International Journal for Asian History, Culture and Tradition
Vol.4, No.3, pp.8-18, July 2017
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org)

ALI'S ISLAM: PROBLEMATICS OF THE ISSUE BETWEEN THE SHI'A AND SUNNI SOURCES

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ABSTRACT: The issue of who was the first person to accept Islam after the Prophet and his wife Khadijah has considerable interest and space among the historical and religious books. In the course of time, this issue, and due to the intensity of the two sides, turned into an issue that separated them though the historical reliable sources of the two sides do not decide categorically to the advantage of either one. But what is certain is that Ali was the first boy who accepted Islam during the Meccan period and was greater than Ali's role, who was still a child. Ali's issue is related to several aspects that are connected to the difference in the religious belief, political ambitions and historical attitudes between Sunnis and Shi'a. It is worthwhile mentioning that each side employed the issue of Ali's precedence to accepting Islam to achieve religious gains and justify their main political theory, which is based on the concept of Imama.

KEYWORDS: Islam — Acceptance, Precedence, Ali, Abi Bakr, Conflict, Shi'a, Sunna.

ISSN 2057-7553(print), ISSN 2057-7561(online)

some confidence that Ali's precedence to other Moslem major personalities , including Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq is now an accepted argument.

The Moslem Historians mentioned that the disagreement over the definition of the first male believers in Islam was limited to three central Moslem peoples: 1. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq 2. Alī 3. Zayd bin Ḥāritha.[5] Some historians added other less known and less significant names.[6]

A lot of classical classifiers gave a lot of news items (akhbār) and traditions that reinforce Ali's precedence to acceptance of Islam. Others, both Sunni and Shīʿa, strongly confirmed the truth of those news and traditions.[7] Despite those confirmations by Sunnis and Shīʿas, some traditions by some non-Shīʿa historians refute the argument of Ali's precedence arguing that others preceded him. It seems that the political conflict between Alī Shīʿites and Abū Bakr's Sunni followers highly contributed to highlight Ali's personality on the one hand and Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq on the other, which led to disregard of some sources and most classical doctrinal debates of other believers such as Zayd Ḥāritha.

It is noticed that in most of the historical traditions that were refused by Shīʿites, Abū Bakr was a candidate to enter the competition[8] On which the comparison and competition

[5] Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 H./ 892 AD) quotes Ibn Sa'd (d. 230 H./ 845 AD), who quoted al-Wāqidī (d. 207 H./ 823 AD) that he said: "Our companion agreed that the first Moslem who responded to the Messenger of God, God's blessings and peace be upon him, was Khadīja wife of Muḥammad, but then they disagreed who of the three accepted Islam first: Alī or Abū Bakr or Zaid bin Ḥāritha?". See: al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad bin Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wal-Mulūk (History of Nations and Kings), Edited by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1967), 2:124-125.

[6] Al-Masʿūdī (d. 957 AD) mentions that when he explains the difference regarding who was the first who accepted Islam, "some say that the first woman to accept Islam was Khadīja, and the first man to accept Islam was Abū Bakr, some say that the first to accept Islam was Zayd bin Ḥāritha, who was called Ḥibb al-Nabī (Beloved of the Prophet), some say that the first was Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, and some say that the first was Abū Bakr (Al-Masʿūdī, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī bin al-Ḥusayn bin ʿAlī, Murūj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 2:280. Other historians said: The first to accept Islam was Khadīja, then Abū Bakr. See in al-Masʿūdī al-Dīnawarī, Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad bin Dāwūd bin Wanand, al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl, Edited by: Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1960), 1:132.

[7] That is mentioned by non-Shīʿite historians such as: Ibn Hishām, al-Sīra, 2:68. He said: "the first who followed the Messenger of God, God's blessings and peace be upon him was Khadīja bint Khuwaylid his wife, and the first male was Abū Bakr". Muḥammad bin ʿAbd Rabbih al-Qurṭubī al-Andalusī (al-Shahīr bi-Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih), al-ʿIqd al-Farīd, 5:68. He says: "Abū Bakr was the first who believed in God and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God" Al-Baghdādī, Ismāʿīl Bāshā, Hadiyyat al-ʿĀrifīn, 1:298-299. He says: people disagreed on who accepted Islam first, Abū Bakr or Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, and Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, al-Istīʿāb fī Maʿrifat al-Aṣḥāb, 3:973 and Khadīja and Alī and Zayd bin al-Arqam that Abū Bakr was the first male may God be pleased with him, was the first to accept Islam and these preferred him others." Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār agreed on this, including: al-Qaḍī al-Nuʿmān, Sharḥ al-Akhbār fī Faḍāʾil al-Aʾimma al-Aṭhār, 1:102. He says: "Most of those who are attributed to the common people (Ahl al-Sunna) accept that and say that Abū Bakr was the first male of this nation who accepted Islam. No one preceded him in that except Khadīja bint Khuwaylid, the Prophet's wife, may God's prayers be upon him and his family, and that was done to her because God wanted to make her happy.." Muḥammad bin al-Nuʿmān, Shaykh al-Mufīd al-ʿUkbarī al-Baghdādī, Kitāb al-Irshād fī Maʿrifat Ḥujaj Allāh ʿalā al-ʿIbād, Edited by: Muʾassasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, (1995),1: 6. He said: "He was the first to believe in God, the Great and Almighty, and in his Messenger, may God's blessings be upon him, from Ahl al-Bayt and its members; and he was the first male that the Messenger of God, may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, called to Islam and he responded". Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, ʿAlī bin al-Ḥusayn bin Mūsā, al-Shāfī fī al-Imāma, Edited by: Ḥusayn al-Dargāhī, (Teheran: Muʾassasat al-Ṣādiq li al-Ṭibāʿa wal-Nashr, 1987), 4:21. He replies to those who say that Abū Bakr was the preceding one who followed the Prophet, may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, and believed in him, and this attitude is well known among the people of "evidence".

