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**A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
TO THE RISE AND EVOLUTION OF *SHĪ'ISM***

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A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE RISE AND EVOLUTION OF SHĪ'ISM

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Abstract:

The majority of *Imāmī* scholars, known as twelvers, believe that the Prophet explicitly appointed 'Alī as his successor and consequently, illegitimate the caliphate of the first three caliphs. However, other Shī'ite sects outside the twelvers, like the *Zaydīs*, legitimize their succession. For *Imāmīs*, 'Alī and his sons are the inheritors of Prophethood. They claim that Prophethood passes on to the descendants. The concept of imamate for *Imāmīs*, is a continuous divine obligation and that the Imam is divinely selected and infallible. Whatever the *Imāmī* scholars try to argue, their claims were refuted by Sunnī scholars who comment that 'Alī gave his allegiance to them, accepted to work with them willingly and gave his daughter Umm Kulthūm to 'Umar in marriage. In addition, the groups that constituted the army of 'Alī did not represent a regular party with absolute obedience to 'Alī or common attitude towards his family. The *Sunnī* scholars subscribe to the view that the word *Shī'ah* was used at that time in the pure literal sense which means followers and supporters. The word was used to describe either sides; it was said *shī'at* 'Alī and *shī'at* Mu'āwiyah. Therefore, the rise of *Shī'ism* was merely political and Ḥusayn's martyrdom marks the beginning of the transformation of *Shī'ah* from a political movement to distinctive religious sect within Islam. In other words, Shī'ism evolved during the Umayyad dynasty but it took firm roots during the Abbasid reign. The issue of Succession played a vital role in the evolution of *Shī'ism*. There are the moderates and *ghulāt* (radicals) of *Shī'ah*. Among the different *Shī'ite* sects, the *twelvers* represent the majority of *Shī'ah* nowadays.

Keywords: The Rise Of Shī'ism, Imamate, Shī'ite Sects, Saba'īs, Foreign Elements In Making Shī'ism

خلفية تاريخية لنشأة التشيع وتطوره

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الملخص:

يؤمن جمهور علماء الإمامية الإثنا عشرية بوجود نص من النبي يوصي بالخلافة من بعده لعلي بن أبي طالب، وبالتالي تبرؤوا من الخلفاء السابقين له. ويعتقد الإمامية أن علي و ذريته ورثوا النبوة وأن النبوة يمكن أن تورث. إن مفهوم الإمامة بالنسبة لهم واجب إلهي مستمر ويشدّدون على وجوب عصمة الإمام وأنه معين من قبل الله. لكن دعواهم هذه فتدّها علماء أهل السنة مغللين قبول علي لخلافتهم والعمل تحت إمرتهم بالإضافة إلى تزويجه ابنته أم كلثوم لعمر. إن الجماعات التي شكلت جيش علي حينها لم تمثل حزبا مستقلا مع أهداف وموقف واحد من تولي أهل بيته. يؤكد علماء أهل السنة أن كلمة الشيعة استخدمت في هذا الوقت بمعناها الحرفي الخالص بمعنى نصير أو موالي، كما كان يقال شيعة علي وشيعة معاوية كوصف لأي من الفريقين. بدأ التشيع كحراك سياسي بعد مقتل الخليفة الثالث ثم تطور مفهومه إلى فرقة دينية خاصة بعد مقتل الحسين. والحق أن الشيعة فيهم المعتدلين كما أن فيهم الغلاة وتمثل الإمامية الإثنا عشرية غالبية جمهور الشيعة في العصر الحاضر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نشأة التشيع، الإمامة، فرق الشيعة، السبئية، العناصر الأجنبية في صنع التشيع.

INTRODUCTION

The end of 'Uthmān's reign witnessed the insemination of alien ideas in naive minds, which soon turned to devilish schemes seeking to wreak strife in Muslim community. The easy-going Policy which 'Uthmān adopted in his governance beside the revolt in some governorates demanding 'Uthmān to remove their governors, this over-lenient approach led some ignorant people to show no respect to the caliph to the extent that they demanded him to step down. In addition to that, the virtuous companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī introduced the idea of equal distribution of wealth among all Muslims. This claim found huge numbers of supporters especially among the poor class. All these problems would not have been so effective but for the patronage of 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba'¹. (Al-Ṭabarī 1387 AH, 4/340) Though few noble companions, like Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr and Muḥammad Ibn Abū Ḥudhayfah, were opposing to 'Uthmān, this opposition was because of personal reasons. The former was a supporter of 'Alī because they were related to each other. As for the later, he opposed 'Uthmān because 'Uthmān did not appoint him for any political position. (Ibn Kathīr 1988, 7/191) When the news of the complaints of the people of the provinces reached the caliph, he delegated four of the noble companions to discuss these complaints. He sent Usāmah Ibn Zayd to Baṣrah, Muḥammad Ibn Maslamah to Kūfah (both in Iraq), 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar to Syria, and finally 'Ammār Ibn Yāsir was sent to Egypt. The first three delegates returned with the result that these claims had no basis. But 'Ammār was deceived by some people in Egypt who managed to sway him to their side. Those people included 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba', Kinānah Ibn Bishr and others. (Al-Ṭabarī 1387 AH, 4/341)

'Uthmān issued an announcement to all provinces that those who had a complaint should present before the caliph to file their petitions, but none filed any complaint. However, the rebels continued their uprising the matter that showed that it was not mere individual complaints. The situation proved to be worse than that. Some of those who were hostile to the caliph marched to Medina (lit. al-Madīnah) with the intention of deposing him. They conspired to kill him but he was informed about their conspiracies. Some companions advised him to retaliate them to get rid of their dangers. However, 'Uthmān, out of his leniency, did not listen to the advice of the companions. Instead, he started negotiating them and persuaded them with the majority of his answers. To their resentment, the rebels took advantage of

¹ He was a Jewish who claimed to be a Muslim at the reign of 'Uthmān. He harbored his resentment to Muslims and sought to spread mischief making use of the political disorder at the end of 'Uthmān's reign.

people's anger with 'Uthmân's policy, particularly appointing his relatives in public offices, and incited people against him. 'Uthmân wisely handled the matter and sent to the governors of the provinces to meet with him to discuss the urgent issues. When 'Uthmân consulted the matter with the governors and ordered them to show leniency with the rebels, they refused to abide by these orders and blamed him for not dealing strictly with them before the matter had deteriorated to that extent. (Ibn Kathîr 1988, 7/187) 'Uthmân never expected that people would breach their pledge of allegiance. In year 35 Ah, some people from Egypt and Iraq set for ḥajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) harboring their true intentions; which is to demand the caliph to remove the governors of their provinces. If he refused, he should resign, otherwise, they would use force. (Ibn Kathîr 1988, 7/194)

