

# Imam 'Ali's Transactions with the Caliphs for Islamic Unity

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This article focuses on the way in which Imam 'Ali ('a) interacted with the Caliphs after the death of the Prophet (s). Despite having his right usurped, Imam 'Ali ('a) willingly offered his assistance and support to the Caliphs in political, economic, military, judicial, and religious matters. His intention was the preservation of the unity and stability of the Islamic Ummah from the dangers of division, disintegration, and destruction.

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# Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) Transactions with the Caliphs for Islamic Unity

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## Abstract

Apart from the noble Qur’an and the conduct of the Holy Prophet (s), the example set by the immaculate leaders (‘a) provides yet another reason for the importance and necessity of working towards Islamic unity. This article focuses on the way in which Imam ‘Ali (‘a) interacted with the Caliphs after the death of the Prophet (s). Despite having his right usurped, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) willingly offered his assistance and support to the Caliphs in political, economic, military, judicial, and religious matters. His intention was the preservation of the unity and stability of the Islamic Ummah from the dangers of division, disintegration, and destruction. Instead of being a point of division, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) can become the pivot of unity for us today, at a time when the Muslim Ummah is weakened both from within and without.

**Keywords:** Imam ‘Ali, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, Transaction, Caliphate, Islamic unity, consultation, Ummah.

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The Unity of Muslims is a basic issue of paramount importance emphasized in the Word of God and the Tradition of the Prophet (s). The invigorating call for unity was announced by the Prophet (s) and his loyal followers at a time when the whispers of discord abounded—its roots tracing back to ancient traditions and feuds from the Age of Ignorance.

With the passing of the Prophet (s), the grounds were laid for the return of tribal and racial supremacy thus leading to the first schism between Muslims over the issue of succession. People became involved in this issue for different reasons. After the affair of Saqifah and the appointment of the first caliph, in spite of their differences of opinion, many of the companions of the Prophet (s) remained quiet in the interest of Islam and the unity of the Islamic Ummah, thereby preventing division therein.

In order to protect the unity of the Ummah, ‘Ali (‘a) advised his followers against undertaking any action that would lead to the weakening of Islam and disunity among the Muslim ranks. Additionally, he never failed to intellectually aid the caliphs in any matter. Historical reports indicate that ‘Ali’s (‘a) counsel with the caliphs in important affairs kept the caliphate from critical blunders, contributing especially towards protecting the rights of the people within the judicial system.

## The Importance of this Topic

Today, at a time when arrogant global hegemonies have aimed their attention at the Islamic world with all their might and have flauntingly dominated some Islamic countries, the unity of the Islamic Ummah is all the more necessary. The only way to shake off current difficulties is through the unification of Muslims.

The Qur’an and the hadith of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) demonstrate that Islamic unity is essential.

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

***Hold fast, all together, to Allah’s cord, and do not be divided [into sects]. (3: 103)***

In the view of Imam Sadiq (‘a), those who separate themselves from the Muslim society even as much as a hand’s length have torn the thread of Islam from their necks.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, unity is first and foremost a logical necessity, and second, it is an essential reality according to numerous Qur’anic verses and ahadith of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

## Aims of this Paper

One of the aims of this discourse is to create unity among the followers of the Muslim Ummah and the various Islamic schools of thought. Through consideration of the customs and methods of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) in his conduct with the caliphs and the various instances of his aid and counsel to them, this paper asserts that attaining this holy goal is not only possible, but also quite simple as well.

## Terminology

Explanation of the concepts and terms used in social or academic discourse is an important component of any serious treatise. Therefore, it is first necessary to define some terms.

### I. Unity [wahdah] and Union [ittihad]

Philological meaning: The word unity [wahdah] means to become one; the state of being one; similarity

of a group in a doctrine and/or goal; and similarity of a nation in desires and aims so as to be considered a singular group.<sup>2</sup>

The word union [*ittihad*] means to become one;<sup>3</sup> unanimity, sincerity, sameness of aims, and consonance of opinions.<sup>4</sup>

Terminological meaning: Terminologically, unity and union designate a situation where several things become one while their individual characteristics are simultaneously preserved.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, unity of the Islamic *Ummah* indicates solidarity and cooperation of all Muslims together with preservation of doctrinal identity against common opponents. The Infallible Imams ('a), who were the rulers explicitly appointed by God over the *Ummah* of Muslims, interacted and cooperated with the governors of their times with the aim of preserving this notion of unity.

## **II. Transaction [ta'amul]**

*Ta'amul* signifies the mutual transactions of people with one another.<sup>6</sup> Thus, *ta'amul* is two-sided, i.e. there have to be at least two parties for *ta'amul* to occur. Of course, transactions are not limited to the domain of buying and selling materials but also encompass the intellectual and scientific realms as well.

## **A Defender of the Interests of Islam**

In the time of the Prophet (s), the newly established Islamic society was threatened continuously by the Roman and Persian empires as well as by dissemblers (*munafiqin*) within. The threat of an impending invasion by the Roman emperor was continually on the Prophet's (s) mind and he was concerned about this issue to the very end of his mission.