[8] The three are also mentioned by Sunni historians such as: Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal, Faḍāʾil al-Ṣaḥāba, Edited by: Waṣī Allāh Muḥammad ʿAbbās, (Mecca: Umm al-Qurā li-Ṭibāʿa wal-Nashr, 1983), 223-227; Ibn ʿAmr bin Baḥr, al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Uthmānī, Edited by: ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr, 1965), 3-4; Yaʿqūbī, Aḥmad bin Abī Yaʿqūb bin Jaʿfar bin Wahb bin Wāḍiḥ al-Kātib al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir li al-Ṭibāʿa wa al-Nashr, Dār Beirut li al-Ṭibāʿa wal-Nashr, 1960), 2:24; Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawarī, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh bin Muslim, al-Maʿārif, Edited by: Thurwat ʿUkāsha, (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li al-Kitāb, 1992), 1:175; al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad bin Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wal-Mulūk (History of Nations and Kings), Edited by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1967), 2:312; Ibn Ḥibbān, Muḥammad, al-Thiqāt, Edited by: Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Aḥmad, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1975), 1:303; Ibn Ḥibbān, Muḥammad, Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān bi-Tartīb Ibn Balbān, Edited by: Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ, (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1993), 15:374; Ibn Ḥibbān, Muḥammad, Mashāhīr ʿUlamāʾ al-Amṣār, Edited by: Marzūq ʿAlī Ibrāhīm, (Mansoura: Dār al-Wafāʾ li al-Ṭibāʿa wal-Nashr, 1991), 1:13; al-Ḥākim, Muḥammad bin ʿAbd Allāh al-Nīsābūrī, al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, Edited by: Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990), 3:4; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, al-Istīʿāb fī Maʿrifat al-Aṣḥāb, 3:973; al-Bayhaqī, Aḥmad bin al-Ḥusayn bin ʿAlī bin Mūsā, Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwa, Edited by: ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Qalʿajī, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988), 2:317; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Aḥmad bin ʿAlī bin Muḥammad, al-Iṣāba fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba, Edited by: ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 1:66; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Aḥmad bin ʿAlī bin Muḥammad, Lisān al-Mīzān, Edited by: Dā'irat al-Maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyya, (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li al-Maṭbūʿāt, 1971), 1:13; al-Ṣafadī, Khalīl bin Aybak bin ʿAbd Allāh, al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt, Edited by: Aḥmad al-Arnāʾūṭ and Turkī Muṣṭafā, (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 2000), 1:164; al-Ṣafadī, Khalīl bin Aybak bin ʿAbd Allāh, Nakt al-Himyān fī Nukat al-ʿUmyān, Edited by: Aḥmad Zakī Bey, (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Jamāliyya, 1911), 1:76; al-Ṣafadī, Khalīl bin Aybak bin ʿAbd Allāh, Aʿyān al-ʿAṣr wa Aʿwān al-Naṣr, Edited by: ʿAlī Abū Zayd and others, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir, 1998), 1:19; Ibn Kathīr, Ismāʿīl bin ʿUmar bin Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī, al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya, Edited by: ʿAbd Allāh bin ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, (Cairo: Hajr li al-Ṭibāʿa wal-Nashr, 1998), 3:27

between ʿAlī and Abū Bakr depended on if evidence showed conclusively that ʿAlī preceded Abū Bakr in his acceptance of Islam, it would be a witness and proof to his priority to Abū Bakr and all the companions of the Prophet, and this is exactly what the Shīʿites aspired to achieve and confirm. Such achievement will serve them to prepare the way for the confirmation of their political and religious rights that should be given to ʿAlī and his dynasty after him.[9] In return, some sources raise doubts about ʿAlī's precedence to acceptance of Islam and they approve of Abū Bakr's precedence in order to denounce the claims of the Shīʿites who denounced Abu Bakr's caliphate by bringing a lot of arguments including Ali's precedence to acceptance of Islam, which put Abū Bakr and all the other caliphs at a position that is lower than Ali's position.[10]

