecca appears as following. While Mecca developed into the heart of trading in western and central Arabia, the Arab tribe called Quraysh from which the prophet Muhammad stems, gained an eminently respectable role in the region (Hodgson 1974, 154). Politically they were organized based on Bedouin principles: "Quraysh of Mecca were playing a role not only influential but politically and religiously unique among them. In contrast to the precarious pyramiding of tribal agglomerations with a king-like chieftain at the top, they had been able to base a reasonably effective political order on the solidarity of one tribe, and its prestige." (Hodgson 1974, 157). With the emergence of Islam and the prophet's mission in a time where there was a moral decline within the Arab society, vulnerable people as the slaves or tribeless persons were among the first to follow the prophet and convert. Islam offered them a sense of belonging and the possibility to return to moral principles that could restore their security and aim on a more just order within the society (Hodgson 1974, 166-167). It is important to note at this point that the Quran mentioned good deeds, moral behavior in this context as *maʿrūf* which translated means the known. It is an indication to specific moral ideals that are already known by the vast majority of people (Hodgson 1974, 163). It becomes clear that the seeds for a new community have been planted but as the prophet was confronted with enormous resistance in Mekka it was not possible at that time to form a new well-established Muslim community. Reasons for the resistance could possibly have to do with the realization of the Quraysh tribe that accepting Islam would weaken their authority in the region and grant the prophet political authority (Hodgson 1974, 169-171).

2.2.2 Umma in the Medinan Verses

With the beginning of the Medinan period, the term *umma* is predominantly being used as a synonym for religious community. The Medinan verses illustrate a clear development of the concept of *umma* in the Qurʾan and reflect the emergence of a Muslim *umma* in Medina lead by the prophet: "To Muḥammad, the move to Medina was not merely an escape from an untenable immediate position in Mecca. It was an opportunity to build a new order of social life such as the development of his faith had more and more obviously demanded" (Hodgson 1974, 172). A theme that is very predominant in this period is the idea of an *muslim umma* (this does not mean that *umma* is only related to Muslims in that period) in which the Qurʾan explicitly addresses the *umma* of prophet Muhammad (2:128, 2:143, 3:104, 3:110). This study will trace the development within three dimensions. Firstly, the religious dimension which indicates the *umma* as a specific religious community. In the Qurʾan it has been spelled out explicitly that Islam in principle is against any form of racism when saying that (49:13):

"O mankind, indeed, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."

This verse introduces an alternative way of evaluating a person, namely on the basis of *taqwā* which can be translated as righteous behaviour and piety. It subsequently stresses another time the importance of morality in relation to mankind and the *umma*. Nevertheless, the Qurʾan doesn't claim that whole mankind is one community (5:48) but rather that God has decided to create people in different tribes and nations, religion and ethnic groups. Thus, it becomes clear from the verses in the Qurʾan and *saḥīfat madīna* (Constitution of Medina) that this term is not restricted to a Muslim community but rather to all religious

communities (Denny 1977, 39.42). In contrast to the parochial consciousness that is defended by the idea of the modern nation-state and its consequent process of homogenising a community (a form of exclusion) (see Sayyid 2014, 100-104), there is a translocal and perhaps global aspiration that is particular to the qurʾanic concept of *umma* as can be seen in the various verses in the Qurʾan and its themes as *al-tawhid, rahmatan lil-alamain and hijra* (Widhiyoga 2017, 55-63). Above that it is important to notice that as the Qurʾan is identifying its people by faith (Jewish *umma*, Christian *umma* etc.) yet this does not seem to be a marker for exclusion but rather one of religious pluralism in which different communities can live alongside the Muslim community as long as there is a just order (see Constitution of Medina). In order to actualise this trans-local aspiration, the political notion as well as the moral notion is necessary. Moreover, the Medinan verses refer to the original one religious' community of whole humankind (2:213) and to Abraham's *umma* as the community, which has gained its reward (2:134, 2:141) (Decasa 1999, 17-18).

Moving to the second dimension, namely the moral dimension that intensified in revealed verses as 3:104, 3:110 or 3:113. The verses that invite the *umma* to take moral responsibility as for instance through the Commanding Right, Forbidding Wrong principles or the verse that describes the community as a *umma qāʾima* (just community) (3:113). It is crucial to notice that the Qurʾan is addressing the importance of moral commitment, which the Muslim Jurist Khaled Abou Fadl also stresses in his article about Islam and Human Rights (Abou Fadl 2002, 27-40). He argues that Moral commitment can be seen as a more powerful force that develops a sense of duty within the Human being. This duty is premised on a sense of responsibility but beyond that it is based on the steadfast respect towards one's own (religious) moral law, which is in the case of the *umma* based on the divine law

(Abou Fadl 2002, 30-40); (Johnson 2018). This notion of morality that is connected with the concept of *umma* is crucial I would argue, as it questions the effectuality of contemporary laws as for instance Refugee laws, and conventions without developing a well-founded awareness about their ethical and moral importance in the first place. Yet this moral obligation of guiding the community seems to be directed towards a specific group within the *umma* as some exegetes believe (3:104): "Let there be among you a community calling to the good, enjoining right, and forbidding wrong. It is they who shall prosper". Nevertheless, the idea of moral obligation and moral commitment is to a large extent interconnected with other dimensions of the concept of *umma* that start to emerge in the Medinan period as the political dimension. After the Prophets *hijra* to Medina there was a necessity of developing a system on how these different communities can live together peacefully and under a just and morally conscious order. A Muslim community that aspires a moral consciousness is therefore necessary and unescapable in order to develop a political[8] community that decides on these moral commitments and obligations which the community shall abide by. Some *mufassirūn* have therefore considered ʿulamaʾ (religious scholars) the specific group that God addresses when talking about a group within the *umma* that enjoins good deeds and forbids bad deeds (Nasr 2015); (Al-Isfahani 2009); (Al-Razi 1981, Vol.8, 181-185). As Islam is aiming at creating a community based on justice as can be seen in many examples in the Qurʾan as 2:143, there is a necessity of creating a system for how to organise this community and how to understand and abide by the Divine Law in order to achieve a just and morally conscious society. Many concepts in the Qurʾan

[8] Political here signifies a way of controlling the new arising conflicts as well as overcoming the new emerging differences. It can be seen as marking a shift from the organic community (that was presented in the Mekkan verses) to a social society that had to be established in order to manage these differences. Salman Sayyid argues: "the political is a means of mastering difference but at the same time its condition of possibility is difference itself". See Sayyid, Salman. Recalling the Caliphate. Decolonisation and World Order. London: C.Hurst and Co., 2014 ,18-20.

offer a basis for this notion as the concept of *hijra*, the concept of *amān* and the concept of *umma* which connects these other concepts with each other: “For Islam, community implies above all a human collectively held together by religious bonds that are themselves the foundation for social, juridical, political, economic, and ethical links between its members.” (Nasr 2002, 160-161)

In the chapter of al-Baqara verse 128 *umma* is for the first time related directly and exclusively to Muslims: *umma muslima* which Decasa, Denny and Al-Razi all define as a religious community that surrenders to God. Denny stresses here that there is another transformation at that point. *umma* becomes a term that is exclusively used for Muslim communities (Denny 1975). In addition to that, the different traditions (religions) are referred to as each being an *umma* by itself. For instance, in the Constitution of Medina the People of the Book (Jews & Christians) are mentioned as *umam*. The constitution of Medina specifically states that *umma* includes Jews and Muslims in Article Number 25: "The Jews of Banu ʿAwf are a community (*umma)* along with the believers. To the Jews their Religion and to the Muslims their Religion." (Denny 1977, 41). Furthermore, according to the Quran also some groups of the people of the Book are an *umma* (7:159, 7:160, 7:164). Each of these *umam* has its own rites and divine law (22:34, 22:67, and 5:48) which again emphasizes the political notion of the concept. When the Qurʾan talks about the Muslim *umma*, there is a special task that is ascribed to them; they are described as 1) *umma waṣaṭ* (middle-community) (2:143) and 2) *khairu ummatin* (the best community) (3:110) that invites people to do good deeds and discourages them from doing wrong (5:48) (Decasa 2011, 17-18). A practical example for the political dimension of the *umma* could be the Constitution of Medina which illustrates the Prophets implementation of the concept of *umma* as a tool for political organization. The *umma* in Medina was

founded on the basis of brotherhood, equality and social justice. It indicated a crucial transformation, taking place during that time. The idea of a community was transformed from a tribal-lead "political" organization to a supra-tribal community lead by a common constitution (Widhiyoga, 2017, 50-56).

Thus a development in the meaning of *umma* can be traced from the Mekkan period and its revelations where *umma* simply indicates to the various communities that God has created, to several religious communities that are following the right path (2:143, 5:66) to a particularly Muslim community that has unique characteristics and shall be the governing community (2:128, 2:143, 3:104, 3:110, 5:48). As it becomes clear through the previous subchapters the concept of *umma* developed in a full-fledged manner in the Medinan period and thus the verses that will be examined in this study are Medinan verses that the chosen exegetes have written extensively on and that are considered important for tracing the development of the three dimension, namely the religious, moral and the political:

1) 2:128 *umma muslima*
2) 2:143 *umma waṣaṭa*
3) 3:104 *umma yadʿūna ila al-Khair wa yaʾmurūna bil-Maʿrūf wa yanhawna ʿan al-Munkar*

2.3 A short Introduction to Classical Tafsīr

Before entering the field of Qurʾan-Commentaries and their interpretation of the term *umma* in the Qurʾan, it is necessary to highlight the specificities and the constraints of the *Tafsīr*-genre. In contrast to other Islamic sciences, Qurʾan commentaries never had specific rules or a certain methodology on which all scholars unanimously agreed upon, with which one can interpret the Qurʾan (Saleh 2005, 2908-2918). The basic separation found in the

Tafsīr-genre is that between *al-tafsīr bi-l-maʾthūr* (exegesis based on the tradition) and *al-tafsīr bi-l-raʾī* (exegesis based on the intellect). The debate between Tradition vs. Reason has been ongoing since the classical Islamic period and is still important in contemporary Qurʾanic Studies (Saleh 2005, 2908-2918). There are different methods to categorise *Tafsīr*-works. In the Encyclopaedia of Qurʾan, *Tafsīr*-works have been categorised under the following subcategories: Traditionist exegesis, linguistic exegesis, exegesis based on dialectical theology (*kalāmī* exegesis), juridical exegesis, mystical exegesis and Shiite exegesis (*bāṭini*). According to Saleh, there are three categories of *Tafsīr*-works 1) encyclopedic commentaries (*mutawallāt al-tafsīr*), 2) madrasah style (*al-mukhtasarāt*) and 3) glosses (*ḥashiyya*) (Saleh 2005, 2908-2918); (Rippin 2012).

Classical Tafsir-Works tend to follow a particular structure. They often start by providing interpretation of the Qurʾanic text which is either structured by *tartīb al-musḥaf* or *tartīb al-nuzūl*. There were three main ways of doing so, either word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase, or verse-by-verse. This structure has only started to change in the modern Period where new genres have emerged and become relatively popular (Rippin 2012). Andrew Rippin has provided a categorisation for the development of the *Tafsīr*-genre in four periods: formative, classical, mature and contemporary (Rippin 2012). This Thesis will focus on the classical and contemporary period, arguing that the classical works have already covered a huge amount of the *tafāsīr* in the formative period (see also on this point Saleh 2005). For the Modern and contemporary time there are new methodologies that have appeared as, thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawdūʿī*), rational exegesis and others. Many Islamicate as well as Western Scholars have categorised them in various ways. Saleh has divided the modern Tafsir in four categories: the modernizing, the Salafi, the classical and the fundamentalist trend. In addition to those, there are the categories of contextualist, feminist and thematic,

socio-political and scientific approach (Saeed 2008, 139). Different *mufassiūn* also have different approaches, concerns and goals which will still shape the way in how they frame their Qurʾan-commentaries. These differences of emphases are reflected in the way these *mufassirūn* stress elements such as the historical, the linguistic, the juridical and others. This thesis follows the categorisation of the Encyclopaedia of Qur'an, even as it recognizes that scholars often go beyond those categories and combine in their work many different approaches. I have chosen one representative of each category in order to examine the concept of *umma* in the Qurʾan as well as the possible continuities and discontinuities in the interpretation of its meaning by different approaches.

The Questions that will guide my analysis in this chapter are 1) How much diversity exists in the way classical scholars have approached the *umma* in the chosen verses (2:128; 2:143; 3:104) and how do these approaches differ from those that are made by modern Muslim exegetes? 2) Which of the aforementioned categories, religious, political or moral is emphasised by the exegetes in the mentioned verses and what are the justifications for the shifting emphasis?

2.3.1 Pre-modern exegesis

In this section I first present the authors I use as representative of different modes of exegesis in the pre-modern period and then discuss the way they interpret the key Qurʾanic verses related to the *umma*.