A letter with 'Uthmân's seal, in which 'Uthmân orders the governor of Egypt to kill the negotiators upon their return to Egypt, was forged. (Al-Ṭabarî 1387 AH, 4/355) This matter sowed bitter hatred against the caliph and instead of returning to their homes, the negotiators went to the caliph and showed him the letter, which he disclaimed. (Ibn Kathîr 1988, 7/196) Then, they asked that his scribe should be presented. 'Uthmân refused lest they may kill him. They insisted on their demand which he refused to answer. (Ibn Kathîr 1988, 7/202) Upon persistence in his stance, the rebels laid a siege to 'Uthmân's house and prevented him from going out. (Ibn Kathîr 1988, 7/198) 'Uthmân sent a letter to the people of the Muslim provinces and as soon as the letter reached. Troops were directed to Medina to lift the siege. (Al-Ṭabarî 1387 AH, 4/351-352) The young people like al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and 'Abdullâh Ibn al-Zubayr hastened to save the caliph and provided him with water and food. The instigators decided to end their mission before the support came to the caliph. They tried to break into 'Uthmân's house, but some companions resisted them. After a siege lasted twenty days, some of the rebels climbed the walls of the caliph's house and attacked him while he was reciting the Qur'an. This strife did not end at 'Uthmân's death. Another file of violence and mischief continued during the reign of the fourth caliph. The conspirators insisted on enforcing their plots against Islam and persisted in instigating Muslims against each other. These plots were headed by 'Abdullâh Ibn Saba' who started to inject his ideas into the Muslim community making use of these disorders. The ensuing war between 'Alî and Mu'âwiyah left some ignorant people who were seduced by the ideas of Ibn Saba' and introduced some alien beliefs which afterwards constituted the basis for the rising *Shi'ite* beliefs.

1. The definition of *Shi'ism*

1.1. The lexical definition

The Arabic word *Shi'ah* is derived from the root word *shâya'a*, which means to support and be partisan of somebody. In *Lisân al-'Arab*, *Shi'ah* denotes a distinct group of people who agree with one another in following a cause. *Shi'ah* literally means a partisan of somebody. Al-Azharî says: *Shi'ah* are those who follow each other's opinions, albeit they are not totally in agreement. (Ibn Manzûr n.d., 188-199) This term was commonly understood as the partisans of 'Ali and his family. Later on, it became a special designation for them. When it is said: so and so are *Shi'ah* or follow their *Madhhab*, it is understood that they belong to that specific group. (Al-Zabîdî n.d., 303) In the days of *Sahâbah*, this term was used to be understood in its very literal sense, and became widely used at the time of disagreement between 'Ali and Mu'âweyah; every one of them had his own followers and supporters (*Shi'ahs*). Later on, the term was used to designate that political party; those who consider the succession to the Prophet to be the special right of the family of the Prophet and follow the school of the prophet's household. The author of *A'yân al-Shi'ah* writes:

"...Then after the death of 'Uthmân and the rebellion of Mu'âwiyah with his party against 'Ali asking the revenge for Uthmân's murder, Mu'âwiyah managed to recruit a great number of Muslims, who became known as 'Uthmânîs and the followers of 'Ali was called 'Alawîs." (Al-Amîn 1983, 1/19) (Trans. is mine)

1.2 The definition of *Shi'ism* according to *Shi'ite* scholars

Shi'ite scholars insist on giving *Shi'ism* an earlier origin, claiming that its origin dates back to the time of the Prophet, or even before. The word *Shi'ah* is defined by al-Nawbakhtî as a reference to 'Alî's party, called as *Shi'ah* of 'Ali ('Alî's partisans) in the days of the prophet and after him, they are known for following 'Alî and confessing his *Imamate* (succession to the prophet). (Al-Nawbakhtî 2012, 51) Al-mufîd- known as *Shaykh* of *Shi'ah*- claims that the word *Shi'ah* may be added to another word, for example: *Shi'ah* of 'Alî or *Shi'ah* of Banū Umayyah, etc. but when the definite article (al-, the) is added, the term becomes special for the followers of 'Ali, who believe that the succession to the prophet is his due right and denounce the succession of the former caliphs. (Al-Mufîd 1413 AH, 35) This definition explicitly repeals the succession of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. As noticed also in other words of al-Mufîd in the book of *al-Irshâd*; he states that The *Imamate* of 'Ali after the prophet was supposed to be thirty years. For twenty-four years, he

was deprived of taking it over and did not demand it practicing *Taqiyyah* (dissimulation of faith), as it was the situation with the prophet who, out of fear, was forced to conceal his *Da'wah* for some years in *Makkah*. (Al-Mufīd 2008, 1/9) This claim, no doubt, is vain as it opposes what the Muslim majority believe of the validity of the caliphate of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Besides, it is not expected from such a noble and courageous knight like 'Alī to harbor a desire for succession, if found, for that long period out of fear or cowardice. Moreover, we do not need to fend off the false accusation of the prophet's concealment of 'Alī's right to succession after him whatever reasons were found. All Muslims believe that the prophet delivered the message of Allah intact as revealed to him with no addition nor omission. Had this been the right of 'Alī, it would have been mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an or the *Sunnah* of the prophet.

In the book of *al-Zīnah* of Abu Ḥātim al-Razī, *Shī'ah* is a term given to those who accompanied 'Alī, in the days of the messenger of Allah and were affiliated to him...it was said *Shī'ah* of 'Alī. (Al-Amīn, 2001, 1/19) As noticed, these definitions have no reference whatsoever to the most prominent tenets of *Shī'ism*, like the succession after 'Alī, the chain of alleged *Imāms*, *Naṣṣ* and *Waṣīyah*. That means that these tenets crept into *Shī'ism* by later generations of *Shī'ī* scholars.

1.3 The definition of *Shī'ism* according to Orientalists

Orientalists view that the term *Shī'ah* as a designation for the partisans of 'Alī against those of 'Uthmān. The partisans of 'Alī preferred him to other companions of the Prophet and believed (and still believed by present *Shī'ah*) in the *Naṣṣ* for 'Alī, the existence of an explicit statement of the Prophet to inherit the Imamate. In the encyclopedia of Islam:

"... It refers to the movement upholding a privileged position of the Family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) in the political and religious leadership of the Muslim Community. The name is derived from *Shī'ah* i.e. the party or partisans of 'Alī, which was first used in the inter-Muslim war during Ali's caliphate distinguishing them from the *Shī'ah of 'Uthmān*, the partisans of the murdered caliph 'Uthmān opposed to 'Alī." (Bosworth 1997, 9/420)

Julius Wellhausen asserts the late rise of the term *Shī'ah* upon the murder of 'Uthmān. At that time, he comments, Islam divided into two parties, the party of 'Alī and that of Mu'āwiyah. The party in Arabic is called *Shī'ah*. Thus the *Shī'ah* of 'Alī countered the *Shī'ah* of Mu'āwiyah. But when Mu'āwiyah was appointed as ruler of Muslim state, the term *Shī'ah* became confined to those who followed 'Alī." (Wellhausen 1958, 146) The term, to orientalists, was merely political. The

opposition to 'Uthmân was inherently a political and social revolt but later acquired a religious form. (Guillaume 1956, 117) It was used to differentiate between the two opposing parties: the party of 'Alî confronting the party of Mu'âwiyah. Thus it will be nonsense to claim that the term has any existence before 'Ali's caliphate.