Preference between ʿAlī and Abū Bakr drove the two teams of the Sunnis and the Shīʿites to employ all the details that are relevant to their acceptance of Islam in an attempt to confirm their political rights in a way that is mostly far from being objective, especially regarding the identity of the 'former' and the 'latter' in embracing Islam.[11] Although a large group of the Sunnis agreed with the Shīʿites regarding Ali's precedence in embracing Islam, they did not agree with the Shīʿites in any way regarding Ali's Imāmiyyah and his political rights that they confirm. The Shīʿites look at Ali's acceptance of Islam with pride and honour and their interpretation of the Koranic text eternalized Ali's precedence in his embracement of Islam. Several Shīʿite interpreters of the Koran coined certain interpretations of some Koranic verses with meanings that refer exclusively to Ali's precedence in his acceptance of Islam.[12] Besides, the Shīʿites denounced calling Abū Bakr by the nickname of "al-Ṣiddīq" (the Truthful), which is an epithet that accompanies him in all historical and Sunni sources.[13]

The following second praised sight the first to believe the Messengers

[9] Naṣr ʿAlī Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ (380 AD) mentioned news items that refer to Ali's boasting of his precedence in acceptance of Islam during his fight with Muʿāwiyah. See: ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār, Nashʾat al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī al-Islām (Cairo: al-Muʾassasah al-ʿArabiyyah al-Ḥadīthah, 1962), 313-327.

[10] $ PRQJ WKH SURPLQHQW FODVVLFDO DWWHPSWV WR FRQILUP WKH SUHFHGH his rig KW WR WKH FDOLSKDWH E DQG WR consider the precedence WR WKH 6XQ DV HYLG to his usurped right to the caliphate, al-ʿAskarī (d. 255 H/ 868 AD) introduces traditional example to what can be called WKH 6XQQLWH FRQF (which took the murder of ʿUthmān (d. 656 AD) as a slogan till it became known by the nickname of al-ʿUthmānī at that time). Al-ʿAskarī mentioned the following: "Then we are told about the argument of al-ʿUthmānī, and we ask guidance by God only and ask for help from Him, and on Him we rely, and our success is granted only by Him. It was told that the best of this nation and the one who deserves Prophet's $ E Ì % D NU ʿUmar, and he was the first and the first thing that showed them in their souls his virtue and special position and his strong merit is his embracement of Islam in such a way that no one else from his world or his age has done. The people disagreed regarding the person who was the first to accept Islam. WKH SHRSOH VDLG $ E Ì % D $ E ʿAlī; others said: Zayd bin Ḥārithah, and a few people said Khabbāb bin al-Aratt, but we checked their news reports and counted their traditions and number of men and checked the accuracy of their attributions and the truth of the news LW WKDW FRQILUPHG WKH SUHFHGHQFH RI $ Ì % DNU ZDV PRUH SUH more correct, and thus they are more popular and its expression is clearer." See this quotation in al-ʿAskarī, al-ʿUthmānī, 3. To see the denouncing view to this view, the view of Muḥammad bin ʿAbdullah al-Iskāfī, VN —Mu ʿWDDa-Mi ʿ— U - ʿ — ʾDQG ʾDO-Iskāfī, P — P $PuP DQG $ E ʿHLUÌ Q G 1981), 73.

[11] To be quickly acquainted with the opinions of the Sunnis in this matter, see: Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, Ḥusn al-Uswah bi-mā Thabata bi-Sunnah fī Umūr al-Nisāʾ wa-Mā Yajibu min al-ʿAmal bihā fī al-Ṣalāt wa-Ghayrihā (Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Khānjī li-l-Ṭibāʿah wal-Nashr, 1963), 64-65.

[12] In the interpretation of the verse: "Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds, for them will be gardens of Paradise as accommodation" (Q. 32:19), it was mentioned that it was revealed to the Messenger of God, God's blessings and peace be upon him and his family, and ʿAlī and Ḥamzah, peace be upon him, and they were the first to pray and kneel." See: Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī bin Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, Asbāb Nuzūl al-Qurʾān, ed. Kamāl Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1991), 259; al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad bin ʿAlī bin Bābawayh al-Qummī (d. 381 H/ 992 CE) mentioned that the verse in al-Qurʾān (10:56) was revealed to the Messenger of God, God's blessings and peace be upon him, and ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib, peace be upon him. See: Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad bin ʿAlī bin Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, Maʿānī al-Akhbār, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī (Qum: Jamāʿat al-Mudarrisīn, 1984), 1:70-71.

[13] 7KH FODVVLFDO VRXUFHV PHQWLRQ WKDW DV D NRUDQLF HQWHUSULVH DQG , VOXP Abū Bakr was the first to believe in the Prophet and to pray and kneel with him. See: Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin ʿAlī bin Thābit al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām wa-Akhbār Muḥaddithīhā wa-Dhikr Quṭṭānihā al-ʿulamāʾ min Ghayr Ahlihā wa-Wāridīhā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1997), 1:14.