The first military encounter of the Muslims with the Roman army occurred in the eighth year of the Hijra in the region of Palestine and this led to the defeat of the army of Islam. It was possible that at any moment the heart of the Islamic territory could be attacked. In the ninth year of the Hijra, the Prophet of Islam advanced an army to the outskirts of Damascus and was eventually able to win back his lost standing.<sup>7</sup> This victory did not satisfy the Prophet (s) and, a few days before the onset of his fatal sickness, he again sent the army of Islam, this time commanded by Usama, to the frontier of Damascus.<sup>8</sup>

The second threat was the Persian Empire. Enraged after receiving a letter from the Prophet (s), the Khosrow of Persia tore it up and disrespectfully cast out the Muslim envoy. The Persian king subsequently wrote a letter to the governor of Yemen to seize the Prophet, dead or alive.<sup>9</sup> However, Khosrow Parviz did not live much longer and died in the Prophet's (s) lifetime.

The third threat was from the hypocrites and dissemblers who, working as secret agents, incessantly infiltrated parties of Muslims to such an extent that they even attempted to assassinate the Prophet (s)

on the road of Tabuk towards Madinah.

The potential damage caused by hypocrites can be so great that the Qur'an speaks of them in many different chapters including Baqarah, Al 'Imran, Nisa', Ma'idah, Anfal, Tawbah, 'Ankabut, Ahzab, Muhammad (s), Fath, Mujadalah, Hadid, Munafiqun, and Hashr.<sup>10</sup>

After the heart-rending death of the Prophet (s), the Islamic Ummah was faced with a fierce dispute over the issue of succession. The Shia believed that the Prophet (s) had appointed 'Ali ('a) as his successor on many occasions, particularly at Ghadir Khum. However, the Sunni held that he had not chosen any particular person as his successor.

In any event, after much discussion in Saqifah, a caliph was chosen for the whole *Ummah* from among a number of Muslims present, even though a large number of the companions and followers of the Prophet (s) were absent.<sup>11</sup> After this event, conflict ignited among Muslims and, in addition to these conditions, Islam was consistently threatened by internal and external enemies.

Imam 'Ali ('a) who regarded himself as having the sole right to rule, did not press his rightful claim and remained silent on the issue in these troubled times. If he had taken up arms to enforce his right, the following consequences would have ensued:

In such an uprising, Imam 'Ali ('a) would have lost many of his followers who believed heart and soul in the fact that he was the Imam. Though martyrdom and sacrifice on the path of God are desirable in Islam, the legitimate rights of the rightful could not be returned with the deaths of these persons.

In addition to losing these dear personages, an uprising of Bani Hashim and the rest of the Imam's followers would cause the deaths of many other Companions of the Prophet (s) who opposed the caliphate of the Imam. Thus, the powerbase of the Muslims would weaken considerably. Though this group had taken a stance against the Imam on the issue of leadership, they were not contrary to the Imam in other matters and were a strong source of power against opposing forces.

Further weakness of the Muslims might have caused distant tribes that had not completely assimilated Islam into their hearts to join the ranks of the apostates and those in opposition to Islam. The considerable power of the antagonists of Islam and an absence of central leadership could have led the monotheistic flame to be extinguished forever.<sup>12</sup>

The Commander of the Faithful had understood well the threat of the enemies and these bitter truths, and so he preferred silence over armed rebellion.

## **Preservation of Unity**

The unity of the Islamic Ummah was of core value to 'Ali ('a). This is why he sought leadership and why he endured so many hardships and adversities.

While ‘Ali (‘a) was readying the holy Prophet’s (s) body for burial, a gathering was convened in Saqifah to choose a caliph. When Abu Sufyan, who possessed a strong political awareness, heard of the people’s allegiance to Abu Bakr, he realized that conditions were favorable for disunity among Muslims. In addition to the danger of apostasy, the dispute between the Emigrants or Muhajirin [those who had emigrated from Makkah] and the Helpers or *Ansar* [those who aided the Prophet in Madinah] in the capital of the Islamic territory was evident. The stances of the *Muhajirin* and *Ansar* in the Saqifah affair, which led to the slogan of “Let there be from us an representative and from you an representative” [*minna amir wa minkum amir*] was an obvious manifestation of the dispute between these groups.

Even though the Prophet (s) made unceasing endeavors to create fellowship and devotion between the *Muhajirin* and *Ansar*,<sup>13</sup> the fanaticism and racism of some gave rise to mutual threats of war between the two parties after the passing of the Prophet (s).

As Abu Sufyan had clearly perceived the rudiments of the dispute, he declared, “I see a storm which cannot end without bloodshed.”<sup>14</sup> In order to reach his evil goal, he went to Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and proposed, “Give me your hand so I swear allegiance with you and clasp your hand as the caliph of the Muslims since if I swear allegiance to you no child of ‘Abd Manaf will oppose you and if the children of ‘Abd Manaf swear allegiance to you, no one from the Quraysh will refrain from giving you their allegiance and eventually all Arabs will accept you as their ruler.”<sup>15</sup>

At that moment, the Commander of the Faithful made his historic statement about Abu Sufyan:

مازلت عدواً للإسلام و أهله

*Your enmity with Islam and Muslims remains.*<sup>16</sup>

Abu Sufyan then recited a poem to provoke Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and his followers, purporting that they should not remain quiet regarding their clear rights.