1.4 The definition of *Shi'ism* according to *Sunnî* scholars:

The definitions of *Shi'ism* by *Sunnî* Scholars suggests that the term has varied understandings. They assert its political origin and refuse to confess its existence before 'Alî's caliphate. Al-Ash'arî (d.324) states that the word *Shi'ah* means those who adhered to 'Alî and preferred him to any companion of the prophet. (Al-Ash'arî 2005, 1/25) While Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456 AH) asserts the centrality of Imamate in defining the term. He states that whoever believes 'Alî is the best of men after the messenger of Allah and the most deserving of *Imâmah* (Muslim leadership) and so are his descendants after him is a *Shi'i*, even if he differs in beliefs other than what we have just mentioned, otherwise, he is not." (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 2/90) It is worth mentioning that later *Shi'ite* scholars adopt the definition of Ibn Ḥazm, as they find it more inclusive than that of earlier *Shi'ite* scholars; whose definitions did not mention the succession after 'Alî. Noticeably, the notion of *Shi'ism* varied over ages. At early times, it meant the group that supported 'Ali politically and preferred him to 'Uthmân. Later words were added to the definition to digest the developed creeds.

Al-Shahrastânî (d. 548 AH) says that *Shi'ah* are those who give special adherence to 'Alî Ibn Abū Ṭâlib and confess, secretly or publicly, his right to *Imamate* through *Naṣṣ* (a report from the Prophet) or *Waṣiyyah* (by legacy). They believe, he continues, that *Imamate* should not fail any of his descendants, and if it were to fail any of them, it would be an act of oppression and usurpation by a rival or a *practice of Taqiyyah* (dissimulation of faith). (Al-Shahrastânî n.d., 1/146) Though this definition mentions *Naṣṣ* and *Waṣiyyah*, it is still free of other *Shi'i* creeds like *Ghaybah* (occultation), *Raj'ah*² or *Badâ'*. Al-Suyūṭî (d. 911 AH) in his *Tafsîr* does not mention any special definition of the word *Shi'ah* other than its general notion, as diverse parties. In Qur'ân: (6: 65), al-Suyūṭî interprets the word *Shi'ah* as meaning "different parties". In (Q. 6: 159), he comments: "It means different parties, innovating sects and heretics. 'Abdul-Razzâq narrated through his chain from Qatâdah who said: "They are the Jews and the Christians..." (Al-Suyūṭî n.d., 3/403)

² the belief that *Shi'ite* Imams will return to this world before the day of resurrection to retaliate for their oppression and to enforce justice.

2. The emergence of *Shī'ism*

2.1 The emergence of *Shī'ism* according to *Shī'ite* scholars

Shī'ite scholars hold different views about the exact date of the birth of *Shī'ism*. Some allege that it started even before the prophet's message, and every prophet of Allah was asked to believe in 'Alī's *Wilāyah*, and that it was ordained along with *Tawḥīd* (Islamic monotheism) to all creations, for it the covenant was taken, and prophets were sent. *Shī'ite* scholars build their understanding on (Q.3:81) they view that the covenant has been taken from the prophets to believe in the message of the Prophet Muḥammad and to support 'Alī. Al-Baḥrānī reports from Abū 'Abdullāh (Imam Ja'far) who said that Allah has not sent a Prophet from Adam, and so forth, except that he would return to this world and support 'Alī, and that Allah's saying **{and you must support him}**, Means to support 'Alī, And Allah, he continues, never sent a Prophet nor a messenger except he made a Covenant for Muḥammad with the Prophethood and for 'Alī with the *Wilāyah*". (Al-Baḥrānī, 2006, 2/60-61) The view that *Wilāyah*, the core of *Shī'ism*, is preached along with *Tawḥīd* is also articulated in a narration by al-Kulaynī from Abu Ja'far (Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir) who interprets the Ayah **{The Trustworthy Spirit [i.e., Gabriel] has brought it down}** (Q.26:193), as a reference to the legality of the *Wilāyah* of 'Alī. (Al-Kulaynī 2007, 1/259)

For some *Shī'īs*, the Prophet was the first one to put the seed of *Shī'ism*, and some *Ṣaḥābah* befriended "*Shāya'a*" 'Alī at the time of the prophet. Al-Qummī says that the partisans of 'Alī Ibn Abu Ṭālib were called *Shī'ah* of 'Alī at the time of the prophet and after him, known for their loyalty to him ('Alī) and used to confess his right of Imamate. He names some companions of the Prophet as partisans of 'Alī, like: al- Miqdād, Salmān, Abu Dharr, 'Ammār and some others. (Al-Qummī 1321 AH, 15) While some other *Shī'ite* scholars claim that it dates back to the death of the prophet and the difference about the most deserving one of succession to him. Al-Nawbakhtī states that Muslims were divided into three groups after the Prophet's death. One group was called *Shī'ah*, who were the partisans of 'Alī, and from them the different sects of *Shī'ah* have emerged. (Al-Nawbakhtī 2012, 31)

Ibn al-Nadīm (d.384 AH) dates the rise of *Shī'ism* back to the battle of al-Jamal³ stating that when 'Alī directed to Ṭalḥah and al-Zubayr to fight them so that they may submit to Allah's command, as he claims, those who followed him then were

³ a revolution against 'Alī, during his reign, by some companions to demand the revenge for 'Uthmān's murder.

called *Shī'ah*, as 'Alī used to call them "my *Shī'ah*". (Ibn al-Nadīm 1997, 217) As for al-Ṭabaṭabā'ī, he views that *Shī'ism* started with a reference made for the first time to the partisans of 'Alī (*shī'at* 'Alī), during the lifetime of the Prophet himself. (Al-Ṭabaṭabā'ī 1975, 34) However, in the following pages, he declares that the main cause behind the emergence of *Shī'ism* was the difference about the right to succession after the Prophet. He says:

"They protested against the act of choosing the caliph by consultation or election, and also against those who were responsible for carrying it out...It was this protest and criticism which separated from the majority the minority that were following 'Alī and made his followers known to society as the "partisans" or "*shī'ah*" of 'Alī." (Al-Ṭabaṭabā'ī 1975, 36)

Other *Shī'ite* scholars hold different opinions on the emergence of *Shī'ism* which are contrary to the above claims. For example, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' says that *Shī'ism* or *Shī'ah* had no existence at that time (the reign of Abu Bakr and 'Umar) as he believes Islam was on its sound grounds at this period. (Al-Ghiṭā' 1990, 124) This statement of Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' excludes the existence of *Shī'ism* before the era of 'Uthmān and suggests that there were no basis for it at the time of the first two caliphs. This view may agree partly with the *Sunnī* suggestion that the conspiracies made at the end of 'Uthmān's time played a vital role in planting some *Shī'ite* creeds by Ibn Saba', which were the kernel for the evolution of *Shī'ism* in the following decades.