ISSN 2056-7553(print), ISSN 2056-7561(online)

The indications of the epithet also include references and hints to his precedence to acceptance of Islam. However, these indications and hints disappear among the Kufis.[14] In reaction to the "Ṣiddīq" epithet, the Kufis described Ali as the Greater Truthful (al-Ṣiddīq al-Akbar),[15] which is a nickname that some Sunnis also attribute to Ali.[16] However, the Kufis did not hesitate to exploit it because it constitutes a sign that distinguishes them from the Sunna on the one hand, and implies Ali's superiority to Abu Bakr and 'Umar al-Ṣiddīq al-Akbar only.[17] Ali's attributes are perfect in the light of the Kufi heritage by arguing that he did not become a Moslem after had been an infidel (kafir) and this is what distinguishes him from the other companions (Ṣaḥabah).[18]

The Kufis believe that Ali's acceptance of Islam came to confirm an older belief that had dwelled in his soul before his body and birth and his old belief goes back to a world that preceded humanity. His entrance into Islam was inevitable, old and preceded the beginning of

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denied it and did not believe Prophet Muḥammad's story that he made a journey to Bet Maqdis and ascended to Heaven in one night. No one believed him and all the people were unjustly astray, living in polytheism and misery. For more information about the poem and other issues, see: al-Kanzī, Muḥammad bin Sulaymān al-Ḥanafī al-Shāfi'ī, Fikr, Beirut, 1994), 1:146; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, Tadhkirat al-Khawaṣṣ fī Khaṣā'iṣ al-A'immah, Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat Misr, 1986), 1: 55; al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī, Shawāhid al-Tanzīl li-Qawā'id al-Tafḍīl, Tehran: Maktabat ibn Taymiyyah, 1976), 1: 55; al-Ḥiz, al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Muḥaddith, Tārīkh al-Madīnah, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996), 1:128.

the Dawah.[19] The 6 Kutub heritage deemed as far above worshipping idols and kneeling to idols and practicing the Jahiliyyah religious rites.[20]

The 6 Kutub took this virtue that is attributed to Ali as a pretext and argument to prove Ali's preference and supreme rank, which was employed in a brilliant way.[21] They invested it as an opportunity to compare between Ali and the great companions who accepted Islam after they practiced pagan rites before their acceptance of Islam.[22] The only ones who did not practice those rites were the Prophet, for his infallibility and Ali, for his honorability.[23] The 6 Kutub confronted the traditions and news that supported the precedence of Bara'ah to Ali in accepting Islam with strong refusal and refutation and generally judged them as weak and fabricated and attributed them to Ali's enemies, the Jews and the Family of Ahl al-Bayt (Family of the Prophet).[24]

One of the old difficulties in the classical sources among the Sunnis and the 6 Kutub, which is related to Ali's acceptance of Islam and became popular among the classified scholars of the two sides is the difficulty in defining Ali's age when he embraced Islam. That difficulty is not attributed only to the differences between traditions and their versions and the discrepancies in the historical information but in the growing difference in many sources that is attributed to the evaluation of Ali's personality through his entrance into Islam.

Some classical historical sources mentioned the discrepancies in determining Ali's age when he embraced Islam.[25] Different ages were given: eight, nine, ten, eleven, thirteen, fifteen and other ages.[26] Neither the Islamic heritage nor historians resolved this issue, which in turn, led

[19] Al-Jahiz, Uthman bin Bahr, Al-Radd 'ala al-Mushabbihah bi-Ra'yihim al-Fasid wa-Ithbat al-Mu'minin al-Sadiqin fi Tawhid Allah al-Qadim al-Samad (Refuting the Anthropomorphists with their Corrupt Opinion and Proving the Truthful Believers in the Eternal Unity of God), (Beirut: Dar al-Nahdah al-Arabiyyah, 1969), 258; Sipra, Muhammad Ali, Ali bin Abi Talib: Sirah wa-Manaqibuhu (Ali bin Abi Talib: His Biography and Virtues), (Beirut: Dar al-Nafa'is, 1990), 40; Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhari, Abu Abdullah, Al-Jami' al-Sahih al-Mukhtasar (Sahih al-Bukhari), (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1987), 3:1305. To be more informed on the subject of infallibility and its characteristics, you are advised to read in: Al-Sharif al-Murtada, Ali bin al-Husein al-Musawi, Al-Shafi fi al-Imamah, (Tehran: Mu'assasat al-Sadiq li-al-Tiba'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1969), 1:211-220.

[20] See in: Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah, Al-Shi'ah fi al-Mizan, (Beirut: Dar al-Tayyar al-Jadid wa-Dar al-Hadi, 2001), 161; Muhammad Kazim Shari'at Madari, Tahrir al-Wasilah, (al-Najaf: al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1971), 1:257-258.