بني هاشم لاتطمعوا الناس فيكم

ولا سيّما تيم ابن مرّة او عدي

فما الامر الا فيكم و اليكم

## و ليس لها الا ابو حسن علي

*O Children of Hashim! Let not the people covet what belongs to you, particularly the tribes of Tim and 'Uday.*

*The rule is yours alone and in your direction;  
no one save the father of Hasan, 'Ali, is worthy of it.* 17

'Ali was well aware of the evil intentions of Abu Sufyan: to cause insurgence, to shrivel the young shoot of Islam, and to restore the Age of Ignorance. Thus, 'Ali refused his proposition saying:

*"You have no aim except sedition and disturbance. You have been malevolent towards Islam for a long time. I have no need of your advice or your troops."*18

In addition, as cited in the Nahj al-Balaghah, the Imam responded to this action of Abu Sufyan by informing the people of the adverse consequences of dispute:

*"Split the waves of sedition with the Arks of Salvation. Steer clear of difference and division and dispense with expressions of vaunting ... If I say something, they say that he covets rule and if I stay silent, they say that he fears death. By God, the desire of the son of Abu Talib for death is greater than the desire of an infant for a mother's breast. If I am silent, it is due to the special knowledge and awareness in which I am immersed. If you were also aware like me, you would become agitated and tremulous like a well rope."*19

The awareness the Imam spoke of was insight into the horrible consequences of dispute and division among Muslims.

The Imam knew perfectly well that an uprising to claim rights could only conclude at the cost of Islam and with return of the people to their previous ignorant beliefs. Therefore, in order to protect Islam and the unity of the Islamic *Ummah*, he preferred to remain silent.

In a letter to the people of Egypt, the Imam denoted the reason for his silence:

*"By God, I never thought that the Arabs would take the caliphate away from the Family of the Prophet (s) or that they would withhold it from me. Nothing astonished me save the people's favour for another whose hand they clasped in fealty. Therefore, I kept back seeing that some people had abandoned Islam and desired to wipe out the religion of Muhammad (s). I feared that if I did not rush to the aid of Islam and Muslims, I would see breach and ruin in the body of Islam that would be a greater calamity and cause deeper grief than the loss of a few days rule, which would evanesce rapidly like a mirage or cloud. I then rose in opposition to these events and aided Muslims until the evil was eliminated and serenity returned to the bosom of Islam [and the Islamic society]."*20

Clearly, in this letter the Imam highlights that when he perceived danger to Islam and the Islamic *Ummah*, he withdrew, disregarding his abused right and hastening to the succor of Islam and Muslims.

Another reason for withdrawing from demanding his right to the caliphate that is evident in the Imam's ('a) orations was to safeguard the unity of the Islamic *Ummah* in order to prevent religious harm and apostasy. He has declared:

*“Quraysh took our right after [the passing of] the Prophet (s) reserving it for themselves. After some contemplation, I decided that forbearance [on the abuse of my rights] is better than causing division among Muslims and shedding their blood. The people are new Muslims. The slightest laxness could destroy the religion and the most inconsequential person could devastate it.”* 21

During the opening days of his rule, in relating the conditions after the passing of the Prophet (s) with regard to his right being abused, 'Ali ('a) stated:

After the Prophet (s), our right was usurped and we were positioned among the mass of traders and marketers. Our eyes shed tears and distress was caused. By God! If there was no fear of sedition among Muslims, return of unbelief, and ruination of the religion, we would act differently with them and we would wage war against them.<sup>22</sup>

Not only did he prevent the people from dispute after the passing of the Prophet (s) but he also gave allegiance in the Assembly of Six even though he had perceived 'Abd al-Rahman's fealty to 'Uthman as a ruse. In this way, he averted altercation among the people. He addressed the members of the assembly as follows:

Even though leadership is my right and your usurpation of it is oppression towards me, as long as the affairs of Muslims are in order and the oppression is only towards me, I will not mount opposition.<sup>23</sup>

Before entering into the assembly, 'Abbas, the Prophet's (s) uncle, asked 'Ali not to take part because he was positive that 'Uthman would be chosen. The Imam confirmed the outcome of the assembly but turned down his uncle's suggestion. He said:

اني اكره الخلاف

*I hate disagreement.*<sup>24</sup>

The day 'Ali opted to do nothing about the issue of rule, noble Fatimah ('a) asked him to rise up against the oppressors. At that moment, the call of the muezzin rose with the cry:

## أشهد أن محمد رسول الله

*I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.*

The Imam faced his noble wife and said,

*“Would you like this call to be extinguished upon the earth?” Fatimah (‘a) replied, ‘Never.’ The Imam then said, ‘Therefore, the way is the one I have set upon.’”<sup>25</sup>*