2.2 The emergence of *Shī'ism* according to Orientalists:

Orientalists incline to date the birth of *Shī'ism* back to the clash between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah after the death of 'Uthmān. (Wellhausen 1958, 146) In the encyclopedia of Islam, "The *Shī'ah* first formed an identifiable movement in Islamic history during the First Civil War between 656 and 661 C.E...*Shī'ism* as a movement, however, burst into full view with the assassination of 'Uthmān and the ensuing civil war." (Stewart 2003, 621) The encyclopedia of the Qur'an also states that the term was used to differentiate between the followers of 'Alī and 'Uthmān's. It asserts that 'Alī's followers were called *Shī'at* 'Alī as also the partisans of 'Uthmān were called *Shī'at* 'Uthmān. (Leaman 2006, 590) While Strotmann views that Ḥusayn's murder was the start of *Shī'ism* as a creed. (Boswoth 1997, 14/59) It is obvious that orientalists uphold the view that *Shī'ism* started to rise at the end of 'Uthmān's reign. No one claim it was found before that time.

2.3 The emergence of *Shi'ism* according to *Sunni* scholars

Sunni scholars, in one way or another, agree that *Shi'ism* had no existence before the era of 'Uthmān. Nevertheless, it first emerged as a political movement. Later on, *Shi'ah* developed into theological sect and began to discuss their theological beliefs on a more theoretical level. Ibn Ḥazm dates the birth of *Shi'ism* back to the dissent in Muslim community after 'Uthmān's reign. He states that *Shi'ah* rose as an ensuing ramification of that dissent. (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 2/76) While Aḥmad Amīn views that the seed of *Shi'ism* was planted on the Prophet's death and grew afterwards. He argues that the first seed of *Shi'ism* was planted by that group of Muslims who believed that the Prophet's family members, particularly 'Ali, had a better claim to succeed the Prophet after his death in leading Muslim community. (Amīn n.d., 266) It is clear that technical *shi'ism* had no roots at the time of the companions of the Prophet. It was adopted after Ḥusayn's murder, but reference was made to the clash between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah as a means to give it spiritual sanctity. This is substantiated by the words of al-Dhahabī who argues that the *Shi'ite* extremists during the early generations of Islam were those who were notorious for speaking ill and showing disrespect to Prophet's companions, especially those who fought against 'Alī. (Al-Dhahabī 1963, 1/6) Iḥsān Ḍahīr infers that in the first era of Islam, the term *Shi'ah* was used literally to refer to a political party, and was widely used at the time of clash between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah. (Ḍahīr 1995, 37) Modern researchers subscribe to this view. (Al-Sawwāḥ 2010, 19) To Ibn Taymiyah, the term had no existence in the time of Abū Bakr or 'Umar. During the caliphate of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, he adds, no one was called *Shi'i* and none was referred to as such" (Ibn Taymiyah 2004, 2/40) this view is also substantiated by the words of Imam Muḥammad Abū Zahrah who says that their doctrines emerged at the end of 'Uthmān's age and were nourished at the time of 'Alī...and when 'Alī's descendants were oppressed and negated at the time of Umayyads, the scope of *Shi'ism* widespread and gained more followers. (Abū Zahrah n.d., 30)

Aḥmad al- Ghāmidī in his book about *Shi'ism*, concludes that *Shi'ism* is of two kinds. **First:** political, that emerged because of political reasons and objectives. He says" political *Shi'ism* rose at the time of 'Uthmān; some people took the side of 'Uthmān while others preferred 'Ali without negating the previous caliphs...thus the term was not confined to the *Shi'ah* of 'Alī" (Al-Ghāmidī 2010, 22) **Second:** dogmatic, that has an earlier ideological basis started with the figure of 'Abdullah Ibn Saba' who was the main founder and indoctrinator of *Shi'ism*. Al-Ghāmidī states that a Jewish character appeared at the time of 'Uthmān, claimed himself a Muslim

and injected new dogmas that later became the basis for *Shi'ism*. That character was 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba'. (Al-Ghāmīdī 2010, 23-24)

3. Foreign elements in making *Shi'ism*

The tenets found in *Shi'ism* seem to have a foreign background and basis, be it Persian, Jewish, or Christian. These tenets proved themselves as unfamiliar and alien to the mainstream Muslim creed and are deemed far-fetched from the spirit of Islamic faith.

3.1 The Persian element

The special partisanship of Persians to Imam al-Ḥusayn and his progeny is particularly affected by the Persian heritage and ancient dogmas; the Persians exaggerated in honoring and glorifying their ancient kings, history and ancestors. Some believe that their fore king "Keyumars"⁴ is the first son of Adam, and they are the origin and first seed of humanity." (Al-Shahrastānī n.d., 2/41)& (Al-Gharīb 1981, 19) When Muslims conquered Persia, al-Ḥusayn Ibn 'Ali married the daughter of Yazdgerd, who came with the captives. This is a fundamental reason why the Persian *Shi'ites* give a special privilege to Imam al-Ḥusayn and his progeny; that is because they are believed to have a Persian blood owing to that marriage. (Al-Gharīb 1981, 57)

Shi'ah also celebrate the day of (al-Nayrūz, or Nawrūz), an old feast of the Zoroastrians. (Al-Maqrīzī 1418 A.H, 34) It appears in Tāj al'arūs that al-Nayrūz is a Persian but were Arabicized during the dynasty of Banū 'Abbās. (Al-Zabīdī n.d., 15/349) This is confirmed also in the encyclopedia of Islam which states that Nawruz was observed in Zoroastrian Persia and has long been celebrated in areas influenced by Persian culture. (Stewart 2003, 506) Moreover, they gave to Salmān, the Persian, the rank of an infallible prophet or a revered Imam; and a later group even elevated him to divinity. (Al-Ash'arī 2005, 1/30-31) Persians used to ascribe to themselves a supreme status; they assumed that others should be servants to them. They felt they were in a grave calamity when their kingdom evaporated at the hands of the backward-they assumed- Arabs. This matter provoked their conspiracies against Muslim community in several times. (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 2/91)

Imām Muḥammad Abū Zahrah asserts the Persian influence on the matter of succession. He expounds that Arabs were accustomed to free ruling while Persians believed in hereditary system... He comments that the resemblance in the ruling

⁴appeared in medieval Zoroastrian texts as Gayōmard or Gayōmart

system and dynasticism, he suggests, reflects a notable influence of the Persian system that lead to the *shī'ite* prejudice to a ruling family. (Abū Zahrah n.d., 34-35) This resemblance was affirmed by the author of *al-Tuhfah al-Ithna'ashariyyah* as well. (Dahlawī 1373 AH, 300)