[21] The Prophet's companions were not free from drawbacks. Some companions, especially those who intervened between Ali and Abu Bakr, were criticized and their images distorted through their pre-Islamic life. The sources attributed to them pagan rites that contradict Islam. The 6 Kutub also accused them of worshipping an idol after their acceptance of Islam. This is a story that was told by Sulaym bin Qays and its weakness is quite clear. See in: Sulaym bin Qays, Kitab Sulaym bin Qays al-Hilali, 2:499-500. In this context, this story is not to be considered as a reliable source. In this context, this story is not to be considered as a reliable source. In this context, this story is not to be considered as a reliable source

to other disagreements that are related to Ali's biography and life, including the well known dispute regarding his age when he died as a result of murder.[27]

The issue of Ali's age on his acceptance of Islam and then his age on his death is connected logically to counting of years because the determination of year of his death contributes to determination of his age on his acceptance of Islam. Those who believed that he was five years old when he embraced Islam said that he was murdered when he was fifty eight years old.[28] Those who said that he accepted Islam when he was ten years old, said that he was sixty-three years old when he was murdered.[29] The difference between sources and the traditions regarding the determination of Ali's age on his death extremely complicated the possibilities of determining his true age on his acceptance of Islam.[30]

The 6 Ḥadīth books did not accept any tradition or version that lowers Ali's age below sixty because they exclude the versions that mention that Ali's acceptance of Islam took place when he was below ten.[31] However, there are sources that disagree with the 6 Ḥadīth books that mentioned that Imām Alī did not reach ten when he accepted Islam. They determine that he was below and even lower than that.[32] The repeated question in some classical sources that raised historical and exciting doctrinal debates lies in the ensuing results of determining Ali's age when he accepted Islam.[33] Imām Alī, according to the conceptions of different sources, did not reach the stage of his required maturity and sufficient awareness that can push him to believe in a religious mission in a conscious way rather than just an emotional one.

The 6 Ḥadīth sources were aware of the significance of Ali's age on his embracement of Islam and the important meanings that the embracement carries. It is most likely enables the Shīʿa to achieve an ideal goal, which is the raising of Ali's status and esteem and shows his virtues that justify his demand of his political rights. The 6 Ḥadīth books had to prove that Ali's acceptance of Islam took place when he was ten year old or more.

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0 D T — W Ṭ L-Q D L E Ā L H Q L U Ì W-Ma'ārifah, 1990), 26-27; al-Ṭ D E D U al-Mustadrak, 1: 95-96; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, al-
, V Ṣ W, 3: 199-200.

[27] This difference appears in many historical sources, which mentioned it without explaining its causes. See that in: Muḥ D P P D G E L Ṣ Q al-Ṣaḥīḥ — al- 7 — kh U al-Ṣaghīr U% H L U Ì W-Ma'ārifah, 1985), 1: 100, 107; ʿAbdullah bin Muḥ D P P D G E L-Q X Ṣ E - D D T W D Q al-Sunnah, P U Q (the book was published in 0 D M D O D h D X W Q H 2 Q X m: Muʾassasat Ahl al-Bayt- peace be upon them- K \ al- 7 X t, 1988), 107-108; Muḥ D P P D G E L Q T D E D U D O al-Ṣ Umam wa-l- 0 X O Ì W H L U Ì W-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1988), 3: 160-161; al-Mas Ṣ G - 0 X U Ì W-Dhahabī, 2: 409.

[28] See: al-Mas Ṣ G al- 7 D Q, 2: 273 K

[29] See: Muṭahhar bin Ṭ - hir al- 0 D T G al-Bad', wal- 7 — kh U - % D J K G — G - M D h D W Q E - D W 7 3; al-Mas Ṣ G al- 7 D Q, 2: 273 K

[30] 6 H H W K H U H D F Ḥ al-Rāzī, Q R - 2 5 E H G 8 5 4 CE) to the Sh P — Q L \ \ D K Y L H Z V D V - Ẓ L ḥ (d. 255 H./ 868 CE) in the copy of the book al- Sh P — Q L that was edited by ʿAbd al- 6 D O — P + — U Ì Q , W L Q W U R G X F H Y L H Z V E \ Ā Ṣ L ḥ, V D N — Muḥammad D (d. 240 H./ 854 CE) to some of al- Ẓ L ḥ' views and interpretations of the book Nahj al- % D Ḷ Ā Ḥ E \ , E Q Ṣ H E G D Ḥ Ḥ Ḥ

The issue of Ali's acceptance of Islam was mentioned in many of the 6 Ṣaḥīḥ sources in the context of their retort to those who denied his precedence to acceptance of Islam by preceding Abū Bakr on grounds that Abū Bakr embraced Islam when he was adult while Alī embraced Islam before attaining maturity and wisdom yet.[34]