During the battle of Siffin, a man from the tribe of Bani Asad asked the Imam, “How did the Quraysh preclude you from the caliphate?” The Imam became upset at the inappropriateness of the man’s question since some of Imam ‘Ali’s soldiers believed in the previous caliphs and propounding such matters at that time could have caused division among their ranks. Thus, after expressing his vexation, the Imam stated:

*“In respect for the relation you have with the Prophet (s) and since every Muslim has the right to ask questions, I will succinctly answer you. Leadership of the Ummah belonged to us and our bond with the Prophet (s) was stronger than that of others but some were envious and others shut their eyes to the truth. The arbitrator between them and us is God and the return of everyone is to Him.”<sup>26</sup>*

Hence, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) remained quiet to safeguard Islam and Islamic unity as he was well aware of the dangers that threatened the newly established Islamic society and religion. Of course, the Imam’s silence meant desisting from armed contention. He never renounced his right and continuously verbalized his criticism of the issue throughout the rule of the caliphs as well as after.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes he would also show his dissatisfaction through his actions<sup>28</sup> but he never refused their requests for help.

### **‘Ali’s Cooperation with the Caliphs**

After the passing of the Prophet (s), many problems assailed the recently established religion. Neglect of these issues could have posed a threat to the foundation of Islam and the Ummah.

During this sensitive period in history, ‘Ali (‘a) mainly exerted himself in carrying out of his divine mandate as well as his social responsibilities through counsel and scholarly collaboration in order to preserve the religion and maintain the stability within society. With the survival of Muslims and the new religion at stake, he could not be indifferent to the major difficulties that had befallen Islam and the Ummah, especially on the pretext that his rights had been usurped.

### **‘Ali’s (‘a) Transactions with the First Caliph**

## **A. Political Counsel**

Some opportunists sought to return to the religion of their ancestors after the passing of the Prophet (s). Their Islam was in a precarious state even when they had first accepted the religion. In order to subdue them, the first caliph was in dire need of the elite among the companions of the Prophet (s), including 'Ali ('a) and the clan of Bani Hashim. If 'Ali were to support the caliph in this area, many related problems could swiftly be resolved because notwithstanding his substantial credibility and reputation in the society, he was the chief of the great and well-respected clan of Bani Hashim and many people supported and followed him.

Many of the advocates of Imam 'Ali were elite companions that were highly respected and enjoyed an elevated status in society. 'Ammar Yasir, Miqdad, Abu Dhar Ghifari, and Salman number among these intimate Companions of the Prophet (s). In the event that 'Ali were to support the caliph, naturally a great number of these personages accompanied by their clans would be a substantial source of power for the caliph.

Needless to say, after the cautious appearance of Imam 'Ali ('a) on the scene, the supporters and Shia of 'Ali followed him into action to the extent that they considered it obligatory in order to defend Islam. Thus, they played an important role in the eradication of apostasy. In *Tarikh al-Riddah*, Hudhayfah ibn Yaman and 'Uday ibn Hatam Ta'i (companions of 'Ali) were named among those who endeavoured to prevent the apostasy of their clans.<sup>29</sup>

Other companions of 'Ali ('a), including 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, Talhah, and Zubayr, were among those who the first caliph stationed at the gates of Madinah to defend against attacks from apostate tribes. When Madinah was assaulted at night, they defended it with utmost bravery.<sup>30</sup>

More important than all this was the Imam's sound advice to the caliph at Dhu al-Qissah where he was stationed for battle. The Imam dissuaded the caliph from his resolution to fight himself by telling him that if he entered the fray personally, exiting the region, order would never return to the Islamic territories. Abu Bakr accepted the counsel of the Imam and sent Khalid ibn Walid to battle the apostates in his stead.<sup>31</sup>

## **B. Military Counsel**

Over a year of Abu Bakr's rule was spent in battle with apostates, false prophets,<sup>32</sup> and obstructers of zakat (religious tax).<sup>33</sup> After the disturbances caused by the apostates were resolved, Abu Bakr was not able to attain any significant conquests (such as the ones after his reign). His military movements went only as far as beginning the campaign against the Romans in Damascus and Syria.

Certainly, the caliph was fully acquainted with the necessary battle skills and experience as well as the selflessness and bravery of 'Ali ('a). He knew that the decisive role of 'Ali ('a) in battles against unbelievers had made him an uncontested military hero, something that could not be overlooked.

However, his absence in wars and conquests and his withdrawal could cause great questions such as, “Why is ‘Ali (‘a) indifferent to unbelievers such as the Romans?” Beyond question, it was clear for everyone that fear of death<sup>34</sup> or indolence regarding jihad were not factors in the matter. Thus, what could cause such a war hero to withdraw in this manner? This question might have been considered by the society of the time.

For this reason, the caliph and his supporters endeavored to make ‘Ali participate in the wars and conquests so that such questions would not be raised. Also, the entrance of ‘Ali (‘a) into the war arena would bring substantial legitimacy to the matter in the minds of many, especially the Bani Hashim.