2.3 The Jewish and Christian elements:

The Jewish and Christian influence on *shī'ite* doctrines cannot be denied as it was confessed by some *Shi'ite* scholars, though others try to object to this fact. These doctrines infiltrated in *Shi'ism* at the hands of Ibn Saba', a Jewish from Yemen who appeared at the time of 'Uthmān and instigated some people against him in a revolt which ended with the murder of the third caliph. Sa'd al-Qummī says:

"'Abdullāh Ibn Saba' was a Jew; then he turned Muslim and claimed 'Alī's friendship. When he was a Jew, he had formed an exaggerated opinion regarding Joshua, the heir of Moses. So when he embraced Islam after the Prophet's death, he asserted the same opinion in respect of 'Alī. He was the first to proclaim the Divine Imamate of 'Alī. On this ground, the opponents of the *Shi'ites* say that the origin of *Shi'ism* is from Judaism." (Al-Qummī 1321 AH, 20) (Trans. is mine)

'Abdullāh Ibn Saba' was among those who claimed for 'Alī the Jewish conception of God-man. This is maintained by Al-Baghdādī (d. 429 AH) who states that Ibn Saba' planted some Jewish creeds among his followers and claimed that 'Alī will return to this worldly life. (Al-Baghdādī 1977, 223) *Shi'ah*, influenced by the teachings of Ibn Saba', said about 'Alī like that which Christians say about the Prophet Jesus who, they claim, has a divine nature. (Al-Baghdādī 1977, 225) The author of *al-Tuhfah al-Ithna'ashariyyah* mentions some influences by Judaism and Christianity. He states that the Jewish said 'leadership cannot fit save a man from the family of Dawūd (David, the Prophet)'. Likewise, *Shi'ah* assume that leadership has to be confined to the descendants of 'Alī. (Dahlawī 1373 AH, 298) *Shi'ah* are likened to the Jews also in attributing regret and remorse to Allah. This regret appears in the *Shi'ite* cult of *Badā'* and is articulated in the Old Testament. (Al-Jumaylī n.d., 317) In the book of (Exodus, ch.32: 14): "the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people". In *al-Burhān*, it is stated that *Shi'ah* resemble the Jews in their statement that the Hell fire, in the Day of Judgment, will not touch them except for few numbered days. This view is presented in connection with the interpretation of (Q.2: 80). (Al-Baḥrānī, 2006, 1/261) There are more aspects of resemblance between the beliefs of *Shi'ah* and that of the Jews which can

be seen in the Jews and the Christians claim they are the chosen and loved ones by Allah. *Shī'ah* likewise, allege they are elected by Allah and are preferred to others.

4. *Shī'ite* sects

United by a belief that Imamate (leadership of Muslim community) is an exclusive right of the members of the Prophet's family, distinct groups have arisen throughout *Shī'ite* history differing about who is to be entitled to succeed in that position. Therefore, *Shī'ah* is known to be subdivided into many sects, whose numbers are counted by some scholars to exceed sixty or seventy. (Al-Qifārī, 1994, 1/90) The number of *Shī'ite* sects in some books, like "*al-Maqâlât wa al-Firaq*" by al-Qummī and "*Firaq al-Shī'ah*" of al-Nawbakhtī, exceeds sixty sects. The doctrinal differences of these sects are not so significance except in the case of *Zaydīs*, who is believed to be more moderate than any of the other *Shī'ite* sects. The *Shī'ite* sects primarily can be divided to three major sects: *Saba'īs*, *Zaydīs* and *Imâmīs* (which is subdivided into *Ismâ'ilīs*, *Ithnâ'asharīs* and some others).

4.1.1 The *Saba'īs*

Many contemporary *shī'ite* scholars attempt to deny the existence of 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba' as a true historical figure. They have written a great number of books that primarily aim at denying that such person ever existed in history. In all their writings, they describe the story of 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba' to be a "fairytale," "legendary," "mythical" etc. for instance, Ḥasan al-Amīn writes that the story of 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba' was made by the enemies of Islam whose goal is to split the Muslims. According to al-Amīn, those so-called "enemies of Islam" claim that *Shī'ah* is a sect originated by 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba'. It is stated in the *shī'ite* encyclopedia that *Saba'īs* were affiliated to the tribe of Saba' in ancient Yemen whose story was mentioned in (Q34:15) and they were known as such till the middle of the second century (of Muslim calendar). As for the character of Ibn Saba', he argues that it was invented by a man named Sayf Ibn 'Umar al-Tamīmī, who ascribed to Ibn Saba' the introducing of *shī'ite* doctrines. (Al-Amīn, 2001, 13/182-185) This is a fail and invalid attempt made by *shī'ite* scholars to deny the influence of *Saba'īs* in injecting alien beliefs, on which the present *shī'ite* doctrines are based. The reality of Ibn Saba' was proved in many of *shī'ite* sources. For example, in his book on *Shī'ite* sects, al-Nawbakhtī declares that the first sect to show extremism was *Saba'īs*, the disciples of 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba' who disparaged Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and other companions of the Prophet and rejected them

as legitimate rulers. Confessing that, 'Alī condemned him to death; some people asked 'Alī: "O, Commander of the Faithful, are you killing a man who calls people for loving you, the household of the Prophet, for allying with you and disassociating themselves from your enemies? Instead, 'Alī banished him to al-Madâ'in. (Al-Nawbakhtî 2012, 57) Ibn Saba' went to the far extreme to claim Prophethood to himself and divinity to 'Alī. Al-Ṭūsî reports through his chain from Abu Ja'far (Muḥammad al-Bâqir) his saying: "'Abdullah Ibn Saba' claimed he was a prophet and 'Alī was God (Allah)!! When this news reached 'Alī, he asked that Ibn Saba' be brought to his presence. Having confessed his crime, 'Alī ordered that he be burnt to death" (Al-Ṭūsî, 1427 AH, 102) & (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 4/142)

The historical existence of 'Abdullâh Ibn Saba' was proved by many Sunnî scholars, including al-Ṭabarî, Ibn al-Athîr, Ibn Qutaybah, al-Dhahabî, al-Shahrestânî and al-Baghdâdî. Al-Ṭabarî reports that Ibn Saba' was a Jewish from San'â' (A city in Yemen). He converted to Islam at the era of 'Uthmân and decamped around Muslim countries. He started deceiving the people of Hîjâz (Arabia), passing by Baṣrah, Kūfah (both in Iraq), and then the Levant where he was disclaimed. Afterwards, he went forth to Egypt where he was welcomed somewhere. He claimed that Prophet Muḥammad will return after death and 'Alī was his legatee and will return as well... (Al-Ṭabarî 1387 AH, 340) Ibn al-Athîr also mentions the same story about him and that he was a Jewish who claimed himself to be a Muslim at the time of 'Uthmân accusing him of usurping 'Alī's legitimate right to succession. To propagate these allegations, he dispersed his agents and deputies in Muslim territories. (Ibn Al-Athîr 1997, 526) Al-Dhahabî in his *Mîzân* stated that 'Abdullâh Ibn Saba' was an extreme heretic and misleading deviant who is supposed to have been burnt with fire. Ibn Saba' assumed that the present Qur'an is only one of nine parts whose knowledge is exclusive to 'Alī, though 'Alī forbade him from assuming that. (Al-Dhahabî 1963, 2/426)