There is no doubt that when al-Jāḥiẓ (255 H./ 868 AD) cited the words of al-ʿUthmānniyyah on this issue ignited the grudge of the Shīʿa, which moved them to show the weakness of his quotation from al-ʿUthmānniyyah and weakness of those who were inclined to accept Abū Bakr's precedence to Alī and agreed unanimously that Ali's acceptance of Islam, though it preceded others, was not at the level of Abū Bakr's embracement of Islam because Alī at that time and age was still a youth who was not able to bear such command and obligation and did not have sufficient knowledge that completes the belief of the believer in a religion out of awareness and knowledge.[35]

Among the things that al-Jāḥiẓ quoted from al-ʿUthmānniyyah is their comment on Ali's acceptance of Islam: "Regarding his acceptance of Islam as a small inexperienced child, we do not deny that, but his acceptance of Islam was by dictation, discipline and education; however, there is a great difference between Islam of command and trial Islam of dictation and education and clear argument."[36]

This ʿUthmānniyya's view met discrepant reactions in many classical sources among the 6 Ṣaḥīḥs and non-6 Ṣaḥīḥs. Some refused and refuted al-ʿUthmānniyya's opinion considering it

[34] The Shīʿa claim that those who say that Ali's acceptance of Islam took place when he was 7 years old, want to conceal Ali's contribution; the Shīʿa sources mentioned this claim that was supported by Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 957 CE), when he said: "People disagreed about the age at which Alī accepted Islam, some said he was fifteen; others said thirteen; others said it was eleven, nine, eight, seven, six, five and the intention of those who said so was to remove his virtues and to deny his outstanding traits in order to make his acceptance of Islam acceptance of a little immature child who does not differentiate between increase or decrease and does not distinguish between certainty and uncertainty and does not know about a right to demand it or injustice to avoid it." Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, 1974, 214.

[35] Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 H/ 868 CE), pointed out that his opinion is in harmony with al-ʿUthmānniyyah in this issue saying: "His embracement of Islam is not Islam of the entrusted person who is aware of the virtue of what entered him and the decrease of what exited from him." This statement and others are mentioned in al-Jāḥiẓ, al-ʿUthmānniyyah, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1991). Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd al-Muʿtazilī (1025 CE) pointed out the previous ʿUthmānniyyah mentioned. Then he introduced the opinions of the major Muʿtazilah sheikhs in this issue. Some of them tend to accept the idea of Ali's maturity and perfection of mind on his acceptance of Islam. See: al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī al-Asadābādī, Tanzīh al-Anbiyāʾ wa al-Aʾimmah (Cairo: al-Sharikah al-ʿArabiyyah lil-Ṭibāʿah wal-Nashr, 1962), 202:138-141.

[36] See: al-Jahiz, al-ʿUthmānniyyah, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1991). Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 H/ 868 CE) elaborated in his style that depends on 'logic' and 'mind' in telling the statements of al-ʿUthmānniyyah. Al-Jāḥiẓ showed it in his style. He said: "al ʿUthmānniyyah said that Alī was the first to embrace Islam but there is a lot of difference between the speaker's statements of: "that person was the first to embrace Islam" and "the person was among the first people who embraced Islam"; but he has not even mentioned the version in which he said that Alī was the first to embrace Islam. We did not find any of the narrators who took place, whether by calling and entrustment or by dictation and education; we did not find any of them who distinguished between that or differentiated in the essence of the issue. We did not find any of the narrators who claim that his acceptance to Islam was by dictation by the interpretations of the transcribers and distinction of the traditionalists who looked into history and knew his age and how old he was when he died, and knew the point of their contemporaries and agreement, and took the middle as it was the fairest and dropped the views of those who increased or decreased and then found the years of his Islam. We found that his age was seven but if we took the opinion of those who increased, we would make his age nine" but we left the statements of those who lowered his age and the opinion of those who economized and thus, we knew that his acceptance of Islam was a result of education, discipline and dictation, and Moslems should deal with their children as God dealt with them". See: ibid, 19.

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weak and reflects feelings of hatred to the Family of the Prophet in general and Ali in particular.[37]

The importance of the issue of Ali's age when he embraced Islam appears in its distinguished presence among some of the distinguished personalities in the Shi'ite heritage, who unsheathed their pens to defend Ali. They showed that the validity of Ali's age was different from what their rivals maintained. They argued that in his case Ali, before acceptance of Islam, was among those who can bear 'command' and 'obligation' and had the right knowledge. They also showed that by resorting to the date of his death and the age that he reached.[38]

The Shi'ites were not ready to accept a view that denies the perfection of Ali's mind when he embraced Islam and even if they gave into those who insisted on Ali's young age at that time and accepted it just for the sake of agreement, there is nothing that stops that they accept the denial of Ali's perfection of mind and suspension of entrustment, charge and obligation from him.