‘Ali (‘a) did not want to sanction the policies of the caliph by directly participating in battles and conquests. However, in the interest of the future of the Islamic society, he preferred to adopt the role of a counsellor.

Dissemination of Islam in other countries is the desire of every Muslim. Therefore, though ‘Ali (‘a) did not personally take part in these battles, he sufficed himself with providing assistance in this regard in the form of counsel and deliberation.

As stated by Qazwini, the Imam remained in Madinah, engaging in matters of the Shari’ah as well as criticizing and solving the problems of the society in order to preserve the Islamic faith.<sup>35</sup>

According to historical chronicles, after the passing of the Prophet (s) and in the wake of the political crises in Madinah, Abu Bakr was hesitant about carrying out the command of the Prophet (s) to wage war against the Romans. He took counsel with several of the companions each of whom gave opinions that did not satisfy him. He finally consulted with ‘Ali (‘a) who encouraged him to carry out the Prophet’s (s) command, adding that if he battled the Romans he would be victorious. The caliph was pleased with the encouragement of the Imam.<sup>36</sup> He subsequently addressed the people thus:

*“O Muslims! This [man], ‘Ali, is heir to the knowledge of the Prophet (s). Whoever doubts his veracity is a hypocrite. His words have incited and encouraged me to war against Rome and have made me extremely glad.”<sup>37</sup>*

In this fierce battle, after valiant struggles and sacrifice, the army of Islam attained a great victory. In this battle, a number of the companions of ‘Ali were also present.

### **C. Intellectual Collaboration: Debate with Jewish Scholars**

After the Prophet (s) passed away and Abu Bakr became caliph, various Jewish and Christian scholars came to the Islamic capital to weaken the morale of Muslims and ask scholarly questions from the caliph.

As an example, several rabbis entered Madinah to see the caliph. They said to him:

*“In the Torah, we read that the successors to the Prophets are the most learned of their nation. Now that you are the caliph of your prophet, tell us: Where is God; is He in the heavens or on the earth?”*

Abu Bakr presented an answer that did not satisfy the rabbis. He maintained that God was located in the throne of the heavens [*‘arsh*]. This triggered criticism from the rabbis who argued that in this case the world would be empty of God. In this critical moment, ‘Ali (‘a) came to the aid of Islam, protecting the honor of Islamic society. He declared:

*“God has created space. He is beyond that which space may encompass. He is everywhere though He never touches or draws nigh on any creature. He absolutely encompasses everything and nothing is beyond the realm of His authority.”<sup>38</sup>*

In this wise reply, the Commander of the Faithful presented, in the clearest of manners, the non-encompassing nature of God within space. This answer amazed the rabbis to such an extent that they involuntarily confessed the verity of his words and his worthiness for being the caliph.

It has been cited that a Jew entered Madinah seeking the leader of Muslims. The people brought him to Abu Bakr. He addressed the caliph saying, “I have several questions, the answers of which only a prophet or his successor know.” He then asked the following three questions: 1) What is it that God does not possess? 2) What is it that does not exist in the Court of God? 3) What is it that God does not know?”

Abu Bakr who had no answer said, “These questions are only propounded by the enemies and deniers of God.” Then he decided to torture the man. Ibn ‘Abbas who was present in the meeting protested, “You are not being fair with this man. Either answer him or take him to ‘Ali (‘a).”

Abu Bakr and others present in the meeting went to ‘Ali (‘a). The caliph said to the Imam (‘a), “This Jew propounds blasphemous questions.” Subsequently, the Imam answered the man’s questions thus:

*“That which God does not know is the statement of you Jews who say that Ezra [*‘uzayr*] is the son of God. God has no child and knows no such son as his own. That which does not exist in the Divine Court is oppression to His servants, and that which God does not have is a partner.”*

At that moment, the Jew declared the Shahadatayn<sup>39</sup> and identified the Imam (‘a) as the successor to the Prophet (s). Moreover, Abu Bakr and the Muslims named ‘Ali (‘a) ‘Mufarrij al-Karb’ (Banisher of Grief).<sup>40</sup>

## **D. Judicial Cooperation**

In the period of the first caliph’s rule, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) also took part in judicial affairs and aided Islam in these matters. The following is an example:

It has been cited that in the time of Abu Bakr’s caliphate, a man was brought to him on the charge of

drinking alcohol. The man confessed to his sin saying, “I live in a place where they consider drinking alcohol and eating dead meat to be permissible. If I had known it was forbidden, I would not have persisted.” The caliph asked ‘Umar ibn Khattab about how to rule in the matter. ‘Umar said, “It is a problem that no one save Abu al-Hasan (the father of Hasan) can solve.” Thus, the three of them left for the house of Imam ‘Ali (‘a).