1. Traditionist exegesis: Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d.310/923)[9]

Al-Tabari is known to be the first Sunni Asharite exegete that has developed an exegetical corpus *Jamiʿ al-Bayan ʿan Taʾwil al-Qurʾan* (The Sum of Clarity concerning the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qurʾan) based upon traditions that clearly sums up the interpretation that was given to each verse up unto his time and is thus regarded by many Scholars in the field as an encyclopaedic commentary (*mutawallāt al-tafsīr*). He is therefore also often regarded as a Compiler (he was ensuring the validity of the chains of transmission), which is however limiting himself to the Sunni Tradition (he did not include Shiite Exegesis). His commentary includes, legal, linguistic as well as poetic material which makes his Qurʾan Commentary rich with information and suitable for exploring the concept of *umma*.

2. Exegesis based upon *kalāmi* approach/ theological exegesis: Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d.606/1210)[10]

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[9] See Khalidi, Tarif. "Al-Ṭabarī: An Introduction." *In Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*. Edited by Hugh Kennedy, 1–10. Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 15. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 2008.;
Rosenthal, Franz. *The History of al-Ṭabarī.* Vol. 1, *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*. Albany State University of New York Press, 1989.
Afaki, Abdul Rahim. "Multi-Subjectivism and Quasi-Objectivism in Tabari's Qurʾanic Hermeneutics." *Journal of Shiʿa Islamic Studies* 2.3 (Summer 2009): 285–305.;
Shah, Mustafa. "Al-Ṭabarī and the Dynamics of Tafsīr: Theological Dimensions of a Legacy." *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 15.2 (2013): 83–139.

[10] See Dughaym, Samih. *Mawsu'at mustalahat Fakhr al-Din al-Razi*. Beirut: Maktabat Lubnan, 2000.
Griffel, Frank. "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi." In *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*. Vol. 2, Philosophy between 500 and 1500. Edited by Henrik Lagerlund, 665–672. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2011.
Shihadeh, Ayman. The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006.
al-Zarkan, Muhammad Salih. *Fakhr al-Din al-Razi wa-ara'uhu al-kalamiyya wa-al-falsafiyya*. Cairo: Dar al-Fikr,c. 1963.
Jaffer, Tariq. *Razi: Master of Qur'anic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Al-Razi, the Shafite Asharite Exegete has written the extensive Qurʾan commentary *Mafatih al-Ghayb* that occasionally goes beyond the tradition-based approach of the Asharites. He has developed the Islamic scholastic theology (*kalām*) and although he was following the Asharite school he has incorporated elements of philosophy and of the Mutazilite School into his Qurʾan interpretation, while still remaining within the guidelines of dialectical theology. Al-Razi's combination of Rationalism and Revelation is a key characteristic for why he is a reasonable choice for understanding the concept of *umma*.

3. Legal/juridical exegesis: Abu ʿAbullah al-Qurtubi (d.671/ 1272)[11]

Although legal exegesis was included in many other comprehensive Qurʾan commentaries it is important to have a Qurʾan commentary that introduces a clear legal analysis of the verses of the Qurʾan. It necessarily also included historical and grammatical analysis in order to derive the legal meaning. Al-Qurtubi the renowned Andalusian Malikite scholar and Jurist is one of the representatives of this methodology. His *Tafsīr* contains various legal interpretations and in addition to that his commentary offers many quotations from earlier commentaries and thus allows for a wide range of opinions on the chosen verses.

4. Shiite exegesis: Abou Jaʿfar al-Tusi (d.460/1067)[12]

[11] See Delfina Serrano Ruano, "al-Qurṭubī", in: Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān, General Editor: Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Georgetown University, Washington DC. Consulted online on 01 April 2019 <http://0-dx.doi.org.library.qnl.qa/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_050504

[12] See Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali, "al-Ṭūsī", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 01 April 2019 http://0-dx.doi.org.library.qnl.qa/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7653; S.A. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, Chicago-London 1984, 32-65

Al-Tusi was one of the greatest Shiʿi and Muʿtazilite Exegetes of his time. His commentary *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qurʾan* exhibits a distinct kinship with accepted Sunnite exegetical writings, including an interest in their variant readings and grammatical or philological explanations. In addition to that he also attained the position of a Shiʿi *faqīh*, consequently his commentary will include legal derivations. One must, however, also take into account their Muʿtazilite outlook.

2:128 "*umma* Muslima"

رَبَّنَا وَٱجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَآ أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَآ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلتَّوَّابُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ

Translation:

And, our Lord, make us submit unto Thee, and from our progeny a **community** submitting unto Thee, and show us our rites, and relent unto us. Truly Thou art the Relenting, the Merciful.

The aforementioned verse marks the first time in which the term *umma* appears to address a Muslim community in the form of an invocation (*duʿāʾ*) offered by the prophet Abraham and his son Ismael. According to Al-Razi, Al-Tabari and other Scholars, it marks a crucial shift in the development of the concept of the *umma* as this is the first time that the Qurʾan mentions the Muslim *umma* explicitly out in between the other existing religious communities (Christian and Jewish). Early Muslim exegetes, such as Muqatil Bin Sulaiman (d.767) have commented on this verse succinctly by stating that the verse urges Muslims to stay loyal towards God and learn the rituals that God has taught them (Bin Sulaiman 2002, Vol.1, 139); (Afsaruddin 2007, 2-9). Al-Tabari's *Tafsīr* is more detailed and explains that this verse is set in the context of the prophet Ibrahim and Ismail who are asking God to make them submit to his command/wishes. Moreover, he explains that the word Islam

is defined as submission to God only and loyalty towards Him (Al-Tabari 1994, Vol.1, 386-387). The term *muslim* is derived from the root *istaslama* and means submitting (to God). In contrast to al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi interprets the term Muslim here as alluding to faith and as a sign of evidence and highlights that although every prophet prayed for himself and his community the prophet Ibrahim was the first one that prayed for another community beyond his own (Al-Qurtubi 2006, Vol.2, 396-402). This argument indicates a first notion of translocality in the meaning of *umma*. During the time of the prophet, the tribe of Quraysh was already involved in translocal activities in the trade sector, yet this translocality was limited to the economic sector, whereas this interpretation suggests a religious translocality or in other words a shared collective religious imagination (Hodgson 1974, 154); (Widhiyoga 2017, 83).

"*Rabana wa ijʿalna muslimīn laka*" Al-Razi argues here that there are two ways to understand the word Islam, either it means Religion (*dīn*) and conviction (*iʿtiqād*) or it means submission (*islām*) and thus obedience to God. Al-Tusi explains that there is no difference between Iman and Islam and criticizes those, Asharites like Al-Razi and Al-Tabari, who argue that there is a difference between both terminologies (Al-Razi 1981, Vol.4, 62-74); (Al-Tusi n.d., 493-499). In the next part of the verse "*wa min dhuriyyatina umma muslima laka*" the focus is on *wa min* which means not all descendants are Muslims and thus part of the *umma*. Because God told the prophet that there is a part of his descendants that will not follow the right path but fall into corruption and Injustice behaviour (Al-Tabari 1994, Vol.1, 386-387); (Al-Razi 1981, Vol.4, 62-74); (Al-Qurtubi 2006, 397-399); (Al-Tusi n.d., 493-499). Some Scholars, as al-Tusi, according to al-Tabari believe that perhaps this particular group of descendants that the Quran addresses are Arabs. Al-Tabari however disagrees with this interpretation as he argues that it's a clear

verse (*ẓāhir*) that does not claim only Arabs to be Muslim as an example he explains that from Ibrahim's children were Arabs as well as non-Arabs. Al-Razi confirms al-Tabari's statement by arguing that that God has guided them by telling them that not all of their offspring will follow Islam. In this verse the term *umma* has been dominantly defined as community with religious, particularly Islamic affiliation. Al-Tabari for instance argues that *umma* in this context can be defined as *al-jamāʿa min al-nās* (a group of people), that is following the righteous path (7:156) (Al-Tabari 1994, Vol.1, 386-387). It is important to notice here that he defines it in this general manner in order to highlight that it is not limited to the Arab Muslims but could allude to a translocal aspiration of who belongs to the *umma*. Al-Razi defines *umma* here as the community that follows the prophet Muhamad and justifies this argument on the basis of the next verse (2: 129) that states that *wa ibʿath fīhum rasūlan minhum*. Thus, his definition explicitly addresses only the Muslim *umma*, a community that follows Islam and worships one God only. Lastly, in al-Qurtubi's Quran Commentary *umma* is defined as a social group. But it can refer to a single person as well as for instance in the verse "Ibrahim was a community in himself, obedient to Allah" (Al-Qurtubi 2006, 397).

All aforementioned *mufassirūn* engage in a discussion on the theological meaning of the *umma* and unanimously agree upon the idea that *umma* means community, the differences arise when they try to define who belongs to that *umma*. There are two strands, those exegetes that follow the tribal structures and argue thereby that by *umma* the Qurʾan meant only Arabs, and those exegetes that have interpreted the meaning of *umma* in a way that transcends the boundaries that existed between tribal-affiliations at that historical moment and included anyone who embraces Islam and follows the prophet. At this point the exegetes do not enter a discussion or offer a contribution on the role, obligations or vision

of that *umma*, thus the religious dimension is emphasized the most. Nevertheless, al-Tusi indicates a certain responsibility that the *umma* has in terms of creating a practicing Muslim society. He argues that Islam exists but there is a need to make people Muslims in terms of the actual practice (Al-Tusi n.d., 493-499).

2:143 "*umma wasaṭ*"

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّن يَنقَلِبُ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ ۚ وَإِن كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Translation:

Thus, did We make you a middle **community**, that you may be witnesses for mankind and that the Messenger may be a witness for you. And We only appointed the qiblah that you had been following to know those who follow the Messenger from those who turn back on their heels, and it was indeed difficult, save for those whom God guided. But God would not let your belief be in vain. Truly God is Kind and Merciful unto mankind.

The emphasis in the Qurʾan on the exclusively Muslim *umma* as aforementioned, is connected with responsibilities that this *umma* has to bear. With the change of the *qibla* that is mentioned in the verses before (2:140-143) there is a central change in which the Muslim *umma* develops into a distinct religious community that is clearly separated from the Jewish and Christian community in terms of obligations and responsibilities, hence a moral dimension of the concept becomes apparent (Denny 1975, 68). There are two dimensions of interest in this verse. The first is the attribute *wasaṭ* that is ascribed to the *umma* and the second dimension is the role of the *umma* as witnesses over mankind. How

is *wasaṭ* defined by the aforementioned exegetes and how does the concept of *wasaṭ* (moderation/justice) relate to the *umma* and its mission?

Starting with the first dimension, early exegetes from the late seventh until early tenth century, as Muqatil Bin Sulaiman and al-Sanʿani (d.827), have principally understood the *umma waṣaṭa* as a just and moderate community (Afsaruddin 2007, 2-9). In spite of the fact that all Muslim exegetes unanimously agree upon defining *wasaṭ* as just and moderate, with the beginning of the early tenth century a development of greater emphasis around the concept of *umma waṣaṭa* has developed and is reflected by the writings of al-Tabari and al-Razi and al-Tusi (Al-Razi 1862, 106-120); (Al-Tusi n.d., Vol.2, 5-15); (Al-Tabari 1994, Vol.1, 412-419). The idea of justice and moderation that is described by the selected exegetes seems to lean on Greek conceptualisation of Justice, in which justice constitutes two meanings. First Justice as a moral disposition that guides and leads the individual as well as the society to act in a just way or request for a just order, hence "justice according to the authoritative rule" (Chroust 1942, 129-131). The second meaning is justice as equality, which is "concerned with the proportionate ratio of commensurable goods" or in other words, which is the midway between to extremes (Chroust 1942, 129-131). Al-Tabari argues that *umma wasaṭ* indicates that God has chosen the community that follows the prophet Muhammad as the best and the most moderate out of the other religious groups. *wasaṭ* is furthermore, used by the Arabs differently meaning the most preferable or the best. The term *wasaṭ* is defined in this context as *al-juzʾ aladhi bayna al-ṭarfayn* which translated means the part/element that is positioned between two extremes. What he implies here is that the middle between two extremes is related to a theological standpoint not necessarily to political positions, hence Muslims are *al-wasaṭ* between the Christians and the Jewish (Al-Tabari 1994, Vol.1, 412-419). Yet, it would be interesting to examine if this meaning

can be translated into the political context of parties (right-wing, left-wing and moderate middle) or if its intended meaning is restricted, as all early and classical exegetes indicate, to the theological dimension. Subsequently, he defines the *umma* as *hiyya al-qarn min al-nās wal-ṣinf minhum wa ghairahum* which means a generation of people, a group of different people, from within their own community as well as outside. As stated, before al-Razi spends more time in defining *umma wasaṭ*. He mentions four aspects in his tafsir about *umma waṣaṭ*: 1- Middle is the *haqiqa* (essence) in distance between the two extremities, therefore it is superior (*fādil*) and balanced (*muʿtadal*) compared to the two extremities (*ṭarafayn*) which are excessive. 2- Justice as *ʿadl* is the middle because it does not lean towards one of the extremities. 3- *Wasaṭ* needs to be justice because *wasaṭ* as best belongs only to the prophet. And the last one 4- "the best or the most just of the spots of a thing is its middle spot because its judgement in relation to all its parts must be on the strength of equality and liberation"(Al-Razi 1862, 106-112); (Decasa 1999, 208-218).