In fact, they deny that in their polemic texts as we find in Sharif al-Radi (d. 436 H/ 1044 CE) who says about the issue of Ali's maturity on his acceptance of Islam: "Even if we concede to our contenders regarding what they claimed that he, peace be upon him, was seven year old at the time of the stimulus to believe, it does not indicate the truth of their claim that his belief was made by dictation and without knowledge or certainty because 'young age' dos not negate 'perfection of mind' and the evidence of entrustment of obligation does not require attainment of maturity and its consideration, according to the people of understanding and minds; the attainment of maturity is considered in legal rulings rather than the mental rulings."[39]

The Shi'ites maintain that Ali's acceptance of Islam was based on insight and certainty rather than on imposition and dictation. They depend in that on a news item that was mentioned by more than one classical Shi'ite Akhbar. The news item says that one day Ali came to the Prophet and found him praying with his wife and he asked him about that. The Prophet called him to accept Islam. Ali asked the Prophet to give him a while to think and consult his father. The Prophet gave him time after he asked him to promise not to reveal the issue. He made an agreement with him to keep it secret even to his father. Ali stayed thinking that night and in the morning he came to the Prophet, embraced Islam and vowed the two testimonials (al-Shahadatayn). He continued to come to the Prophet, and pray with him secretly without his father's knowledge.[40]

According to the previous news item, the Shi'ites believe that Ali entered Islam after deep thought and contemplation that pushed him to speedily support the Prophet and that he was

[37] See the book: Ali wa-l-Islam, p. 7 — Ali was contemporary with al-Jahiz, which confirmed Ali's maturity on his acceptance of Islam and the lack that the opinion of al-Jahiz — Ali was young — is without evidence, and Jahiz is one of the Sunni scholars who wrote with hostility to Ali. Al-Jahiz, al-Nabi wa-l-Hashimiyun, 1:80-81.

[38] See the Shi'ite scholars mention that in their books, such as: Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Fusul al-Mukhtarah, p. 275, 278-282; al-Murtada, al-Shafi, 1: 21-22, al-Fusul al-Mukhtarah, p. 275, 278-282; al-Murtada, Tanzih al-Anbiya, p. 272-273.

[39] See that in: al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Fusul al-Mukhtarah, p. 275.

[40] This news item appears in: Ibn Ishaq, p. 107; al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Umam wa-l-Muluk, 2: 312-313; Ibn Hisham, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah, 1:125-126; al-Tabarani, al-Mu'jam al-Kabir, 1: 52-53.

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inspired by wisdom (ḥikmah) despite his young age till his soul reached the degree of care about Islam.[41]

It is noticed in this news-item that the early 6 Kūfee sources ignored an issue that the news reporters brought, which is that Ṣaḥābī asked the Prophet for a short while to consult his father but the Prophet prohibited him from that because Abū Ṭālib followed the religion of his sect and consequently, he will enter the community of the infidels, which is a necessarily rejected issue by the 6 Kūfees, who emphasize Abū Ṭālib's belief in Islam, which is a distinguishing attitude between the Sunnis and the Kūfees.[42]

The previous news-item saves the 6 Kūfees from the impasse of the Sunnī-niyya's contestation. Through it, the 6 Kūfees find an exit and use it as evidence to Ali's perfect mind despite his young age.[43] Besides, they made it an argument and a plea to prove his miraculous and supernatural nature[44] by describing him as having a 'perfect mind' and 'knowledgeable' at early age. Generally, ordinary human beings do not conceive of religious knowledge and reach fully established belief in the Prophet's message. Therefore, that ability of Ali had constituted one aspect of the supernatural aspects that are incomparable in the Islamic heritage.[45]

Some non-6 Kūfee sources tried to resolve the issue of 'precedence' to acceptance of Islam and reconcile the differences by bringing traditions that put Ṣaḥābī and Abū Bakr at equal level. Such traditions mentioned that both Ṣaḥābī and Abū Bakr took the first place of the pioneers of the early Moslems, but Ṣaḥābī his acceptance of Islam while Abū Bakr declared it.[46]

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[41] Al-Ṭabarī, Kanz al-Fawā'id, 1: 275.

[42] There is no doubt that the faith of Ali Kūfee and the whole Ahl al-Bayt is from the most important Imam. Therefore, they did not like the statement that others introduced regarding his infidelity and being of Ahl al-Nār (people of the fire). Therefore, for this and for other considerations, which we cannot discuss in this research, the 6 Kūfee sources avoided to mention Abū Ṭālib's acceptance of Islam. To review non-6 Kūfee sources that deal with Abū Ṭālib as a non-Moslem, see: Ibn Hishām, al-Sīrah, 2: 58; Ibn Sa'd, al-Ṭabaqāt, 1: 82; Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Cairo: Idārat al-Ṭibā'ah al-Munīriyyah, 1928), 5: 144-145; Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj al-Nayshābūrī, al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ (Maktabah al-Dāwūdī al-Ūlā al-Shaykhān wa-Shurakā'uhumā, n.d.), 1:135. However, al-6 Kūfee sources exaggerated and elaborated in mentioning the virtues of Abū Ṭālib and emphasized his faith and belief of the Prophet and his good embracement of Islam. See: Muḥammad bin Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī (Teheran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1968), 1:448-449; Muḥammad bin al-Nuʿmān al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, Naf al-Makhlūq fī Ithbāt Wujūd Allah wa-Ithbāt al-Ḥujjah Abī Ṭālib (Maktabah al-Wujdānī wa-Bal'ghah, 1987), 114-115; compare with: J. Eliash, 'Shī'ī Qur'ān Exegesis and Its Attitude to Sunnī Belief', (London: University of London, 1966), 173-175.