The Imam said, “Take someone with him to show him to the Muhajirin and Ansar to see whether or not anyone recited the Qur’anic verse banning alcohol to him.” This was done but since no one among the Muhajirin and Ansar attested to reciting the verse to the man, he was released.<sup>41</sup>

## **‘Ali (‘a) in the Tenure of the Second Caliph**

The spread of Islam and protection of the essence of Islam were among the lofty aims of Imam ‘Ali (‘a). He considered himself the true appointed successor of the holy Prophet (s). Even though his obvious right had been abused and the caliphate was usurped, whenever he saw a problem in the workings of the caliphate, he would resolve it in a way that revealed a perspective and train of thought that was both exalted and profound. Similar to the period of the first caliph, ‘Ali (‘a) was also a counsellor and trouble-shooter for many issues—military, political, scholarly, judicial, economic, or otherwise—that arose during the time of the second caliph.

### **A. Military Cooperation**

In the term of the second caliph, battles and conquests were more extensive and thus the role of ‘Ali (‘a) was more apparent in this period. Considering the valor and battle experience of ‘Ali, the second caliph could not do without his guidance and cooperation. The caliph knew that ‘Ali (‘a) would not directly participate in battles. However, he endeavored to make use of his counsel and informed assistance. Since the Imam could not neglect the fate of Islam and Muslims, he aided the caliph in the form of guidance and offering opinions. The following are several instances of such counsels:

#### **1. The Battle of Jisr (Bridge)**

In this battle, the Muslims were defeated. The caliph called upon the Muslims and encouraged them to *jihad*. He took counsel with various people including ‘Ali about whether he should take part personally in the battle or send someone in his stead. ‘Ali (‘a) proposed that he not participate personally.<sup>42</sup>

#### **2. War with the Romans**

When the army of Islam encountered the army of Heraclius, Abu ‘Ubaydah wrote a letter to the caliph requesting orders and asking for reinforcements. The second caliph convened a meeting with the elite companions where he asked ‘Ali (‘a) about the matter. ‘Ali(‘a) said, “Tell Abu ‘Ubaydah to stand firm, victory will be that of the Muslims.”<sup>43</sup>

### **3. The Battle of Bayt al-Muqaddas (Jerusalem)**

In the battle of Bayt al-Muqaddas, the caliph also took counsel with the companions including Imam 'Ali ('a). He was made glad by the words and advice of 'Ali ('a) and told the companions, "I shall not act against the counsel of 'Ali. I praise him in advice and see his brow to be white."<sup>44</sup>

### **4. The War for Khurasan**

Regarding the war for Khurasan, Imam 'Ali ('a) enumerated the features and strong points of each of the cities of the Khurasan province and encouraged the second caliph to conquer it.<sup>45</sup>

#### **The Role of 'Ali's ('a) Followers in Battles**

The companions and followers of 'Ali ('a) had key roles in the campaigns during the second caliph's tenure. The victories of Islam in conquering surrounding territories are indebted to the unceasing struggles of the heroic commanders that were companions of the Imam. Of course, the direct participation of the companions of 'Ali ('a) in conquests was not without their leader's approval. For instance, when the caliph tried to appoint Salman Farsi governor of Ctesiphon [mada'in], he did not accept until 'Ali ('a) gave him permission.<sup>46</sup>

Malik Ashtar took part in the Qadisyah battle.<sup>47</sup> He conquered Amid and Nasibin.<sup>48</sup> Hudhayfah ibn Yaman was a commander in the battle of Nahawand.<sup>49</sup> According to Dinwari, he took command of the army of Islam after Na'man ibn Muqrin.<sup>50</sup> In the conquest of Egypt, 'Ammar Yasir commanded the cavalry.<sup>51</sup> He was also present in the conquest of Diyarbakir (previously known as Amida) beside Miqdad ibn Aswad. Hashim ibn 'Utbah Mirqal, the nephew of Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas and an exceptionally brave and selfless companion of 'Ali ('a), was appointed commander of a five thousand strong army in the time of the second caliph. He took part in the conquest of Bayt al-Muqaddas<sup>52</sup> and in the conquest of Azerbaijan and led a group of soldiers.<sup>53</sup> Jarir ibn 'Abdullah Bajli was a commander in the battle of Qadisiyyah (a city in southern Iraq) and was also present in the battle of Jalula'. In the attack on Iraq and Hirah, he commanded the army.<sup>54</sup>

Obviously, the participation of 'Ali's ('a) companions in the battles during the tenures of the caliphs did not indicate their endorsement of the caliphate. It was rather due to their interest in expanding and developing Islam beyond the Islamic borders.

#### **The Companions of 'Ali ('a) and Governance**

With his permission, some of the companions of 'Ali ('a) actively participated in the political and governance arenas with the aim of preserving unity. For instance, after Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas captured Ctesiphon, the caliph appointed Salman Farsi as the governor of the city.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the caliph appointed 'Ammar Yasir governor of Kufa.<sup>56</sup>

## The Presence of 'Ali ('a) in Governance

Imam 'Ali ('a) regarded his right to have been usurped. Even so, the solidarity of the Islamic Ummah was of vital importance to him. This is why, when the second caliph was planning to leave Madinah to attend to the affairs of Muslims and appointed 'Ali ('a) as his regent and obliged the people to follow him, 'Ali ('a) did not neglect his duty to the unity and fate of the Islamic Ummah in the least. For this reason, during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn Khattab, 'Ali ('a) was chosen as his regent in Madinah three times.