Al-Razi has thus three main definitions of *umma wasaṭ*. The first one is that *wasaṭ* means just or justice because it is the essence/ truth in the distance between the two extremities without tending to any side and its judgement in relation to its members is based on moderation. The second point he makes is *wasaṭ* as justice is what the Muslim community is in itself. Thus, an *umma wasaṭ* is a community where justice reigns among its members. And the last point that he draws upon is that the Muslim community in relation to other communities is seen as the moderate one in the sense of middle or moderate in Religion (*dīn*) (Al-Razi 1862, 106-112); (Decasa 1999, 208-218).

What is missing in al-Razi's *tafsīr* but indicated in a more implicit manner in al-Zamakhshari's is that this attribution of *umma wasaṭ*, middle or well-balanced is something

that has to be protected and maintained by the *umma*, therefore the *umma* has the duty to constantly maintain its being as an *umma wasaṭ* otherwise it can slowly turn into a peripheral issue according to al-Zamakhshari (Al-Zamakhshari 2009, 100). Al-Razi's view is tradition-based in contrast to al-Zamakhshari's (d.1144) view which is relying more on a reason-based inquiry. The argument for why the *umma* is chosen as the moderate is explained by Al-Razi by stating that in the same manner that God has guided Muslims towards a new *qibla*, he has made them an *umma wasaṭ* to prove their singularity. Whereas al-Zamakhshari believes that that God's Will is always what is good, hence the *umma wasaṭ* is the best, basing his reasoning on the Muʿtazilite idea of ethical rationalism (Al-Zamakhshari 2009,100); (Fakhry 1991, 41-44). The position that al-Razi adopts that whether guidance or misguidance both are Gods Will (*Al-hidāya wal iḍlāl min Allah taʿāla*) reflects the traditional Ashʿarite position of ethical voluntarism (Al-Razi 1862, 106-112); (Fakhry 1991, 44-48). The consequence thus is that *wasaṭ* as a distinctive character of the Muslim community is not deserved nor chosen by the community but rather it is God's creation.

Al-Qurtubi, who is approaching the verse from an *fiqhi*-perspective argues that as the Kaʿba is the middle of the earth from the perspective of Muslims God has made the Muslim community a middlemost community that is inferior to Prophets but superior to other communities. Thus, he concludes that the moderate *umma* is the intermediary between the prophets and other communities while the prophets are the intermediary between God and Muslims (Bewley 2003, 384-385); (Al-Qurtubi 2006, Vol.2, 435-441). Al-Tusi argues that *umma wasaṭ* addresses the community of followers of the prophet Muhammad explicitly. His interpretation of this verse goes in line with all of the previously mentioned *mufassirūn*; he defines *wasaṭ* here as justice. In light of the second part of the verse that states "that you

may be witnesses to mankind (…)" indicates that everyone from within the *umma* is a witness and proof (*hujja)* for the rest of mankind. In his *tafsīr* of this verse he mentions an interesting saying by Zuhair, who says "*hum wasaṭ yurḍā al-Anʿām bi-hukmihum idha nazilat iḥda al-layālī bi-muʿẓam*" which can be translated as following "The Muslim community is the mediating one, as people accept their governance, when any bad incident occurs.". This part indicates the first implicit invocation of the *umma's* attribution of moderation in relation to a political dimension of governing a community and further justifies its moderation and attribution as the best *umma* by arguing that people and different communities accept their role as the governing figure and seek refuge with them (Al-Tusi n.d. Vol.2, 5-15).

The second dimension in this verse that affirms the position of the moderate *umma* as witnesses over mankind is seen by the *fiqhī* exegete al-Qurtubi as a justification for the *fiqhī* principle of *ijmāʿ* as he states that "this *āyat* also contains evidence for the soundness of the consensus of the community and the obligation to judge by it because they have been considered just enough to testify against all mankind." (Bewley 2003, 384-385). The question that remains after approaching his interpretation is who does he mean when he asserts that the *umma* is considered just enough? Similarly, al-Tusi argues that the *Aya* is a proof for *ijmāʿ* because God attributed the *umma* with justice and moderation. Now he argues that because they are just, it is not possible to reject their role as witness. This would however mean that every member of the *umma* is just which is not realistic according him (Al-Tusi n.d. Vol.2, 5-15). Thus, he concludes that the community of moderate/just believers does not address the whole Muslim *umma,* but a specific group with the ability to uphold their just character, namely the infallible imams from descent of the prophet Muhammad (as long as they do not practice any *kabāʾir*). As this part of the verse affirms

a validity of *ijmāʿ* and hence constitutes a ruling (*ḥukm)* it ascribes an authority to the *umma* although there is no clarification to which extent this authority is (Al-Tusi n.d. Vol.2, 5-15).

3:104 "commanding right and forbidding wrong"

وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

Translation:

Let there be among you a **community** calling to the good, enjoining right, and forbidding wrong. It is they who shall prosper.

The *umma Muslima* which is characterised as an *umma wasaṭa* is further characterised in the above mentioned verse which introduces the reader to the Principle of enjoining right and forbidding wrong and highlights the appearance of a moral community that ought to develop a moral consciousness through which it can actualise the aforementioned principle and not only abide by the divine law but beyond that enforce its implementation within the existing community. Accordingly, the principle of enjoining right and forbidding wrong appears repeatedly in the Medinan verses vv. 110, 114; 7:157; 9:71, 112; 22:41; 31:17 (Nasr 2015, 372-377). While *maʿrūf* is predominantly seen as a good deed that is always known and that is divided between two types, namely obligatory deed and permissible deed, *munkar* is defined as the bad deed which is unconditionally mandatory to be forbidden. On the other hand, the deeds that are obligatory have to be commanded and those that are permissible can but do not have to be commanded (Al-Tusi n.d., Vol.2, 548); (Nasr 2015, 372-377). Al-Tabari argues that with this verse God wants to address the believers (*muʾminūn)* that the *umma* which he defines here as community shall enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong to the people. He further argues that *yadʿuna ila al-khayr* in this

context means invite the people to Islam and its divine law which consequently means that the principle is directed towards non-Muslims. Enjoining right according to him signifies following Gods prophet Muhammad and his religion. *Yanhawna ʿan al-munkar* alludes according to him to *kufr* hence preventing kufr becomes obligatory. If they manage to do so they will be considered of the *mufliḥūn* (successful). Al-Razi interprets that God blames the unbelievers for two reasons: for being an unbeliever and the second reason for encouraging others to become unbelievers. That is important in order to understand the following verse where he goes on to explain that this is why he orders the Muslims to be pious and follow God and about the principle he says that God commands them to make effort in encouraging people to follow his path just as the unbeliever are trying to do the opposite (Al-Razi 1981, Vol.8, 181-191).

According to Al-Tabari, God restricts the application of this principle to a group of Muslims, thus according to him it is not obligatory for everyone. Al-Qurtubis interpretation is in line with al-Tabaris, he argues that the *min* alludes to the fact that not just anyone can practice the principle of enjoining right and forbidding wrong. It has to be done by the *ʿulamāʾ* as clearly indicated by him. Many other Scholars support this interpretation as they are convinced that a less knowledgeable person cannot bear the responsibility of enjoying good and forbidding evil (Nasr 2015, 372-377). He states further that the principle of enjoining right and forbidding wrong is a principle that is limited to *farḍ kifāya*. Ibn Zubair has added a part to this principle of enjoining right and forbidding wrong which says and 'they ask help from God due to what they are going through'. Al-Qurtubi argues that there was a mistake in the transmission of this verse as it is not found in the Quran thus it is just an explanation of the verse. Nevertheless, Al-Razi disagrees with them and argues instead that this verse is not *fard kifāya*, but rather addressing the whole *umma*. He justifies his

argument by alluding to the verse 110 of Surat Al-ʿImran. The second reason he gives is the hadith that states that everyone should try to invite people to enjoin good and forbid wrong either by action, by speech or at least by heart. He argues thus, that the word *min* is just an instrument of *tabyīn* instead of *tabʿīḍ* clarification/emphasis instead of *fard kifāya*. Lastly al-Tusi explains that *umma* linguistically has five categories 1) group/ community (*al-jamāʿa*), 2) Elevation (*al-qāmma*), 3) righteousness (al-*istiqāmma*), 4) blessing (*al-niʿma*) and 5) ideal (*al-qudwa*) These 5 categories originate from one purpose (*maqṣad)* which according to him is derived from the term *umma* and the verb ʾ*amma* itself which means to lead, to guide. In terms of the first category he argues that *umma* is a group of people that gather for one common purpose. He explains further that the category of *umma* as an Ideal relates to the group of people that are united by one purpose and emulate from one another or from a prophet (e.g. Ibrahim was an *umma*). The category of *umma* as a blessing, he explains by arguing that this group of people are striving for a higher objective and thus they are blessed. *Umma* as an Elevation is explained as this group of people is continuously rising in order to reach their higher objective. He thereby comes to the conclusion that the community is named *umma* and not *milla* because of their unity on the basis of one similar intention, whichever that may be (Al-Qurtubi 2006, Vol.5, 252-264).

Pre-modern Muslim Scholars unanimously agree upon the idea that Commanding right and forbidding wrong is obligatory and most of the Scholars argue that it is *fard kifāya* (obligatory for some) (Al-Tabari 1994, Vol.2, 300-305); (Al-Razi 1981, Vol.8, 181-191); (Cook 2001, 19-20). Nevertheless, we are left with a number of unanswered questions that the selected exegetes do not tackle. If the principle of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong is a collective duty that should be performed by the whole Muslim *umma* or by a

part of the Muslim *umma* (i.e. Scholars), how is this performance organised, in what broader political system can a religio-moral concept function properly?

2.4 A short introduction to Contemporary/Modern Tafsir:

Within the genre of Qurʾan exegesis there is a broad current of unbroken tradition continuing to this day where Muslims continue to produce Qurʾan Commentaries in the classical form (Taji Farouki 2004, 323). Yet, Modern and Contemporary Tafsir works are generally regarded as a category on its own because although the modern *mufassirūn* predominantly build upon classical exegetical works such as Al-Razi's, Al-Tabari's and Ibn-Kathir's (d. 774 /1373), a number of innovations have taken place in the modern period. Thus, it can be argued that there is a continuity in terms of the transmission of classical Qurʾan interpretations, but in addition to that there is also a growing critique towards those classical commentaries and an emergence of new ideas about the potential intended meaning of the Qurʾanic verses. The modern *mufassirūn* are generally occupied with questions that arise from the political, social and cultural context that they are coming from and indicate those influences more explicitly in their Qurʾan-Commentaries than the Classical Scholars did. As this is the case, the questions that modern exegetes would engage with are predominantly occupied with the compatibility of the Qurʾan and its world view with modernity, science and technology (Wielandt n.d.).

The choice of Modern exegetes is based on an attempt to offer a wide spectrum of *mufassirūn* with different approaches that illustrate the transformations that the concept of *umma* has undergone from the end of 19th / Beginning of 20th Century onwards.

1. Muhammad ʿʿ*Abduh* (d.1905)/ Rashid Rida (d.1935) - essentially rationalistic approach to the exegesis of the Qurʾan, (Neo-Mutazilite)[13]

Muhammad ʿAbduh is an important figure in modern Islamic thought; He was an activist and reformer that advocated for the Islamic revival in Egypt; his disciple Rashid Rida (d.1935) a pan-Islamist thinker and Muslim reformer has written an influential *Tafsīr al-Manar* in which he presents ʿAbduh's Qurʾan exegesis and adds to it his own commentary. Situated in Egypt under British occupation and an emerging consciousness about the Egyptian identity (see Abu Lughod 1963, 19), ʿAbduh stresses the necessity of the direct contact with Qurʾan and the need for a practical exploration of the Qurʾan for the common people in contrast to the pre-modern qurʾanic commentaries that were primarily written by Theologians for the Intellectual class or learned religious folk (*ʿulamāʾ*). This phenomenon arguably created a gap within the society between the average person and the intellectual in terms of their understanding of the Qurʾan. His emphasis however is particularly on the Egyptian public, that according to him need to equip themselves with religious knowledge in order to create religious leaders and resist foreign occupation (Jansen 1974, 18-20). ʿAbduh provides the reader with some important principles for approaching the Qurʾan, such as (1) that one should not explain things that are left unexplained; (2) One should look into the context, to find out what a word means in the Qur'an and lastly, (3) to demythologize certain passages or beliefs. Thus, his approach stresses the idea of the Qurʾan being *al-hidāya* a source primarily for Muslims to seek spiritual guidance and ideas about the world they are living in. He was, as many other reformers during his time, an

[13] See Haj, Samira. Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009; Haddad, Yvonne. "Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform." In Pioneers of Islamic Revival. Edited by Ali Rahnema, 30–63. London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1994; Kerr, Malcolm H. Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

advocator of education and attempted to regain the people's connection with the Qurʾan (Jansen 1974, 18-34).

2. Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) Islamist approach[14]

Sayyid Qutb was an Egyptian Writer and is considered today as one of the leading Islamists ideologues and advocators of a revolutionary Islamist political doctrine of the 20th century. He was influenced by Islamic revivalism and the Muslim Brotherhood movement. After his not so pleasant visit in the U.S, due to his witnessing of prostitution, racism and corruption his ideas radicalised and accordingly, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Due to his struggle against the Nasserist-state and his call for a unified Muslim *umma*, he was imprisoned for many years and executed by President Gamal Abd al-Nasser (d. 1970) in 1966. In prison his writings radicalised, and he managed to finish his last work *Fi Zilal al-Qurʾan* (In the Shade of the Qurʾan) a Qurʾan-commentary which partly reflects his radical views but is nevertheless important as it has been widely read by the following generations. The Commentary includes a re-examination of the moral dimension of the Qurʾan and the ethical norms that are enrooted in the Islamic themes of the Qurʾan. Nevertheless, it is also filled with elements of social critique and political polemic that reflect the context of his time. The goal was to establish a political programme that is guided by the moral and religious foundations of the Qurʾan (Tripp 2005, 154-180).

[14] See Calvert, John. *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*. Ithaca, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010.; Abu-Rabiʿ, Ibrahim M. *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996; Mousalli, Ahmad S. *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb*. Beirut, Lebanon: American University of Beirut, 1992.; Jansen, J.J.G., "Sayyid Ḳuṭb", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 02 April 2019 http://0-dx.doi.org.library.qnl.qa/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1012; Haddad, Yvonne Y., Sayyid Qutb: ideologue of Islamic revival, in J. Esposito (ed.), Voices of the Islamic Revolution, New York 1983.; Carré, Olivier. Mysticism and Politics: A Critical Reading of "Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʿān" by Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966). Leiden, The Netherlands, and Boston: Brill, 2003.

3. Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) modernist / thematic approach[15]

As Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) a distinguished Pakistani modernist Scholar and Philosopher of Islam argues, that in order to understand the spirit of the Qurʾan one needs to go beyond a literal or traditional interpretation. *Major Themes of the Quran* is an attempt to offer a modernist Qurʾan exegesis that examines the Qurʾanic verses in their socio-historical, cultural and linguistic context. He believed that there is a clear distinction between normative Islam and historical Islam, accordingly Qurʾanic revelations cannot be merely seen as separate periods (Mekkan, Medinan) that are independent from each other, but rather as a gradual development of socio-historical formations, that is interconnected (Rahman 2013). His *tafsīr* is also particular as it does not follow the usual structure of verse by verse commentary, instead he structures his Qurʾan Interpretation around general themes that are predominant in the qurʾanic verses, from within one is the concept of *umma*.

4. Al-Tabatabaʾi (d. 1981) Shiite approach[16]

Muhammad Hosayn al-Tabatabaʾi was a distinguished Twelver Shiʿi philosopher and his Qurʾan commentary is regarded as one of the most influential modern exegesis in Shiʿi dominated societies. *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qurʾan* his twenty-volume exegesis is partly

[15] See Taji-Farouki, Suha. Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qurʾan. London: Oxford University Press, 2004.; Benzine, Rachid. Islam und Moderne. Die neuen Denker. Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2012.; See

[16] See Mohd Najib Abdul Kadir, Abur Hamdi Usman, Mohd Akil Muhamed Ali, Mohd Arif Nazri, Ahamad Asmadi Sakat and Bayu Taufiq Possumah, 2015. Al-Mizan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran: A Review on Al-Tabataba'i 's Philosophical Exegesis. The Social Sciences, 10: 325-332.; Ayoub, Mahmoud. The Qurʾan and its interpreters, vol.1. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.; Algar, Hamid,"Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabaʾi: Philosopher, Exegete, and Gnostic" in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol.17, No.3, Oxford University Press 2006,326-351.

formulated as a response to the aforementioned *tafsīr* of Muhammad ʿAbduh (*Tafsir al-Manar).* A particular element of this *tafsīr* is that the author tries to follow the method of *tafsīr al-Qurʾan bil-Qurʾan (*interpreting the Qurʾan with the Qurʾan, meaning searching for explanations of the verse in other passages of the Qurʾan). Another characteristic of his commentary is that he groups the verses of each Chapter of the Qurʾan into cohesive segments and justifies this grouping by pointing out the relationship between those verses in one segment. His ideas are to be situated during the time of the Islamic revolution in Iran, although he himself was physically unable to participate in it, many of his students however did play a leading role in the revolution. This indicates that his teachings and ideas where compatible with the new emerging order at that time. It also points towards his awareness of the existing political sphere to which he contributed by tackling political dimensions in his Qurʾan commentary (Algar 2006, 326-351).

2.4.1 Modern exegesis

2:128 "*umma Muslima"*

رَبَّنَا وَٱجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَآ أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَآ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلتَّوَّابُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ

The reformist Scholar Muhammad ʿAbduh and his disciple Rashid Rida agree with the classical scholars on defining the meaning of *muslim* as someone that is submitting to God and loyal to God only. Nevertheless, ʿAbduh doesn't stop at that point, but goes beyond the classical *tafsīr* by arguing that there is a second part to the meaning of the *duʿāʾ* that is mentioned in *sūrat al-baqara* verse 128, namely " (oh God) with your generosity, (I ask you for) us to purify our minds/ souls with the best characteristic traits (ethical virtues) and to progress our memories with the correct belief that is empowered with demonstrative

proofs." (Abduh 1954)[17] There is a clear rational element in this statement that indicates that only by the use of reason can a Muslim and thus the *umma* can fulfil their moral duties and comprehend their mission on earth. Apart from the rational element that he stresses in this interpretation the idea of a moral community seems to grow here when he says, "purify our minds/souls with the best ethical virtues", nevertheless he does not offer a more extensive definition of what these virtues are at this point (Abduh 1954).

Sayyid Qutb states: "Ancestors and offspring only become one family or nation when they are all believers united by the same faith, regardless of colour and geographic or ethnic origins." (Qutb 2001, Vol.1-2, 133). He stresses a point that was not mentioned by classical exegetes but may be of crucial importance for the conceptualisation of *umma*. He argues that in this *duʿāʾ* the prophets are asking God in a humble way to support them and protect them and their offspring. According to Qutb this means two things, first of all that they are fully aware that without Gods help and support they are powerless and secondly and most important it illustrates the intrinsic notion of solidarity that is communicated by the prophet towards his successive generations and which is not restricted to a certain tribe nor ethnic group (Qutb 2001, Vol.1-2, 134). Qutb raises a new element that was not existent in pre-modern exegesis namely the idea of overcoming racism and ethnicity in order to points out to the one central theme of the *umma* which is according to him faith (Qutb 2001, Vol.1-2, 134). In light of his personal experience and confrontation with racism and prostitution in the U.S., there is a suggestion that he was responding racial problems of modern societies by asserting that Islam doesn't discriminate and consequently the concept of *umma* is based on a universal notion of acceptance and inclusion. Another two elements he connects with

[17] *minna an nuzakki nufūsuna bi-makārim al-akhlāq, wa nuraqqī ʿuqūluna bil-iʿtiqād al-saḥīḥ al-muʾayyīd bil-burhān*

this verse and the *umma* is its role as the "heirs of legacy" of the prophet or in other words, the *khulafāʾ* and their role to lead the remaining communities, that is entangled with it (Qutb 2001, Vol.1-2, 134-135). Apparently, a political dimension in his understanding and interpretation of *umma* becomes very explicit. Al-Tabatabaʾi on the other hand explains that with *muslim* the prophet cannot mean the understanding of Islam that is clear to us now as that would mean the basic stage of professing the matters of faith and religious practices. He gives that example of verse 131 where God asks the prophet Ibrahim to be a *muslim*. It is apparent that the prophet is already a *muslim* at that time, which subsequently means that there are different stages of what it means to be a *muslim*. Al-Tabatabaʾi calls it the "sublime grade of Islam" in which being a *muslim* means "total servitude, unconditional surrender of all a servant has got to his Master" (Al-Tabatabaʾi 1997, 275-288). This idea leads him to the conclusion that this stage of Islam must be a divine Gift as an average man would not necessarily have the capacity to reach such a high standard of submission (Al-Tabatabaʾi 1997, 275-288). His interpretation indicates that the *umma* in this context does not include every follower of Islam, but rather addresses those Muslims who have attained the highest stage of submission to God.

The moderate Muslim community

2.5 Conclusion Chapter One

As we trace back the meaning of the *umma* within the tafsir-genre, there are a couple of remarkable aspects that become apparent. In the Premodern context, first and foremost exegetes indicate a clear common presumption that the *umma* exists and that the *umma* attained the characteristic of moderation and justice. Whereas modern exegetes indicate that the *umma* needs to come into existence (see Qutb) or needs to be maintained (See Abduh and Rida). Second, although the internal diversity in terms of linguistic analysis

becomes clear at some point, as for instance whether the *umma* is addressed as a whole or just partly, it does not prevent the selected scholars from having a common grounding. Namely, that the *umma* as an abstract collective that in the context of the three verses addresses the Muslim community. God has ascribed some pivotal attributes to this Muslim community, namely *muslim*, *wasaṭ* and their ability to enjoin people to good deeds and forbid them from undertaking immoral acts. While the religious dimension is emphasised throughout all interpretations, the moral dimension is emphasised mainly in 3:104. The political dimension is perhaps invoked implicitly by al-Tusi, yet it is remarkable that in the interpretation of the selected pre-modern exegetes there is no relation to the actual governance in Medina and its implications. Furthermore, there is little information about the socio-political role of the *umma* or what *wasaṭ* as justice means and how it can be implemented. The principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong is described as a mandatory action whereby there are differences in interpretation when it comes to who is eligible for performing this principle. There is a divide between Scholars who argue *ʿulamāʾ* should practice this duty and other Scholars who argue that this can only mean the whole *umma* and hence is an authoritative dimension of the *umma* to morally enforce its society.

Thirdly, it seems that that the interpretation of the selected Qurʾanic verses by the Classical exegetes was heavily focused on the linguistic and theological interpretations and also close to the Quranic text. Most of their exegetical effort is spent describing and defining the different concepts that are mentioned in the three verses. Yet they, in general, do not go beyond the religious interpretation of the text. In contrast to this picture, one can see that in the context of the modern period, the approach of exegetes towards the Quran has undergone a pivotal change. Although they do build upon the existing scholarship and

follow some of the classical definitions of *umma,* modern definitions often enter into a more structural discussion of what the role of *umma* is in society or how the *umma* can emerge as in the example of Muhammad ʿAbduh. Modern interpretations tend to reflect the exegetes' political, cultural and intellectual contexts more directly. They go beyond the theological dimension and engage with the concept of the *umma* from a socio-political dimension where the concept is supposed to offer a solution to the modern problems the exegetes face. The political dimensions of the *umma* has been of particular interest to modern exegetes, perhaps because of the political crisis that the Muslim World faced in the 20th century, such as the colonial occupations, the abolishment of the caliphate in 1924 (See Hassan 2016, 259), the emergence of the modern-nation state, the rise of capitalism, and the destruction created by two world wars.

A final point noticed during the analysis is the fact that the term *umma* was often translated as nation/ nation-state in the English versions of original Arabic texts although the authors in question do not mention the word *waṭan* or *dawla* in the Arabic version. As Tamim al-Barghouti argues in his book *the Umma and the Dawla*, translating a word from a specific cultural sphere to another can lead to a drastic change of its meaning (Al-Barghouti 2008, 32). This leads us to the question whether this was an intended attempt to change the narrative around the Islamicate understanding of the term *umma* by epistemically influencing the internal debate and projecting modern concepts on it that potentially limit and circumscribe its broader meaning.

Chapter Two: Pre-Modern and Modern Meanings of *Umma* in Islamic Political Thought

How did the meaning of *umma* transform in Islamic Political Thought in Modern Times and what are the causes and historical moments that shaped this transformation? After undertaking a conceptual history of the *umma* in the *tafsīr*-genre whereby politics was only implicitly mentioned by pre-modern exegetes (chapter 2), in this chapter I turn to Islamic Political Thought as a contrasting case and trace some transhistorical similarities and transformations from one period to another. After the *umma* was developed theologically with a moral and religious dimension in the early field of Qurʾan exegesis, Scholars attempted to epitomize a coherent conceptualisation of *umma* in relation to Islamic government and what grew to be known as *siyāsa sharʿiyya* by calling into life the idea of a political (community) *umma.*

Although an exhaustive answer to this question cannot be attempted here, I will seek to demonstrate in this chapter how the concept of the *umma* has been connected to classical understandings of *siyasa sharʿiyya* in relation to governance and how the European colonial enterprise, the rise of Nationalism and the emergence of a Modern and to a large extent secularised world and the abolishment of the caliphate has shaped modern understanding of the *umma*. Consequently, the study will illustrate how the narrative of the ethico-political dimension of the *umma* was affected and changed by these historical moments.