Al-Shahrestânî substantiates the existence of a sect named Saba'îs, the disciples of 'Abdullâh Ibn Saba' who said to the noble 'Alī 'you, you are the one (God). 'Alī exiled him to al-Madâ'in...he was the first one to invent a text assuming the legacy to 'Alī and from him, the extreme denominations emerged. He assumed that 'Alī is still alive, is partly man and partly God (God-man), and will return to this life to fill the earth with justice. (Al-Shahrestânî n.d., 1/174) Al-Baghdadî also mentions the Saba'îs, the followers of 'Abdullâh Ibn Saba', he says that Ibn Saba' was exiled to al-Madâ'in. When 'Alī was murdered, Ibn Saba' claimed that the dead body was not 'Alī's, but was a demon in his image. As for 'Alī, Ibn Saba' assumes, he ascended to

heaven as did Jesus, the son of Mary. (Al-Baghdādī 1977, 223-224) Thus, the *Sunni* scholars assert the historical existence of the *Saba'īs*, and emphasize their influence on most of the present *Shi'ite* beliefs.

4.1.2 *Saba'i* doctrines

The present *shī'ite* doctrines are primarily based on *Saba'i* beliefs. They believed in Immanentism, the immanence of the spirit of God in 'Alī. This immanence is to be transformed through his noble progeny one after another. Ibn Saba' and his companions used to describe 'Alī as the God incarnate; they said to him 'you are 'HE' The God', thereby 'Ali burnt them. (Abū Zahrah n.d., 36) *Saba'īs* reiterate the claim of Ibn Saba' that 'Ali did not die and is still alive. They assume that he will die only after he has spread justice on earth. Al-Nawbakhtī states that a sect called *Saba'īs*, the disciples of 'Abdullāh Ibn Saba' said that 'Alī was not murdered nor was thought to be dead, and he won't, till he hits Arabs with his crook and fill the earth with justice and fairness as it was filled with injustice and oppression. (Al-Nawbakhtī 2012, 57) A similar statement about *Saba'īs* is stated by Ibn Ḥazm in al-Fiṣal. (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 4/138)

Saba'īs were the first sect to show extremism in Islam. They started with the statement that 'Alī was a prophet. Subsequently, they went further to assume that he was a God, a genuine God, in addition to the saying that he is still alive riding the clouds. (Al-Asfrāīnī 1983, 123-124) *Saba'īs* also introduced the issue of succession by legacy and confined the legitimacy of Muslim leadership to 'Alī and his descendants. Those statements Ibn Saba' used to say about Yūsha' Ibn Nūn⁵ when he was a Jewish. (Al-Qummī 1321 AH, 20)

4.2 The dissent of *Shi'ah* after the death of al-Ḥusayn

During the imamate of 'Alī, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn. *Shi'ah* did not undergo any divisions. Subdivisions arose after the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn, the majority of *Shi'ah* adhered to the imamate of 'Alī Ibn al-Ḥusayn, al-Sajjād, while *Kīṣāniyyah* accepted Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah as the fourth Imam as well as the promised *Mahdī*, and that he had gone into occultation and would reappear. After the death of al-Sajjād, the majority of *Shi'ah* accepted his son, Muhammad al-Bâqir, while a minority followed Zayd and became known as *Zaydīs*. Following al-Bâqir, the *Shi'ah* accepted his son Ja'far al-Şâdiq, then Mūsâ al-Kâzim, the seventh Imam. At that stage, one group followed the older son of the sixth Imam, Ismâ'îl and became

⁵ Joshua, the leader of the Israelites after the death of Moses

known as *Ismā'ilīs*. After al-Kāzīm, the majority followed his son, 'Alī al-Riḍā. The chain continued to the twelfth Imam, whom the majority of *Shi'ah* believe to be the promised Mahdī. Any following division was not so significant. The majority of the *Shi'ite* sects disappeared within a short period, except three ones: Zaydīs, *Ismā'ilīs* and Twelvers, who represent the majority of *Shi'ah* nowadays. We shall limit our discussion to these three subdivisions, which continue to exist until now.

4.2.1 The Zaydīs

Zaydīs are the adherents of Imam Zayd, the son of 'Alī al-Sajjād. The followers of Zayd regard him as the fifth Imam of the Household of the Prophet. After him, they followed his son, Yaḥyā, followed by his progeny. At the beginning, the Zaydīs, following the example of Zayd, considered the first two, Abu Bakr and 'Umar, as legitimate Imams. But after a while some of them began to delete the name of the first two caliphs from the list of Imams and claimed 'Alī to be the first legitimate Imam. (Al-Ṭabaṭabā'i 1975, 70) From what is known of the Zaydī beliefs, they follow an approach close to that of the *Mu'tazilites* in *Uṣūl* (fundamentals of the faith), , while in *Furū'* (the branches of the law), they apply the jurisprudence of Abu Ḥanīfah, the founder of one of the four *Sunni* schools of law. They also differ among themselves concerning some minor issues. (Ibid, *Zaydīs* are deemed to be the most moderate sect within *Shi'ah* and the closest to the majority of *Sunni* Islam. They do not elevate their Imams to the position of Prophethood nor do they exaggerate in praising them, rather, they believe they are just noble humans. Moreover, they do not accuse any one of the companions of the prophet of disbelief, particularly those whom 'Alī had given allegiance. (Abū Zahrah n.d., 40) *Zaydīs* also have undergone subdivisions throughout history. Zayd used to accept Abū Bakr and 'Umar, yet preferring 'Alī above all. When he heard those who defame them, he renounced that and forbade them. However, they refused to abide by Zayd's instructions and continued their practices. Later on, they were divided, concerning some questions, to *Jārūdīs*, the followers of Abu al-Jārūd who again aroused the issue of legacy of succession; *Sulaymānīs*, the followers of Sulaymān Ibn Jarīr al-Zaydī who believed that Imamate is a matter of consultation, in addition to al-Batriyyah. (Al-Ash'arī 2005, 65-69) It is worth mentioning, Zaydīs nowadays differ, in some aspects, from those who accompanied Imam Zayd.