One of the instances where the caliph officially appointed 'Ali ('a) as his regent in Madinah was when he wanted to leave for Damascus.<sup>57</sup> Before he left, he made an oration for the army of Madinah. After praising the Lord, he said:

ايها الناس إني خارج الي الشام للامر الذي قد علمتم، ولو لا أني اخاف علي  
المسلمين لما خرجت، و هذا علي بن ابي طالب رضي الله عنه بالمدينه،  
فانظروا أن حزبكم امر عليكم به و احتكموا اليه في اموركم واسمعوا له و  
اطيعوا، أفهتكم ما امرتكم به؟ فقالوا: نعم سمعاً و طاعة.

“O people! I leave for Damascus and if there were no danger to Muslims, I would never leave Madinah. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a)—may God be pleased with him—is in Madinah. Look to him. I entrust your affairs to him. He is the governor among you. Listen to his words and follow him. Do you understand that which I have said to you?”<sup>58</sup>

The people answered, “Yes. We have heard and we shall obey.”

Another similar incident occurred when the caliph decided to leave Madinah after taking counsel with 'Ali ('a) about dispatching soldiers to reinforce the Islamic army for the battles of Qadisiyyah and Jisr. At that time also, he made 'Ali ('a) his regent in Madinah.<sup>59</sup>

Yet another instance was when the caliph determined to go to Bayt al-Muqaddas after a meeting with 'Ali ('a). The reason for the trip was to carry out the conditions for peace with the people of that city, which could not take place without the presence of the caliph. Before he left for Palestine, he made 'Ali ('a) his regent in Madinah.<sup>60</sup>

The aforementioned cases of 'Ali's ('a) temporary presence in the government are according to authentic Sunni sources. Some Shia historians such as Sharif Radhi also indicate the temporary involvement of 'Ali ('a) in governance.

When the caliph went to Damascus, 'Abbas was with him. The caliph said to him, “Maybe you think you are more deserving of this title than I am?” 'Abbas answered, “More deserving than you or I is the

person who is your regent in Madinah—the man who struck us with his sword until we converted to Islam, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib.”<sup>61</sup>

## **B. Political Advice**

The second caliph was also in need of the guidance of ‘Ali (‘a) in political matters. The benevolence and profundity of his thought in various areas including political counsel continuously served to consolidate the Islamic nation.

It has been cited by some scholars that Iranians from various cities including Hamadan, Rey, Isfahan, and Nahavand sent dispatches to other cities announcing that the Prophet (s) had passed away, that after him, Abu Bakr, who was their ruler had also died, and that ‘Umar, who would live long, would make transgressions against their cities. These letters asked the people to drive the armies of ‘Umar out of their cities and wage war against them.

After hearing this news, ‘Umar apprehensively went to the Mosque of the Prophet (s) and took counsel with several Muhajireen and Ansar. Each said something that did not satisfy the caliph. Finally, ‘Ali (‘a) declared, “I counsel that you not move the people of Damascus, Yemen, Makkah, or Madinah but that you write to the men of Basra to divide into three parts: One to defend their women and children in Basra; one to preside over the Ahl al-Dhimmah<sup>62</sup> to keep them from breaking oath; and the third to hasten to the aid of their brothers.” ‘Umar answered, “Indeed, this is the correct opinion. I want to follow this opinion.” Afterwards, he kept on repeating the statements of ‘Ali (‘a) with astonishment.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, after the conquest of Ctesiphon in the month of Rabi’ al-Awwal of the 16th year of the Hijra, the caliph decided to record history. He finally accepted the idea of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) to specify history from the date of the Hijra of the Prophet (s).<sup>64</sup>

## **C. Economic Advice**

Without a doubt, the insight of ‘Ali (‘a) was more profound than that of all the companions of the Prophet (s). Thus, whenever the caliphs met with complications in any area they would refer to the Imam and ask him for a final solution. One such area was the area of economic issues regarding public and private wealth.

### **Stipends from the Bayt al-Mal (Public Wealth)**

A person that is charged with the leadership of a society must be given an amount of money for their livelihood. In his tenure as the caliph, ‘Umar conferred with various companions including Imam ‘Ali (‘a) regarding this issue. He finally accepted the view of the Imam that, “Take only as much from the Bayt al-Mal as you need for you and your family’s livelihood.”<sup>65</sup>

## **Use of the Jewellery of the Ka'bah**

'Umar intended to use the jewels of the Ka'bah for the Islamic army. Imam ('a) said to him, "As the Prophet (s) did not touch them you must not either!" 'Umar accepted the words of the Imam and chanted the slogan:

لولاك لافتضحنا

*If you did not exist, we would surely be disgraced.*<sup>66</sup>

## **Allotment of the Lands of Iraq**

The second caliph asked 'Ali ('a) his opinion about the fertile lands surrounding Kufa after Muslims had captured the city. The Imam said to him, "If you divide the lands among the current generation of Muslims it shall not avail the Muslims of the future. However, if you leave the lands to the current owners for them to work on and pay taxes to the Islamic government, it will be beneficial to both the current generation and the future one." Thereafter 'Umar declared his consent.<sup>67</sup>