The Chapter will firstly give short overview on how the concept of *umma* developed in genre of Islamic Political Thought and how an intellectual discourse around its theories has evolved in the period of the middle ages. It will offer a brief outline on how the 'political' was understood within the history of Islamic political Thought in relation to the *umma*. The

10th century Muslim Jurist Al-Mawardi's and 13th century Theologian ibn Tayimiyya's conception of *umma* in relation to governance. It will then turn to a late 19th century Egyptian scholars, Al-Marsafi, and his understanding of the *umma* in his well-known *Al-Kalim al-Thaman*. Lastly, the chapter will end with a brief section on contemporary Muslim Scholar Salman Sayyid's conceptualisation of the *umma.* These Scholars were chosen as they offer contrasting visions of what the concept of *umma* entails. However, I am not making any claims about the representativity of those Scholars. They are all renowned Scholars that were/are engaged in likely debates of their time on the *umma.* It is therefore highly interesting to trace back their understanding of *umma* as all of them are shaped by and simultaneously shape the intellectual debates of their time. Accordingly, they lend themselves nicely to the study of a conceptual history.

3.1 Umma in Islamic Political Thought of the Middle Ages

The genre of Islamic Political Thought has a long and rich history which can be categorised into three main strands: juridical, philosophical, and literary,[18]. This study will focus on the first strand, namely the theory of Muslim jurists which starts with the belief that God is the ultimate sovereign, not the state and thus the rights and obligations are to be derived by the Qurʾan and *shariʿa* (Anjum 2012, 10-20); (Lambton 1981, xvi). This consequently means that in its juridical version political science cannot be seen as an independent discipline, as it is entangled in various ways with theology and *fiqh* (Jurisprudence). Furthermore, ethics and moral philosophy also play a pivotal role in the discussion of Islamic political ideas, even though premodern Muslim thinkers have tended to incorporate them within the field of theology (Lambton 1981, xiv-xv). Although it can be argued that political / governing

[18] This genre was mainly called mirror of the princes and addressed the ruling elite in order to maintain their importance (Anjum 2012, 19)

concepts exist in the Qurʾan, they have been utilised and developed further gradually with the beginning of the Islamic Expansion (*futūḥ)* by early Muslim Scholars. The theory of jurists is based upon Qurʾanic verses, the Sunna and practices of the early Islamic community. Before the emergence of the modern nation-state in the Muslim World during the 19th century Muslims lived under a different form of government that was structured differently and consequently cannot simply be referred to as 'state' (Hallaq 2009, 7). Many Scholars of Islamic Political Thought argue that the Islamic government is Nomocratic (government based upon the rule of law[19]) and Nomocentric (law-based) which means that "law precedes the state, which exists for the sole purpose of maintaining and enforcing the law" (Lambton 1981, xv). In the Islamic context this means that Human Beings do not have the authority to legislate they only derive them from the *shariʿa*, as it is a government that is based upon the divine law, thus God is the only legislator within that system (Lambton 1981, 1). But what is meant with law in the Islamic context? *shariʿa* goes beyond the idea of law in several forms, 1) as we have mentioned before God is the legislator, 2) it is not just a legal document, but a way of living, 3) in the scope of its legislation God lay down limits (*hudūd*) for human liberty (Lambton 1981, 2); (Hallaq 2009, 6-8); (Anjum 2012, 24-25, 50).

Besides the pivotal role that *shariʿa* plays as a 'moral force' in this system it is also important to highlight the rather restricted role of government, at least in contrast to contemporary times. The role of government was to protect the members of the community from external invasion, guarantee social and political order, collect taxes and military inscription. It has thus been argued that the community in the middle ages had the authority

[19] With law here *sharīʿa* is meant in particular.

to regulate their own affairs (Hallaq 2009, 8); (Anjum 2012, 6). The modern-nation state, however, is designed to govern and control all citizens affairs, manage the problems that arise and manage the new emerging differences within these societies (Hallaq 2013, 24-34). The Emergence of Islamic Political Thought has started to develop by *ʿulamaʾ* that theorised the caliphate, its purpose and its origin as a form of resistance against the Kings that have come to power after the lost caliphate and theorize the ideal caliphate that is to be ruled by a righteous caliph who unites the entire Community (Anjum 2012, 5-6). Anjum raises an essential point when he emphasises the difference between politics that is centred around a discourse on *polis* and one that is centred around the Muslim community, namely the *umma*. He says " We cannot easily brush aside differences between *polis* and *umma*, on the one hand, a territorially defined community that seeks the good life in this-worldly pursuits of material prosperity and intellectual enlightenment and, on the other, and ideologically defined community (with territorial unity mostly taken for granted) that seeks the ultimate good in the eternal afterlife and sees this life as only a means." (Anjum 2012, 14).

Understanding the nature of Islamic Political Thought is important for the study of *umma* for several reasons. Firstly, When discussing the concept of politics in relation to the field of Islamic political thought it is important to study it as part of the Islamic discursive tradition and notice the conceptual elements that are indispensable and form a constituent part of the debate around the political, namely the community (*umma*), reason (*ʿaql*) and agency (*qudra*) (Anjum 2012, 18). For analysing a body of political thought three dimensions are necessary to identify (Anjum 2012):

1) The socio-political context in which it is embedded
2) Its location within the discursive tradition of which it is a part of

3) Its position towards the conceptual elements in political life and its moral vision

A second argument is that in Islamic Political Thought at least two ideals can be identified in relation to governing, one of them is centred around the *umma* as a unified Muslim community that is governed by a righteous caliph. The second ideal renders the *umma* as apolitical by arguing Islamic religious and spiritual life is supposedly free of politics (Anjum 2012, 7). This study will investigate the first ideal through examining the works of Abu al-Hassan al Mawardi (d. 450 / 1058) and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 / 1328). Within the first ideal there are two common positions, 1) the community-centred vision of governance and 2) the ruler-centred vision. Their meaning will be further explored and examined in the sub-chapter on al-Mawardi's and Ibn Taymiyya's conceptions of Governance in relation to the *umma*. But before delving into the ideas of Al-Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyya it is necessary to clarify what the scope of "the political" is, what is meant with 'poltical' and what are the different ways in which the political can be defined in the Islamic context.

The root "s.w.s" in Arabic means to manage and was used in the Arabic language commonly to refer to the management or training of animals, as horses for instance, but also in the management of people and cities (Najjar 1984, 92); (Anjum 2012, 59) (Lewis 1986, 3). In the Islamic context it was used in a hadith report from the first / seventh century to refer to *banu isrā'il's* prophet's management and leadership of his people. After the end of the prophethood members of the Muslim *umma* were endowed with the responsibility to lead and manage the *umma* and its affairs (Anjum 2012, 59). Qudama (d.337 / 948) a Muslim Scholar that lived during the Abbasid Empire that was interested in analysing the branched of Knowledge in Islamic Civilisation, argues that Political Thought is concerned with "the question of governance (*siyāsa)* of a human community and body politic", politics

thus in this definition means the management (*tadbīr)* of public affairs, the actual governance or *ʿIlm al-Siyasa*, which discusses the knowledge that is necessary for an just and effective system of governance. At the same time its meaning is not limited to the theoretical realm but also enters the practical one when involving the political community (Heck 2002, 194). In general, *siyāsa* seemed to indicate statecraft in the writings of Scholars in the middle ages, it occurred frequently in the statements of the Umayyad period (Lewis 1984, 3-4). By the time of the Abbasid Caliphate the term of *siyāsa* was started to be used increasingly in verses that addressed a specific caliph as for instance caliph al-Saffah (Lewis 1984, 5). When those Scholars discussed *siyāsa* it was always with the assumption that governance is guided by divine law. Caliph al-Hadi however, was one of the first that used *siyāsa* in a different way contrasting kingship with divine law (Lewis 1984, 6). Lewis argues therefore that "siyasa was coming, more and more, to mean the discretionary power exercised by the sovereign – any sovereign – and their officers as distinct from the authority conferred upon the Muslim caliph by the holy law" (Lewis 1984, 7). In contrast as will be illustrated in the following part on Al-Mawardi and Ibn Tayimiyya, there was a notable use of *siyāsa* as inclusive of *dīn* and divine law. In both writings *sharīʿa* is an indispensable part of *siyāsa* (Lewis 1984, 7-9).

3.2 Umma in the writings of Al-Mawardi in relation to his theory of governance

Abu Hassan al-Mawardi (d.450/ 1058) a shafite, sunni Jurist is considered one of the pivotal Scholars in the history of Islamic political Thought. With his title as *aqḍa al*-quḍāt he was one of the most important counsellors of the caliph al-Qadirbillah (r. 388- 422/ 991- 1031) and caliph Qaʾimbillah (r. 422-475/ 1031-1074). He lived during the period of political transition from the Shiite buwayhid to the Sunni seldjuk empire. Two of his most influential works are *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* (The Ordinances of Government) has been regarded as

an authoritative and renowned expression of the classical theory of the caliphate/ Imamate and *Kitab Adab al-Dunya wal-Din* (Anjum 2012, 109); (Lambton 1981, 83). The first thing to notice in his writings is his usage of the terminologies Imamate and Caliphate as synonyms, whereby he stresses that the term caliphate is older whereas the term Imamate is used more frequently in the shiʿi context (Al-Mawardi 1989, 2-3). He emphasis Gods greatness for providing Human Beings with Religion and the Divine Text that guides everyone and shows the right path (*shariʿa*) by providing rules that differentiate between the permissible and the forbidden (Al-Mawardi 1996, 1-2); (Al-Mawardi 1989, 3). Al-Mawardi was thereby setting Religion as the most effective foundation on which political systems can be established. He wrote *The Ordinances of Government* as it is of higher relevance for those who are in authority who do not have the time to study those ordinances more profoundly as they are busy with ruling (Al-Mawardi 1996, 1-2); (Al-Mawardi 1989, 3). God has appointed a leader to the *umma* that succeeds the prophet and protects the creed (*milla*) (Al-Mawardi 1996, 1-2); (Al-Mawardi 1989, 3). The Leader has been authorised with the task to govern (*wa fawaḍa ilayhi al-siyāsa*) (Al-Mawardi 2006, 3) on the basis of the true religion Islam, where people will follow one opinion on the foundation of the Imamate that is premised on the rules of the creed and through which the *umma* will be embodied and which ultimately leads to the regulation of public affairs (Al-Mawardi 1989, 3). According to him there are two possible ways of designating an Imam, either through the election of *ahl al-ḥall wal-ʿaqd*[20] or through the nomination by an outgoing caliph/imam. Al-Mawardi was the first that considered the designation of a person that fits the role for the imamate, without the community's interference, a valid method, which the

[20] *Ahl al-ḥall wal-ʿaqd* is a *fiqhī* terminology that does not occur in the Qurʾan, it refers to a council of elder people that have certain characteristic and are hence eligible to nominate the caliph on behalf of the rest of the *umma*. (See Kamali 2016, 388-396).

umma has to accept[21] (Anjum 2012, 114); (Al-Mawardi 1989, 11); (Kamali 2016, 388-392). Thus, it seems he was attempting to be remove the will of the community from taking active part in the policies of the imamate. This can be explained as follows, when considering the political context, he was writing in: He was defending the centrality of the Imamate for the sake of the Abbasid caliph that ran the danger of becoming irrelevant due to Buyids and others that were trying to gain military control over the Caliphate/Imamate. It can thus be said that he was reinforcing the above-mentioned caliphate-centred vision of Islam although it was due to the critical condition in which the caliphate was positioned at that time (Anjum 2012, 119). He moves the discourse of the caliphate from a theological level to jurisprudential and at the same time ritualizes the imamate by allowing the separation of caliphal authority from effective power to govern. Most importantly he reduces the significance of the Community, the *umma* clearly plays no decisive role in his theory (Al-Mawardi 2006, 25-26); (Kamali 2016, 388-396); (Anjum 2012, 119-121). Although he mentions the need of *adab* for a society, namely the *adab al-shariʿa* (doing religious duties) and *adab al-siyāsa* (political duties) he subjugates the *umma* by restricting the latter category which indicates political activity to the ruler, the accordingly only figure that is capable of maintaining justice and security (Heck 2016, 164-166). The role of the *imām* is thus indispensable for guaranteeing the existence of the *umma* (community) (Anjum 2012, 119-121); (Lambton 1981, 85). Al-Mawardis Conceptualisation of the Imamate/ Caliphate stems from his idea that the Caliphate can never regain its original

[21] "God Almighty has appointed (*nadaba*) for the *umma* a leader by whom He [God] has followed up the prophethood (*khalafa bihi al-nubuwwa*), protected the creed (*milla*) and entrusted to him the conduct of policy (*siyāsa*), so that affairs may be managed upon the prescribed way (*dīn mashrūʿ*) and consensus may obtain on the course to pursue. The imamate is, therefore, the foundation (*asl*) upon which the principles of the creed (*qawāʿid al-milla*) are established and whence originate (*saddarat ʿanhu*) all the particular offices. It is therefore incumbent to privilege the decrees of (the imamate) over any of the decrees of the ruler (*hukm al-sultan*), and to mention its opinion over any other religious opinion." (Al-Mawardi 2006, 13)

authority and power anymore so the objective for Muslim Scholars in a situation like that would be to at least try to keep it alive (Sayyid 1984, 55); (Anjum 2012, 121).