4.2.2 The *Ismâ'îlîs*

Ismâ'îlîs is a branch from *Imâmîs* and was named after *Ismâ'îl*, the oldest son of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Şâdiq. *Ismâ'îl* died during the lifetime of his father. Concerning this question, some believed that *Ismâ'îl* did not die but went into occultation, and would appear again as the promised *Mahdî*. Another group believed that the true Imam was *Ismâ'îl* whose death meant the imamate would transfer to his son *Muḥammad* and his descendants. (Al-Nawbakhtî 2012, 114-115)& (Al-Shahraṣṭānî n.d., 167) *Ismâ'îlîs* has undergone a certain divisions. *Sab'iyah* (related to number "seven"), as they believe that *Ismâ'îl* was the seventh and the seal in the chain of Imams, albeit his descendants may inherit the position. They also assume that the system of the Underworld, i.e. the Orbit, owes to the role of the major seven planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and finally, the Moon. (Al-Ghazālî n.d., 16) This philosophy is similar to that of the *Şâbi'ah* (star worshippers). (Al-Ṭabaṭabâ'î 1975, 70) There are another two sects within *Ismâ'îlîs*: *Muḥammirah*, it is thought they were named as such because they used to paint their clothes in red, or because they stigmatized their rivals as *Ḥamîr* (donkeys). *Ta'lîmiyyah* (the masters of teaching) is another sect characterized by the need for an infallible Imam who has the absolute right to teach and instruct. They deny knowledge obtained through reason and mere opinion. (Al-Ghazālî n.d., 17) This description also fits the *Bâṭinîs* who believe that each exterior teaching (*Zâhir*) has an inner aspect (*Bâṭin*) and each element of revelation (*Tanzîl*) has a hermeneutic and esoteric exegesis (*Ta'wîl*). (Al-Ṭabaṭabâ'î 1975, 71)

Ismâ'îlîs believe that the earth can never fail to have *Hujjah* (Proof) of Allah. *Hujjah* is two kinds: "speaker" (*nâṭiq*) and "silent one" (*Şâmit*). The speaker is a prophet and the silent one is an *Imam* who is *Waṣî*, the executor of the testament of a prophet. A prophet, they believe, who is the perfect manifestation of God, has the esoteric power of initiating men into the divine Mysteries. After him, they claim, there are seven *Waṣîs* who possess the power of executing his testament and the power of esoteric initiation into the Divine Mysteries. (Al-Ṭabaṭabâ'î 1975, 71) *Ismâ'îlîs* believe that Adam was sent as a prophet with Prophethood and esoteric guidance and that he had seven executors of whom the seventh was Noah. Likewise, Abraham was the seventh executor of Noah, Moses was the seventh executor of Abraham, Jesus was the seventh executor of Moses, *Muḥammad* was the seventh executor of Jesus, and likewise, *Muḥammad Ibn Ismâ'îl* was the seventh executor of *Muḥammad*. They claim that the *waṣîs* of the Prophet are counted seven, the chain of whom starts with 'Alî, al-Ḥusayn...and ends with

Ismâ'îl Ibn Ja'far.⁶ After this series, they assume, there are seven descendants of Muḥammad Ibn Ismâ'îl whose names are hidden and secret. *Ismâ'îlīs* also believe that beside the Proof of Allah (Ḥujjah), there should always be on earth twelve *Naqîbs* (chiefs) who are the elite followers of the Ḥujjah. (Al-Salūmî 2001, 1/585-590)

5.1 *Al-Ithnâ'ashariyah* (The Twelvers or *Imâmîs*)

The *Twelvers* represent the largest sect within *Shi'ism*. They were named as such as they believe in a chain of twelve Imams of the household of the Prophet, starting from 'Alī Ibn Abū Ṭālib, his son al-Ḥasan, followed by al-Ḥusayn, the second son of 'Alī. The chain continues after that through the descendants of al-Ḥusayn until it reaches the twelfth Imam who is believed to have gone into occultation and would reappear as the promised Mahdī. (Al-Baghdādī 1977, 47) Al-Ash'arī says that they were called *Imâmîs* due to the statement that the legitimate Imams after the Prophet are 'Alī and his household. *Imâmîs* believe that Imams were assigned by their names one after another. 'Alī assigned al-Ḥasan to be the *Imam* after him, likewise, al-Ḥasan assigned al-Ḥusayn and al-Ḥusayn assigned his son 'Alī. Then comes his son Muḥammad, Ja'far, Mūsā, 'Alī, Muḥammad, 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and his son Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, known as al-Mahdī. (Al-Ash'arī 2005, 17-18) The author of *A'yân al-Shi'ah* mentions that *Twelvers* are the largest sect of *Shi'ah* that exists today, followed by the minority of *Zaydīs* and *Ismâ'îlīs*. (Al-Amīn 1983, 1/20) Al-Mufīd asserts the existence of a Prophetic Naṣṣ (text) that obligates the following of the infallible Imams. That is why those who believe in the Naṣṣ and the Imams are called *Imâmîs*. He states that the term *Imâmîs* designates those who believe in the obligation of the Imamate and its due existence over times, and also confess the obligation of the *Naṣṣ* which nominates the infallible and perfect Imams by their names and that the succession to the Prophet has to be the exclusive right of the descendants of al-Ḥusayn. (Al-Mufīd 1413 AH, 38) The description of *Imâmîs* as *Twelvers* has arisen after the death of al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, the eleventh Imam (d.260 AH). Before this date, none counted the twelfth Imam as a promised Mahdī. Controversies have arisen about his existence. Some denied his birth and others said he died while his father was still alive. The proof of his absence before his father's death is that his brother, Ja'far, claimed his inheritance from al-Ḥasan who had died leaving no inheritor except him. (Ibn Taymiyah 2004, 4/87) Ibn Ḥazm named them *Qat'iyyah* and *Râfiḍah* because they believe in the certain death of Mūsā, al-Kâzim and refuse to accept Abū Bakr and 'Umar. They, he adds, assume that Muḥammad

⁶ they rule Imam al-Ḥasan, the brother of al-Ḥusayn, out of the chain

Ibn al-Ḥasan is still alive and will never die, but will reappear to fill the earth with justice. To them, he is the promised Mahdī. (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 4/138)

Imamīs assume that the nomination of an *Imam* was the duty born by the Prophet. He had to cut it clear and should not leave it to debates and unguided consultation. Al-Shahrastānī defines *Imamīs* as those who view Imamate is the exclusive right of ‘Alī Ibn Abū Ṭālib and was proved by a clear text and definite nomination by the Prophet. The Prophet, they guess, not only mentioned the Imams by description, but also nominated them with names. They hold the view that religion has no pillar more important than the nomination of the Imam, since a prophet's duty is to remove conflict and to establish accord. Therefore, they believe that the Prophet nominated ‘Alī explicitly and sometimes, implicitly. (Al-Shahrastānī n.d., 1/162) *Imāmīs* also believe that the twelfth Imam, Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan al-‘askarī has gone into occultation hiding inside a vault in his father's house at Surra-man-ra‘ā (an old city in Iraq). They differ about his age at the time of disappearance. It is said he was whether four or eight. They also differ about his authority at that time. Some claim that he had the qualifications of an eligible *Imam* who is worth obedience. Others view that authority was held by responsible scholars. (Abū Zahrah n.d., 46)