[43] See: al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, Sharḥ al-Akhbār, 1: 189-190.

[44] See: al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, al-Irshād, 305-307; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtārah, 275-276; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d.436 H/) & (SRLQWHG RXW WKLV LVVXH LQ DQRWKHU SODFH VD\LQJ « L customs of the Imams and endows them with things that he does not endow others; if perfection of the mind and young age is not possible, it becomes possible for them, peace be upon them, as a breaking of the custom". See: al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, al-Shāfī, 2: 255. See also: al-Karājikī, Kanz al-Fawā'id, 1: 273-275.

[45] The non-6 Kūfee Islamic heritage accepted the idea of the child's genius before reaching the usual age for that, according to the custom and spontaneity of human beings. The Koranic text mentioned classical stories that confirm this idea. See about that: al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Mughnī, 15:215. The scholars of ḥadīth among the Sunnis mentioned that it is alright to listen to someone who is below thirteen and pointed out the truth of endurance before the age of maturity. See: Aḥmad bin ʿAlī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, al-Kifāyah fī ʿIlm al-Riwāyah (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1972), 103.

[46] Al-Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 H.\ 855 CE) related in al-Faḍā'il a tradition that indicates the tendency of some scholars (Islām) to create an intermediate fair conception that balances between Ali and Abū Bakr and we read in the version from Muḥammad bin Kaʿb: "The first person who believed from this nation in the Messenger of God was Khadījah, and the first two men who accepted Islam were Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and Ali, and Abū Bakr was the first to show his Islam". Ibn Ḥanbal, Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥābah, 1: 226. See also: Muḥammad bin Ishāq, al-Siyar wa-l-Maghāzī, Edited by Dr. Suhayl Zakkār (Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 139; al-Maqdisī, al-Bad' wa-l-Tārīkh, 5: 71.

ISSN 2056-7553(print), ISSN 2056-7561(online)

It is certain that this old attempt that sought reconciliation and approximation between the two sides did not find listening ears among the Sunnis because, in their calculations, it equates between two incompatible rivals in their view. The intermediate tradition does not serve their doctrinal interest. In fact, it demolishes their private intellectual conceptions about Islam. Besides, it shows Ali's weakness and fear while it points out Abu Bakr's power and bravery, whose declaration of his acceptance of Islam was evidence to that, while Ali's concealment of his belief in Islam indicates his fear of his relatives' violence and his disqualification and incompetence to take leadership.

It is possible to suppose that the issue of Ali's acceptance of Islam bears broad indications that reflect, to some extent, the slowly widening abyss between two different sides who disagreed in their evaluation Ali's personality and its role in the Islamic Da'wah. However, the Sunnis benefitted from the Sunni heritage, which helped them and provided them with materials that contributed to the establishment of their faith and evaluation of Ali's personality. This can be noticed in reviewing Shi'ite and Sunni sources that observed the issue of Ali's acceptance of Islam.[47]

Finally, it is possible to say that the issue of Ali's acceptance of Islam is in the core of the Sunni Shi'ite disagreement on the concept of Imamiyyah and the legitimate right in it. Therefore, both Shi'is and Sunna set out at early stage to focus their interest on the issue of Ali's acceptance of Islam in an attempt to justify their religious and political rights to the caliphate.

47 The Sunnis benefitted from the necessity of supporting their belief in Imamiyah. Therefore, they used the heritage of Sunna for reconciliation and approximation between the two sides. See: Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, Fiqh al-Sirah, 6th Ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1991), p.126; Ahmad Shalabi, Al-Tarikh al-Islami wa al-Hadarah al-Islamiyyah, 3rd Ed. (Cairo: Maktabah al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah, 1978), p.526; Ahmad Mahmud Subhi, Fi 'Ilm al-Kalam: Dirasah Falsafiyyah li Aqwal Firaq al-Muslimin fi al-Usul al-Din, 3rd Ed. (Alexandria: Mu'assasah al-Thaqafah al-Jami'iyyah, 1985), p.49; Ahmad Amin, Fajr al-Islam, 10th Ed. (Cairo: Maktabah al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah, 1969), p.255; Ahmad Mahmud Subhi, Nazariyyat al-Imamah li Ithna 'Ashariyya, Zaydiyyah, Isma'iliyyah, 2nd Ed. (Alexandria: Mu'assasah al-Thaqafah al-Jami'iyyah, 1991), p.526.

ISSN 2056-7553(print), ISSN 2056-7561(online)