3.3 Umma in the writings of Ibn Taymiyya in relation to his theory of governance

In contrast to Al-Mawardi, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/ 1328) a renowned theologist, Hanbali jurist and political thinker adapts an approach in the theory of the caliphate that is more centralised on the role of the *umma* as a whole integrated unity. He is one of the most diversely interpreted and understood scholars in Islamic Political Thought of the middle ages, due to the fact that his ideas and the ongoing turbulences of his time (Malkawi 2011, 112); (Anjum 2012, 173). Ibn Taymiyya was not considered innovative in his ideas, yet it can be argued that his theory of the caliphate is of great importance in relation to the concept of the *umma* as he shifts his attention from a caliphate-centred vision that is illustrated in al-Mawardi's conceptualization, to a rather community-centred vision of governance (Malkawi 2011, 112- 126); (Anjum 2012, 27-30).

Ibn Taymiyya states in *Minhaj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya:* "If they had not accepted Abu Bakr's pledge and not given allegiance to ʿUmar, he would never have become an imam, regardless of whether this act of theirs would have been permissible or impermissible… For imamate (caliphate) is rule (*mulk*) and authority (*sulṭa*), and a ruler does not become ruler by the agreement of one or two or four, except if the agreement of these few will guarantee the agreement of the rest. "(Anjum 2012, 228).

Anjum suggests that Ibn Taymiyya introduces us to a new genre *al-siyasa al-sharʿiyya* in which the ruler, the ruled (the community) and the *ʿulamaʾ* endorse political activity that is based upon the *shariʿa* (Anjum 2012, 29-31). Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya similarly to other classical Scholar at his time, believes and enforces the idea that a ruler and coercive

power (*quwwa*) is indispensable in order to maintain order and protect the community from foreign invasion (Malkawi, 2011, 112). He bases his argument on the Prophets saying that affirms the need for a leadership position in even the smallest social groups (Malkawi 2011, 113). Yet whereas the *umma* in Al-Mawardi's theory is passive and plays no decisive role, In Ibn Tayymiyya's theory there is a shift where the *umma* forms the centre of the theory. The purpose of the *umma* is according to Ibn Taymiyya the establishment of Justice; In order to establish Justice within a society the tool of governance is needed (Malkawi 2011, 113). Governance is thus seen as a tool for the *umma* to achieve a justice and social order and those people amongst the community that have received divine guidance have the responsibility to guide and lead the community as Caliphs/Imams (Kamali 2016, 397). Hence, the obligation of governing a society is seen by him as a *farḍ kifāya* duty which means that not everyone within the *umma* has to participate in governance, as long as a responsible group of people contributes. This does not mean that the community should not be politically active, Ibn Taymiyya argues that each member of the community has duties and responsibilities assigned by God and only when each member of the community in addition to the ruler fulfil their obligations can a society function in a just and proper manner (Malkawi 2011, 114). Among the main tasks of the community that Ibn Taymiyya mentions repeatedly is the importance of obedience to political authority. This does not necessarily mean absolute power but rather he describes the relationship between the *umma* and the ruler as reciprocal, a contract (*sharāka*). Within the community of believers there is a special role assigned to the religious scholars (*ʿulamaʾ*), namely as advisors of the government; their task is to advice those who are in authority (*wulat al-ʾumūr*) by providing them with the necessary knowledge that is needed in order to establish an Islamic government that is based on the principles of *shariʿa* (Malkawi 2011, 114-116).

"If the umaraʾ and the ʿulamaʾ are righteous[22], the masses will also be righteous", with this saying Ibn Taymiyya emphasises the entanglement of rulers and scholars' responsibilities and justice with the well-being of the community and society in general (Malkawi 2011, 116).

Although Ibn Tamiyya is strictly against rebellion or revolution by the *umma* even when the ruler is unjust, he offers a powerful alternative, namely civil disobedience as a form of resistance (Malkawi 2011, 120). A very important point about the government is that although its objective is to implement *shariʿa* in the society that does not necessarily mean that religion and government are the same, it however simply indicates that they are governed by the same values and he stresses that the government is therefore existent in order to offer a setting that allows for the implication and active practice of religious rituals and obligations. Once this setting is not available anymore there is an obligation for the Muslim *umma* to act upon it in order to re-establish an Islamic social order (Malkawi 2011, 120-124). Four aspects can be extracted from his theory of governance. The first aspect is that political legitimacy is a function and thus if the legal system is not Islamic in the sense that it establishes justice for instance, the government is not legitimate. The more central aspect for our study is that Ibn Taymiyya argues that political responsibility rests on the community as a whole and is therefore not just restricted to the ruler as in al-Mawardi's thought. The *umma* can therefore be seen as a religious-political community that participates actively in the attempt to uphold justice and social order by providing advices to the government/ caliph for instance (Malkawi 2011, 125). From within this *umma* there is a group of *ʿulamaʾ* which can be seen as the moral community that has the responsibility

[22] With righteousness he seems to indicate good qualities as," patience in carrying out God's commands, speaking the truth, fulfilling promises, good behaviour towards parents (…)" (Malkawi 2011, 116)

to provide the government/caliph with knowledge on how to rule according to the dive law, at the same time they have the authority to guide the rest of the community to obedience or disobedience towards the government (Al-Malkawi 2011, 125).

3.4 Transformation of the umma in the Age of Nationalism –Al- Marsafi's Understanding of umma

Transformations in Islamic Political Thought can be traced back to the 19th century when the key concepts for understanding Islamic Political theory became *dīn*, *dawla* and/or *umma* (Voll 2013, 56). The period from mid-19th to mid-20th century marks the emergence of a transformation from *umma* as a religious/political/moral community to the idea of *umma* as a nation-state in Islamic Reformist consciousness as that of Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi (d. 1890), Al-Tahtawi (d.1873), Al-Afghani (d. 1897) and al-Marsafi (d.1890) (Belkeziz 2009, 4). The spread of European values in the aftermath of the French revolution in 1789 had a profound impact on the nature of government in Europe and the Global South. Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion in Egypt and his famous proclamations, introducing nationalist ideas and other colonial invasions in the Muslim World play a pivotal role as they represented the idea of a European modern nation-state that shall be adopted by the colonised communities. Although this idea was not acknowledged by Muslim Scholars at the beginning it became more and more present in the writings of 19th century Muslim Reformist Thinkers that had travelled to Europe (Belkeziz 2009, 9); (Abu Lughod 1963, 11-13). It is important to notice that a central shift in the consciousness of Muslim Political Thinkers was that of thinking of political theory beyond the idea of the caliphate as in pre-modern times it was not within their imagination that they would need a different system "For many Muslims, the caliphate even constituted a symbol of Islam itself, one deeply

embedded in a rich intellectual and cultural discourse that could readily evoke a sense of the wider community's glory, righteousness, and esteem." (Hassan 2016, 13-14).

From the beginning of the 19th Century, the term *umma* in modern Arabic language has developed into a synonym for the nation whereas throughout the middle ages, *umma* has been continuously conceived as a religious, moral and political community as mentioned in the previous chapters. This tacit transformation, however, marks a pivotal shift in the narrative of how Islamic political ideas were understood, used and articulated. While *umma* used to address a community, the term was used more and more in the wider sense to address non-Muslim nation-states as *al-umma faransāwiyya* or al-*umma al-iṭāliyāniyya* in private Egyptian press for example (Rebhan 1986, 24). In Napoleons proclamation he addresses the Egyptian people as *al-umma al-miṣriyya* which indicates the attempt to project the idea of a nation-state to the Egyptian society (Abu Lughod 1963, 11-13); (Rebhan 1986, 25). In 1929 the translation of al-*umma* as nation was mentioned in the German-Arabic dictionary of Bocthors (Rebhan 1986, 25). In that context, al-Marsafi's ideas that are reflected in his Book can be seen as part of a modern project that utilises writings to transform the mentality of contemporary Egyptian society, by introducing them to his understanding of modern political concepts that entered the public discourse through the growing contact with Europe.

From the mid-20th century up until the 21st century there are different stages of a transformation of Islamic Political Theory from religion being a traditional obstacle to its modernization process to religion growing to become the basis for ideologies of post-modern revolutionary challenges to modernity. These transformations illustrate the changing nature of modernity itself (Voll 2013, 56). They can be divided into four phases.

Firstly, the After WW2 period where Islamic Political Thought is concerned about older issues of nationalist opposition, imperialism and westernizing- reformist efforts to modernise Muslim societies dominated political and cultural discussions. Ending foreign colonisation was in that historical moment more relevant than establishing an Islamic state. Yet by the middle of the 20th century the concept of the nation-state started to shape the way most Muslim Intelligentsia defined political terminologies and ideas- Nationalism grew into the most powerful ideology of that time: e.g. Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaati Islami operating within the framework of the nation-state (Voll 2013, 57). The second period started after Independence from colonial powers. Articulation of radical ideologies of societal and political transformation were at stake at that time, as the new generation of leaders rejected both foreign control and the old-style conservative modernizers. At the same time the rise of a self-consciously revolutionary nationalism, with religion as a broader part of it emerged as can be seen by many examples, as the FIS in Algeria etc. In the 1970s another transformation can be observed. A rise of political opposition that is articulated in Islamic terms, e.g. Establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979 and the Emergence of what has been characterised as 'Political Islam' (Voll 2013, 57). The last period starts at the End of the 20th century. It is marked by academic debates around the 'Failure of Political Islam'. John O Voll is asking a crucial question in his chapter on Political Islam and the State, namely, "Is Islam 'dīn and dawla' or 'dīn and *umma*h?' and argues that this question can provide an important framework through which one can trace the evolution of Political Islam and the State (Voll 2013, 57).

3.5 Umma in Al-Marsafi's Risalat al-Kalim Al-Thaman

Hussain al-Marsafi was a blind Egyptian Azhari Scholar and teacher that was born in 1815 in a village called Marsafa, near Banha in Egypt. His particular interest in belles-lettres[23] was one of the main reasons he was appointed as a professor of Arabic linguistic disciplines in Dār al-ʿUlūm (which was more modern orientated than al-Azhar) in 1872. He taught there until 1888 and Scholars consider him the first to have formulated a *nahḍa* (reform) in Arabic literature (Delanoue, 2012). For al-Marsafi "A revival of the art of writing (*inshāʾ*) is necessary for the use of the élite of modern Egypt, after the centuries of decadence, and in view of the catastrophic situation of this art in the 19th century" (Delanoue, 2012). Besides his interest in linguistic reform as a tool for advancement, he was interested in the history of political ideas.

Al-Marsafi published three works during his lifetime. The first is called *al-Wasila al-Adabiyya ila al-ʿUlum al-ʿArabiyya* (Literary Means to the Discipline of the Arabic Language) and was published in 1875. It is an Encyclopaedia for linguistic terminologies and grammar. His second work is called *Dalil al-Mustarshid fi Fann al-Inshaʾ* (A Guide for the Art of Creation); it remained unpublished and was similar to the above-mentioned Book an Encyclopaedia for linguistic terminologies. His last work is different from his previous two Books as it discusses political terminologies. *Risalat al-Kalim al-Thaman* (Treatise of the Eight Words), which was published in 1881 is furthermore going to be the Book, that this chapter will focus on.

[23] It describes a category of writing, where authors focus on aesthetic qualities of language.

Al-Marsafi published his Essay "Treatise of the Eight Words" in October 1881. He believed that the political crisis of that time was due to the misuse and misunderstanding of certain political terms that he addresses in his Book. "Treatise of the Eight Words" addresses eight political terms that entered the public discourse in Egypt during the ʿUrabi Era and simultaneously, according to Mitchell, made use of the new vocabulary of modern nationalism (Mitchell 1988, 132): *umma* (nation, community), *waṭan* (fatherland), *ḥukūma* (government), *ʿadl* (justice), *ẓulm* (injustice), *siyāsa* (politics), *ḥurriya* (liberty) and *tarbiyya* (education).

The Books title is connected to the idea of "the ring of words" that is found in political writings such as Rifaʿa al-Tahtawis (d.1873) Book *Manahij al-Albab al-Misriyya* or al-Jurjani (d. 1414) with his Book *al-Taʿrifat*. The Circle of the eight words is structured in the sense that the meaning of each term is interpreted in terms of the next, so each term is tied to the next and the last term connects back to the first (Mitchell 1988, 134). Mitchell explains further that this system is similar to Aristotle's golden octagon but usually the source for Arab scholars of the 19th Century is Ibn Khaldun as they can read it in Arabic (Mitchell 1988, 134). Al-Marsafi published his Book in October 1881 a time that was at stake for the ʿUrabi Movement/ Revolt (*Al-Thawra al-ʿUrabiyya*), that was led by the Egyptian Nationalist Ahmad ʿUrabi (army officer). Ahmed ʿUrabi (d.1911) entered the Cairo military academy and rose to the rank of a colonel, being the first Egyptian native to reach that rank. In February 1881 some officers (including Urabi) released some of their co-officers that were detained and the Khedive Tawfik was forced to announce al-Barudi as the new Minister of War. From that moment on the situation in Egypt became more rebellious although the Khedive attempted to satisfy some of the army's demands (Large demonstration were organised to put new demands before Tafwik). In October, ʿUrabi and

other nationalist leaders created a manifesto that declared that the main aim of Egyptian people is to complete their national education by means of a parliament, the press and by the spread of schooling (Mitchell 1988, 132). He, furthermore, declared the necessity of leading a revolution against Khedive and European influence (Hopwood, 2012). In Egypt a public consciousness and a primordial Egyptian identity[24] was emerging particularly during the 19th Century. Literacy was spreading, and more newspapers and Books were being published due to what Benedict Anderson would call print-capitalism (Anderson 1983, 33-36). Egypt was under foreign Ottoman occupation until the British invasion in 1882. During Muhamed Ali's rule (1805-1849) there was an emerging social change due to his division of the educational system into two, the traditional religious and the modern secular system (that was particularly for the Egyptian elite). While Kedourie argues that this split caused the dilemma of a dichotomised and chaotic society that prevented the unification of the Egyptian society, Hoda Yousef stresses that the educational reform was not as simple as that, as both schools relied on each other at one point (Yousef 2008, 110). Above that, new political ideas were quickly adopted by Egyptian scholars as a result of their increasing contact with Europe (Mirza 2014, 157). Mitchell explains that colonising is not solely the establishing of European presence but also the spread of a political order that reframes the social world of the colonised people.