5.2 The status of Imamate

To *Imāmīs*, an *Imam* has the full authority to legislate and enact the laws; every single word he says is a faith, as he is not expected to contradict the faith. They assume that Imamate is a position like prophethood; should be treated as the divine revelation. They add that *Imams* were to be selected out by God as prophets were. A prophet receives laws through divine revelation, but *Imam*, who bears the duty to complete the prophet's job, is believed to receive them through prophetic inspiration. (Al-Ghiṭā’ 1990, 134) Being so serious position, *Imāmīs* argue, Imamate entails an infallible and wise Imam. This means that Imam is neither expected to err or commit a foolish act, nor does it fit him to forget. Al-Ṭūsī views Infallibility is a vital prerequisite for him (Imam) as well as great knowledge. Since Imam, in *Imāmīs* faith, is veritably well-versed in every single thing his community may need; it does not suit him to be less knowledgeable or inferior in rank than any one of his community." (Al-Ṭūsī, 1928, 1/80) Moreover, *Imāmīs* claim the occurrence of supernatural matters at the hands of *Imam* as a sign of his Imamate and, incline to call this *Mu‘jizah* (a miracle given to a prophet as a sign of his Prophethood) exactly like what happened with the prophets of Allah. Al-Ṭūsī claims that Because infallibility cannot be perceived through senses, proves for it cannot be set except through a clear text, or through the exhibition of miracles –as an alternative of a text- to substantiate the Imamate of an Imam. (Al-Ṭūsī, 1928, 1/276)

Imam not only have to be infallible, but also, he should have a good command of everything related to *Shari'ah* (Islamic theology), the knowledge of the explicit, the implicit, the outward and the inward meanings of legal texts. He is believed to be responsible for all religious matters, be they serious or trivial. His knowledge is believed to be divinely inspired, and not gained through human teaching; as Imam is, as believed, not expected to exert his effort in issues above his capacity and still there probability of error of judgment; i.e. he is not apt to involve in uncertain knowledge, rather, his judgments is based on doubtless knowledge through inspiration. (Abū Zahrah n.d., 49) *Imāmīs*, though diverse, agree on the sacredness of the position of Imamate; the status of an Imam should not be questioned. To them, it is close to that of a prophet, equals it or even, as some assume, excels it. Those who view the status of Imam as superior to or higher in rank than that of a Prophet make use of the Qur'anic Ayah (Q2:124), there in Abraham was tried by Allah with commands and he fulfilled them. Thereafter, Allah said that Abraham will be made an Imam (leader) for people. They infer from this Ayah that Abraham was granted Imamate as a higher degree after he has completed the mission as a prophet! They argue that the above Ayah refers to the tests to which Allah exposed the Prophet Abraham after his Prophethood at the end of his life. Having successfully passed these tests and patiently withstood the great hardships, they assume, he was granted the position of Imamate. (kardan n.d., 15)

These statements concerning *Imam* and Imamate have no sound basis. They are based on sheer conjecture and can be easily refuted. The infallibility is proved only to the prophets of Allah. *Imam* is a normal human who is apt to err and could be elected through general or restricted consultation, nomination or other suitable and accepted procedures. Imamate for *Sunnī* majority is a political position, to watch over the interests of the community in the light of *Shar'ī* rules. (Al-Khudaṛī 1982, 8-11) As for the legacy for 'Alī and his descendants to inherit the position of succession to the Prophet in leading Muslim community, 'Alī himself stated that if he were to claim that position, it would be due to his close relation with the prophet and did not mention anything about the existence of a text or legacy. Imam Muslim reports in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* 'Alī's statement to Abū Bakr: "...We had a right (to be consulted) on account of our kinship with the messenger of Allah". (Al-Mundhirī 1987, 2/306) This report states that 'Alī mentioned only one thing that gave him a right to be consulted concerning the position of Caliphate, which is his kinship with the prophet. He did not mention any word about the existence of a text of legacy (*Naṣṣ*). If there had been a so called bequest made by the Prophet, it would have been approved and enforced by the Prophet's companions. (Al-Khudaṛī 1982, 7)

CONCLUSION:

In their attempt to promote Shī'ism, Imâmî scholars resort to esoteric exegesis as an attempt to substantiate their support to 'Alī's household. Imâmî scholars are of the opinion that the three caliphs (Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmân) are not worthy of the caliphate, but their claim was refuted by Sunnî scholars who argue that 'Alī gave his allegiance to them, accepted to work with them willingly and gave his daughter Umm Kulthūm to 'Umar in marriage. The majority of Imâmî scholars, known as twelvers, believe that the Prophet explicitly appointed 'Alī as his successor and consequently, illegitimate the caliphate of Abū Bakr. However, other Shī'ite scholars outside the twelvers, like the *Zaydīs*, legitimize the succession of Abū Bakr. In other words, for the twelvers, there is a text (naṣṣ) which stipulates the Prophet's testament (waṣīyyah) for 'Alī; however, for the latter, there is no such a text. For the Imâmîs, 'Alī and his sons are the inheritors of Prophethood. They claim that Prophethood passes on to the descendants. The concept of imamate for Imâmîs, is a continuous divine obligation and that the Imam is divinely selected and infallible.

Whatever the *Imâmî* scholars try to give their Faith an earlier origin to the time of the Prophet himself, their opinions have no sound basis. The groups that constituted the army of 'Alī did not represent a regular party with absolute obedience to 'Alī or common attitude towards his family. The *Sunnî* scholars subscribe to the view that the word *Shī'ah* was used at that time in the pure literal sense which means followers and supporters. The word was used to describe either sides; it was said *shī'at* 'Alī and *shī'at* Mu'âwiyah. The evidence to that is the words of al-Dhahabî about Busr Ibn Arṭa'ah: "...and was of the *Shī'ah* (supporters) of Mu'âwiyah." (Al-Dhahabî 2003, 2/793) Therefore, the rise of *Shī'ism* was merely political and none can allege that it emerged before the era of 'Uthmân, rather, its origin was late, precisely, by the end of 'Uthmân's reign ensuing the rebellion instigated by 'Abdullâh Ibn Saba', the Jewish. Thus, it was political in nature and Ḥusayn's martyrdom at Karbala marks the beginning of the transformation of *Shī'ah* from a political movement to distinctive religious sect within Islam. (Stewart 2003, 625) In other words, Shī'ism evolved during the Umayyad dynasty but it took firm roots during the Abbasid rule. It is noticeable that *Shī'ah* were characterized by the over-diversity to many sects. The issue of Succession played a vital role in this respect, and was the essential axis for this diversity. *Shī'ah* also were divided regarding the degree of deep stuck to *Shī'ism*. There are the moderates and radicals (*ghulât*) of *Shī'ah*. Among the different *Shī'ite* sects, the *Twelvers* represent the majority of *Shī'ah* nowadays.

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