Egypt in the 1870s was under foreign and corrupt occupation, misgoverned and in a state of financial ruin, as they were under huge debts by Ismail Pasha. ʿUrabi represented "a peasant population frustrated with tax-exempt foreigners and wealthy local landlords." (Cleveland, 2009, 92) Taking into account the historical incidents of that time Al-Marsafi's

24 See Ze'evi, Dror. 2004. Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East1 in *Mediterranean Historical Review*. 19, no. 1: 73-94.

work is of particular interest for a couple of reasons. Mitchell for instance analyses Al-Marsafi's work in the context of examining the peculiarity of political authority in Egypt. He argues that it is of great importance for two reasons, 1) because it has been proven that the teachings of al-Azhar mosque scholars were significant and influential for the political authority in Egypt and 2) the transformation that occurred in the nature of writing corresponded to the transformation in the nature of political authority according to him (Mitchell 1988, 131). According to Mitchell, al-Marsafi's work is shaped by the thinking of nationalist leadership: "the vocabulary and thinking of the nationalist leadership was reflected in Eight Words." (Mitchell 1988, 132). Stephan Guth, however, points out al-Marsafi's particularity by alluding to his belonging to a larger group of an 'Egyptian Educated Elite' that according to him has not received enough scholarly attention as Afghani, Rida or Muhammad Abduh did receive for instance (Guth 2016, 76). Guth as well as Mitchell, highlight his rural background as important for understanding his ideas and writings. Mitchell explains that as al-Marsafi grew up in an "intellectual and political tradition in which the city depended upon the countryside rather than dominating it (…)" he rejected the use of excessive printing press because the accepted tradition was that the only way to read a text and retain its uncertain authority was to hear it read out loud by a person who mastered it (Mitchell 1988, 133). Another innovative aspect is that al-Marsafi did not use the usual prominent terms as *shūra* (council), *thawra* (revolution) or *istibdād* (depotism). Delanoue argues that these terms were more prominent in journalistic discourses at that time. Yet, he does not have a final answer to this question but suggests that one possible explanation for his selection of terms could be his particular interest in education, including educational politics.

Al-Marsafi is addressing the intelligent youth of these generations *"adhkiyā' al-shubbān min ahl hādhihi l-azmina"* (al-Marsafi 2011). He has a nationalistic vision that becomes visible throughout his chapter. Guth believes that his ultimate goal is "the Egyptian nation's well-being and the spirit of patriotism (*waṭaniyya*) which he says should guide all educational efforts in the country." (Guenther 2016, 80); (Al-Marsafi 2011). Al-Marsafi adopts a holistic approach that runs parallel to the holistic vision of God as a Creator – everyone and everything has its place according to the function they fulfil in whole (Guenther 2016, 85). For instance – the *umma* will be well if its citizens find among themselves a harmonious balance between egoistic incentives (which may be good for the nation's economy and its civilizational progress) and solidarity with the poor (which is necessary for, the maintenance of social peace as well as from a moral point of view), thus he includes and integrates economic and social considerations which support the idea of a holistic point of view (Guenther 2016, 85-86). According to al-Marsafi the *umma* is a group of people that are united by three things, 1) Language, 2) Place (Origin) or 3) Religion. A community tied by Language, however, is the most appropriate and suitable definition as it is a community that emerges from within the people and therefore a bounding factor that is navigating towards a union the most. It is according to al-Marsafi that a common language creates companionability. In contrast to people with different languages, there is no resentment or alienation (al-Marsafi 2011, 26-27):

"*fa inna jāmaʿatiha min dhātiha wa hiyya adkhala al-gharaḍ min al-ijtimāʿ*" (al-Marsafi 2011, 26).

The argument that there is no resentment or alienation because they have a common language assumes that communities are organically monolingual or else it will cause problems. Yet this view seems to be nuanced by colonial patterns of thought as in the

African continent many regions have been multilingual for decades (See Zsiga 2014). Among pre-modern Islamic civilisation, the Persians and Arabs that lived together and considered themselves one community are another example. Most importantly during the time of the Prophets *hijra* to Medina, his Constitution explicitly declares all communities, ethnic and tribal identities that lived there one united *umma*, with many 'sub-*ummas*' (e.g. *bani ʿawf)* on the basis of the moral vision of the Divine law (Hodgson 1974); Al-Marsafi however argues that in the early times when people could not communicate with each other, they were at the level of wild animals that had attributes as resentment (*nafra)* and alienation (*waḥsha)*. He argues then that once one of the groups learns the language of the other, after a long period of time and hardship, they escalate to the level of an *umma* that is tied by language (al-Marsafi 2011, 26-27):

"*wa ḥīna izin yakūnuna bi-manzilat al-umma bi-ḥasab al-lisān*" (al-Marsafi 2011, 26)

Thus, he believes that when a group of people share the same language the can live in harmony. He is pointing towards the organic qualities of the nation, as Mirza would put it (Mirza 2014, 160). He gives the example of the growth of a tree with an abundant root that is providing the larger growth of the tree and ensuring that, even if the tree would die other trees would certainly succeed it. He compares this then with the view that linguistic is the foundation of a nation, that leads to the most authentic nation (al-Marsafi 2011, p.26-29) (Mirza 2014, 160-161). Moreover, he claims, the *umma* that is tied by language, did not have any political implications in his generation and the generations before: "In our generation (time) and from what we know about the previous generations *umma*, which is tied by language, was not considered in the context of political organizations, kingdoms or national organizations" (al-Marsafi 2011, 26-27). The importance of al-Marsafi's

attachment to the linguistic basis of the nation is connected to the classical idea of the *umma (*Mirza 2014, 161).

Al-Marsafi then moves to his second definition as a community that is tied by Territory. He defines them as "A group of people that utilize an area of land that is restricted by four sides" and is named specifically as for instance the Egyptian *umma* or the Hijazi *umma*. This group of people develops their area of land has the goal to live there while benefitting from its bounties for the rest of their lives without having to leave this place (leaving it liveable for the next generation) (Al-Marsafi 2011, 26-27). Thus, he indicates that the *umma* should be like a home for its community and that they should defend it. They, moreover, should not let anyone else into that home, except for work, visit or residence. And lastly, he emphasizes that there are restrictions that are known and that they have to respect and abide by. Only then is the rise of the *umma* is possible or else it would turn into a worse state then the wild animals (Al-Marsafi 2011, 27-29). Again, it is very clear that al-Marsafi is invoking strong notions of nationalism and patriotism that restrict the actual meaning of the *umma* (see Chapter 2). Al-Marsafi seems to attempt calling for jihad. He invokes a moral imperative upon all Muslims to defend their home (Egypt) against any intruder (the British and Khedives) "nobody should be allowed in one's home unless for service, visiting, or living but even for those purposes there are certain limits" (Al-Marsafi 2011, 27-29); (Mirza 2014, 162). It is interesting however to notice here that this by him suggested "real meaning" of the *umma* clashes with that, which was observed during the early period of the prophet in Medina. The opinion that was emphasized in classical Qurʾan Scholars as al-Razi (d. 925), al-Isfahani (d. 967) and others was that the concept of *umma* in Qurʾan was the first to break through the tribal structures of the communities and form them into supra-tribal entities that are abiding by a common constitution, which is the

constitution of Medina. At the time of the Prophet tribal structures were predominant in the Arab region (Widhyoga 2017, 114); (al-Ahsan 1992). Al- Ahsan argues that at that time the tribal identities were even more important than their ethnic (Arab) identity (Al-Ahsan 1992, 611). The prophets hijra to Medina marked a transformative moment in the history of Islamic Political Thought, because of the fact that the prophet founded a new social and political structure that slowly dismantled the so far existing tribal structures (Al-Ahsan 1992, 611). At the same time, it marked the pivotal shift from a tribal to a trans-local identity. The communities were basing their belonging to a group no longer exclusively on the basis of kinship, but beyond that on the basis of religion and I would add to that also on the basis of a universal moral worldview (e.g. Jews living in Medina with the Muslims) (Widhyoga 2017, 116). Nevertheless, people did identify themselves with their tribe, but it was no longer the most important and authoritative identity. His trans-tribal constitution of Medina (*saḥifat al-Madina*) offered anyone who joins the Medinan community whether they are from the same tribe /ethnic group or not, protection (Al-Ahsan 1992, 611). It is noticeable from the constitution of Medina that the prophet's objective was to break the tribal structure and form a new community out of it that is driven by the divine law and its moral mission.

Nevertheless, that does not necessarily mean that the condition of joining this *umma* is purely religious, due to the fact that the constitution mentions the Jews as an *umma* alongside the Muslims in article 28: "*wa inna yahūda bāni ʿafw umma maʿa al-muslimin*" (Lecker 2004, 35). The First and the second article of the constitution, moreover, define the Muslims and *muʾminūn* of Quraysh as and Yathrib as well as anyone who joins and follows them as one community out of many others (*umma min dūni al-nās*) (Lecker 2004, 35).While Watt argues that this article indicates that Jews and Muslims were one *umma,*

al-Ahsan and Denny disagree and argue that it means the Jews were an *umma* alongside the Muslim *umma* (Widhiyoga 2017, 117); (Al- Ahsan 1992, 613). Whether they are one united *umma* or two *umam* living together through this constitution, it's important to point out here is that there is a pluralistic notion in the political and social structure of the prophets' time in Medina that stays in contradiction with al-Marsafi's argumentation.

The last possible definition of *umma* according to him is the *umma* tied by religion. For him it is a community that follows a prophet and abides by the *shariʿa*. They don't get divided upon the differences that exist between the *madhāhib* (Al-Marsafi 2011, 27-29). Mirza argues that his emphasis on a religious tied community aims to remind people about the centrality of *ʿulamaʾ* (Mirza 2014, 160). When it comes to a community tied by religion al-Marsafi emphasizes the importance of tolerance between the *madhāhib.* He argues that if there is no tolerance between the differences that exist within the *madhāhib* (Al-Marsafi 2011, 29-31). As long as one follows the prophet and Gods law the community can be referred to as an *umma* tied by religion, but if the personal interests and desires are stronger than their commitment to the rules of their religion, they start following their desires and corrupt their souls thereby. In this case he argues, they are far away from being an *umma* tied by religion. "*fa idhā kanū kadhalika lam yakūnū ummat dīn wa kana al-dīn baynahum isman laisa lahu musammā*" (Al-Marsafi 2011, 29-31). Another aspect he mentions is the importance of a united community as to his opinion this is the strength of an *umma* tied by religion, he goes back to *ayāt* from the Qurʾan and Hadith narrations that underline his argument (Al-Marsafi 2011, 29-31). Apart from the uniting factor of the *umma* he seems to be invoking and emphasising a moral dimension that is connected with righteous behaviour and the practice of morally fruitful actions. He therefore defines the main essence of the religious *umma* as a community that takes the obligation to enjoin people to do good deeds and prevent them from the bad or wrong, which is related to the qurʾanic

concept of Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong. The principle of Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong is an act that has to be repeated until doing good deeds becomes a habit for the people (Al-Marsafi 2011, 33-36). Nevertheless, he restricts the practice of this principle to various groups who are, according to him, the eligible group of people that are in charge or responsible for this task. For him the Friday preachers are the least eligible, whereas the *ʿulamāʾ* and the preachers (*al-waʿāẓ*) were closer as they are more morally conscious of what is right and what is wrong (Al-Marsafi 2011, 33-35).

His vision becomes clear towards the end of the chapter, when he starts questioning the existence of the *umma* and comes to the conclusion that the *umma* tied by religion did not exist, is not existing, but has to exist. We see a contrast here to the writings of Al-Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyya were the assumption of an existent *umma* is self-evident and thus the focus of study was more on the role which that existing *umma* played in relation to governance. Al-Marsafi, however does not discuss the role of the *umma* from a political dimension in detail but rather confirms the idea of *umma* as equivalent to that of the state that ought to protect its citizens from foreign invasion. He tackles the obligation of Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong of the group which ought to be proceeded by the *ʿulamaʾ* yet they are restricted within the moral dimension and do not seem to interfere in political issues. His objective is to argue and convince the reader that realising the *umma* and reviving its existence is connected to an educational project consisting of three factors 1) Schools, that engage in teaching good humanities, 2) Organisations, that aim at teaching the culture of socialising and how to deal in a well-mannered way with people, he further explains that youth and older men shall gather to discuss daily concerns of their society to facilitate their lives and 3) Media, that is not excessive, but rather reporting the news that are relevant for that time either to let them benefit from it or to warn them (Al-Marsafi

2011, 35- 39). His vision for a better functioning *umma* is including the engagement of thinking about a beneficial education system and its empowerment by the Egyptian intellectuals. Thus, the *umma* shall be successful when the goal would be the realization of truth, the establishment of consciousness (or good deeds) and the attainment of righteousness.

3.6 Sayyid's reconceptualization beyond the idea of the nation-state

What has changed after al-Marsafi during the 20th -21st Century? It is not feasible to trace all of the understandings of *umma* in that period; however, this subchapter will offer a brief insight into one transformation of the conceptualisation of *umma* in contemporary Islamic Political Thought by a distinguished Scholar with diasporic background, namely Salman Sayyid. He is an Islamicate Scholar of Decolonial Thought and considerably Islamic Political Thought, that is situated in the 21th Century, the so-called Postcolonial World[25]. As the founder of the new field *Critical Muslim Studies* and as the Founding Editor of the Journal *ReOrient* he encourages decolonial approaches that go beyond the binary of the West and non-West. As, the contemporary Muslim world seems to be facing, on a daily basis, many humanitarian crimes, genocide, terrorism, racism, a rise of populism and civil wars, it led many Scholars to rethink the idea of the indispensable nation-state. The question of whether the standardized political system of a modern nation-state is failing to achieve its supposed objective of justice, peace and stability and yet whether there is an alternative form of governance, started to form the framework of academic discussions.[26] In light of Al-Marsafi's understanding of *umma* as the Egyptian nation Salman Sayyids question of

[26] See Opello, Walter. The Nation-State and Global Order. A Historical Introduction to Contemporary Politics, 1999.

whether being a member of the *umma* can be the same as belonging to a nation is very useful (Sayyid 2014, 99). Salman Sayyid points in his reconceptualization of the *umma* towards the idea that "Islam interrupts the logic of the nation by highlighting the problem of integration; that is, how to include various populations within the boundaries of a nation, while at the same time focusing on the problem of their loyalties to an edifice larger than the nation" (Sayyid 2014, 103). Similarly, Wael Hallaq emphasises that the nation-state claims all sovereignty and removes the sovereignty of the divine in order to project all legislative power on the nation-state itself (Hallaq 2009). Yet throughout the Islamic discursive tradition there has been a recurring emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of God and the divine law (*shariʿa*) how can Muslim Scholars as al-Marsafi accommodate an essential value of the Islamic tradition in order to fit the standard of the modern nation-state?

Salman Sayyid argues for a globalised *umma* by stating that there is an explicit assertion of Muslim subjectivity which had reached all Muslim communities, in addition to this assertion of Muslim subjectivity, Muslims are heavily represented in several migrant communities in the West. And lastly, the fact that Muslims /Migrant Muslims tended to live in urban areas which consequently allow them to develop networks with each other and converge around their commonalities, emphasises the existence of a global *umma* as a social reality. Hence, the potential conditions of an articulation of a global *umma* are fulfilled (Sayyid 2014, 103).

As the nation, according to him has a limited and restricted nature and is in fact exclusionary, the Universalism of the nation-state, is consequently based on exclusion rather than inclusion "The universal nation can be an exceptional grouping, an incarnation

of all that is considered to be great and good; it can be infinite in a temporal sense, but spatially it has to be bounded, it cannot expand forever."(Sayyid 2014, 103) He contrasts this idea with the nature or essence of the *umma,* which allows according to him for more inclusion "The idea of the *umma* rejects all such limits and its universalism and implicit expansionism is constantly reiterated." (Sayyid 2014, 104). As he lists all of the characteristics which the *umma* is not, such as nation or way of life, he questions whether the difficulty of identifying the *umma* suggest another tragedy, namely that the idea of a Muslim identity is nothing more than a "chimera" (Sayyid 2014, 104). After pointing out the fragmentary nature of Muslim identity he suggests for an alternate usage of the *umma* as a Muslim diaspora. In order to justify his choice, he explains the essence of diaspora as a concept and attempts to extend it theoretically in order for it to fit his idea of *umma* as diaspora. Diaspora is usually utilized in a descriptive manner to refer to "an empirical situation in which settler communities are relocated from their ordinary homes" (Sayyid 2014, 105). The concept of diaspora rests on three coordinates: homeland, displacement and settlement. Sayyid however, suggests a reconceptualization of diaspora from a demographic to a political meaning by expanding the idea of diaspora beyond its descriptive meaning (Sayyid 2014, 105-17). Thereby, Diaspora grows into an anti-national phenomenon because nations "define 'home' whereas diaspora is a condition of homelessness." (Sayyid 2014, 108) His definition of *umma*: "By seeing Muslim identity as diasporic it is possible to affirm its political nature, while accepting that it is without a state. Since it is not a specific empirical group of Muslim population that is diasporic (for example Palestinians), but it is being a Muslim itself that is in a condition of diaspora." (Sayyid 2014, 114).

3.7 Conclusion of Chapter Two

The Genre of Islamic Political Thought offers a far-reaching engagement between the concept of *umma* and the theory of governance. Although the political setting of the Classical Scholars al-Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyya is different due to the fact that the caliphate still existed and their conceptualisation of *umma* was drawn in relation to maintaining the existing caliphate, the *umma* played a political role in their theory of governance. After the Decline of the Caliphate Scholars, from al-Marsafi in the nineteenth century to Salman Sayyid in the twenty-first, have sought in various ways to find alternative modes through which Muslims can theorise governance. The concept of the *umma* seems to play a decisive role in the new emerging theories. This indicates the centrality that the *umma* plays in the Islamic political organisation. The Emergence of the Egyptian nation-state can be dated back to 1882 one year after the Urabi-Revolt was at its most decisive phase, but also ultimately failed due to the British invasion that brought Tawfiq pasha to power. Thus, the publishing of Marsafi's book marks the culmination of a period of events that saw the emergence of an Egyptian national consciousness that al-Marsafi tries to contribute to. It is likewise a crucial turning point for the *ʿulamaʾ* as they remained distant from politics and increased thereby the distance between Egypt's political institutions, but al-Marsafi as a high *ʿālim* from al-Azhar was defining political terms. What would that mean for the status of *ʿulamāʾ*? (Mirza 2014, 158).

Moreover, al-Marsafi is part of a movement, that offers a definition of *umma* that challenges the until that time dominant position of Islam being incompatible with nationalism. He argues that Islam can accommodate loyalty to the nation (Mirza 2014, 159). By trying to accommodate Islam to certain modern constructions as Nationalism and Modernity it could be argued that he is be part of the general mode of thinking that was

present at the Age of Nationalism in Egypt. Under the reign of Muhammad ʿAli Pasha, first attempts of a modernization process were made in the Muslim World that contributed greatly to the Arab appreciation for the West.[27] "Islam must accommodate modernity and modernity must accommodate Islam". This slogan was the objective of generations of Muslim scholars such as al-Afghani (d. 1897), Muhammad ʿAbduh, and Rashid Rida. They believed that Islam and Modernity, including the concept of a nation-state, are reconcilable (Milton-Edwards 2005, 451). Some of the important Muslim Reformists who were in favour of the nation-state included Rifaʿa Rafiʿ al-Ṭahṭawi (d. 1873)[28] and Khayr al-Din al-Tunsi (d. 1889)[29]. They both defended the modern nation-state as an idea that should be implemented in Muslim countries, as it was in Europe, because it is a state that is based on one of the most important values in Islam; the concept of justice (Belkeziz 2009, 11); (Abu Lughod 2011, 104-113). As with other Scholars and Muslim Thinkers, they argue that although the nation-state and Islam may be theoretically incompatible, it has become a fact of life that has to be accepted and dealt with (Piscatori 1986, 82).

When looking back at the three interconnected dimensions of the concept of *umma*, it is interesting to notice that Al-Marsafi in contrast differentiates between the three possibilities of an *umma* instead of combing them. The *umma* is thereby either political in reference to the nation-state, genealogical tied to a language and descent, or religious by invoking and enforcing morality premised on *shariʿa*. Apart from that, he claims that he is reforming the concept of *umma* and reclaiming its original meaning, yet his chapter is a representation of

[27]He aimed at modernizing the Egyptian society and imitate Europe in its industrial advancement. See Belkeziz, ʿAbdelilah. The state in contemporary Islamic thought: a historical survey of the major Muslim political thinkers of the modern era, 2009, 17; Abu-Lughod, Ibrahim. The Arab Rediscovery of Europe. A Study in Cultural Encounters, 2011, 15.
[28] See Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ. Takhlīs al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz, 1993.
[29] See Al-Tunisi, Khayr al-Din. The Surest Path to Knowledge Concerning the Conditions of Countries, 72-99.

a modernised conception of *umma* that fits in the political and social context of that time in Egypt. The classical definitions of *umma* did not include a strict territorial restriction with border policies as has been illustrated in the first chapter. On the Other hand, Salman Sayyid's project seems to lay in contrast with al-Marsafi's. Instead of accommodating Islamic principles to fit the new emerging Modern Structure, Sayyid's conceptualisation of the *umma* is an attempt to deconstruct the existing narrative that according to him is dominated by "Westernese" or hegemonic Western discourses. Sayyid attempts to analyse the displacements by which the decolonisation of the *umma* continues to be disavowed by attempts to defer Muslim capacity to project themselves into the future. Hence, he points out that the dilemma is, that there is no epistemological or political space for the Muslim *umma* to assert itself, and yet it exists in a fragmented way.

CONCLUSION

Despite its limitations, the Conceptual History of the *umma* briefly sketched here reveals important features. By delving into the different understandings of *umma* throughout time and across genres and approaches, the thesis has shown how the qurʾanic concept of *umma* serves variously as a tool for Islamicate Scholars to understand and respond to the circumstances of their time. This study relied on two hermeneutical approaches to understand 1) how Scholars have sought to grasp the intended meaning of the qurʾanic term (which we might call "intentionalism"), and 2) how the understanding of *umma* has varied, transformed and expanded throughout both genres ("conceptual history"). The first approach revealed the importance of etymology and the efforts of scholars to trace the origins of the concept to a collective that seeks or strives (*qaṣada*) towards a common element. The second approach showed a clear transformation of the concept of *umma* in the tafsir-genre as well as in Islamic Political Thought. A reason that can explain these differences in interpretation lies perhaps in the theoretical abstractness of the concept. Th Qur'an allows for multiple interpretations of the *umma* in various political, social and historical contexts. Another reason for these transformations could lie in an attempt to change the narrative from an outside source, e.g. epistemic colonisation of the conception. This explanation would, however, need further studies to explore its plausibility.

The thesis has also sought to demonstrated how the boundaries between Islamic Political Thought and Tafsir works have been blurred in the modern period as we can be seen most clearly in the works of Fazlur Rahman and Sayyid Qutb. Their "*tafāsīr*" include extensive contributions to Islamic Political Thought and hence fall outside traditional categories. The expansion of Islamic political thought beyond its conventional borders can be seen in Salman Sayyid's position. The difficulty one faces in categorizing his position stems from

the fact that Sayyid undoubtedly is contributing to the field of Islamic Political Thought and yet he does not always draw upon the classical sources of Islamic Political Thought in his definitions and theoretical explanations.

Although the three selected categories of the *umma* – religious, moral and political – have their limits, they have been heuristically useful for illustrating some shifting emphases in the understanding of the *umma*. In the modern period the emphasis is shifting towards politics. The importance of *umma* as a political community and the centre of authority appears to be a function of the contexts of Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Colonialism in the absence of a Caliphate. It is thus understandable that the concept of *umma* has been utilized as an alternative tool, whether for responding to or for resisting a global political structure that is disconnected from divine law and divine sovereignty. Thus, even Al-Marsafi who adapts the narrative of the nation-state, still uses the concept of *umma* in order to assert a certain religious and moral dimension before it gets lost in the structure of the secular and liberal nation-state structure that was about to emerge in Egypt. Salman Sayyid offers a definition of *umma* that affirms the abstraction of the idea of *umma* in the Qurʾan and highlights the condition which the Muslim *umma* is facing in the 21st century, i.e., the failure to assert a Muslim Subjectivity. In spite all of those different dimensions and meanings that are stressed by the selected Scholars, it would be presumptuous to argue for the loss of the original meaning of the *umma* or for its corruption, as the grounding element that is apparent in all definitions throughout genre and time is the religious dimension. Beyond these differences, the three genres discussed here - lexicography, *tafsīr*, and Islamic Political Thought - arguably provide a better understanding of the interconnected nature of the *umma*. In this understanding, the religious dimensions (*taqwa*, *islām*) requires morality (*wasaṭ, al-ʾamr bil-maʿrūf wal-nahy ʿan al-munkar*) to function, and the moral dimension

can only function in a political setting (*al-imāma/khilāfa*), because the definition of the term justice which is attributed to the *umma* presupposes a governing authority to the political community which is the moderate middle (2:143) in order to establish justice.

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