## **D. 'Ali in Judicial Affairs**

During this time, 'Ali ('a) also offered his guidance in judicial affairs and resolved quandaries faced by the caliph. The following are some examples:

A woman with a mental disorder who had committed adultery was brought to 'Umar. After consulting with the people, he ordered her to be stoned [rajm]. When the Imam ('a) heard of the incident, he instructed that the woman be brought back. He went to 'Umar and stated, "Do you not know that three groups of people have been absolved of responsibility? They are the insane until they recover, the unconscious until they wake, and the child until they mature." While chanting takbir (i.e. Allahu Akbar) 'Umar ordered that the woman be returned and not punished.<sup>68</sup>

It has been cited that a woman who had married while she was still in her waiting period ['iddah]<sup>69</sup> was brought to 'Umar. He took the mihr (marriage portion) of the woman and put it in the treasury [*bayt al-mal*]. He also ordered that the marriage of the man and woman be permanently annulled without the possibility of remarriage and that they be punished. The Imam ('a) declared this verdict to be incorrect and instructed that they be separated and that the woman wait for the completion of the first 'iddah as well as a second 'iddah for the second marriage. In addition, he obligated the second husband to pay a customary marriage portion [mihr al-mithl] to the woman since they had consummated the marriage.<sup>70</sup>

'Umar punished drinkers of alcohol with forty lashes but drinking alcohol still became widespread. He consulted with the companions of the Prophet (s) in this regard. 'Ali ('a) advised that they punish them

with eighty lashes speaking thus, “Those who drink alcohol become intoxicated and lose their reasoning. They rave and slander people. Thus, their punishment must be as much as the punishment of calumny.” The second caliph accepted the opinion of the Imam (‘a) and, after that, the punishment of drinking alcohol became eighty lashes.<sup>71</sup>

### **E. ‘Ali (‘a) as an Authority in the Field of Knowledge**

The spread of Islam after the Prophet (s) gave rise to new issues encountered by Muslims, the precepts of which did not directly exist in the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet (s). As a result, Muslims experienced problems in trying to solve such issues. Instead of utilizing the Qur’an and traditions in such cases, some companions resorted to conjectures or personal opinions. ‘Ali, (‘a) who was the most knowledgeable in the Islamic Ummah and the gate to the city of the Prophet’s (s) knowledge, would rush to the aid of the caliphs including ‘Umar and state the related divine decree when new matters baffled them so that ‘Umar came up with the slogan, “If there were no ‘Ali, ‘Umar would surely perish.”<sup>72</sup>

Many instances of ‘Ali’s (‘a) support in this regard have been chronicled in history. Mu’awiyah has also mentioned that whenever ‘Umar had a problem, he would go to ‘Ali (‘a), and the Imam would answer wisely every time.<sup>73</sup>

The caliphs did not shy away from asking about religious decrees from the Imam (‘a) such that sometimes they even asked questions and were answered in the presence of other people. In some cases, they were even reproached by those around them. For instance, two people asked the second caliph about divorce. ‘Umar looked around and asked, “O ‘Ali (‘a)! What is your opinion on this matter?” Imam gestured with his two fingers in answer. ‘Umar communicated ‘Ali’s (‘a) answer to the enquirers. They protested thus, “We asked you but you ask another?” ‘Umar replied, “Do you know the answerer? He is ‘Ali ibn Abi Ṭalib and I heard from the Prophet (s) that the faith of ‘Ali is greater than the weight of the heavens and the earth.”<sup>74</sup>

A group of Jewish scholars came to Madinah during the caliphate of ‘Umar and said to him, “We have questions that, if you answer, it will show that Islam is true and that Muhammad is the prophet of God. Else, it will become evident that Islam is false.” Some of their questions were as follows: What is the lock of the heavens? What is the key of the heavens? Which grave took its inhabitant around with it? Who struck fear into the hearts of their people but was not jinn or human? These and several others were questions to which ‘Umar had no answer. He bowed his head and said, “It is not a dishonour for ‘Umar to be asked questions to which he must answer: I do not know.” The Jewish scholars went saying, “It is clear that Islam is false.” Salman who witnessed the affair went to ‘Ali (‘a) and asked the Imam for help saying, “Islam has been diminished.”<sup>75</sup> ‘Ali (‘a) donned the attire of the Prophet (s) and went to the mosque. When ‘Umar’s eyes fell upon the Imam (‘a) he got up and said, “Whenever a problem arises they come to you.” The Imam stipulated to the Jewish scholars that if he were to answer them in accordance with the Torah they must become Muslim, and they acceded. The Imam (‘a) declared:

*“The lock of the heavens is polytheism because polytheism causes the deeds of a person not to ascend and not to be accepted. Its key is the Shahadatayn [i.e. the two testimonies of Islamic faith]. The grave that carried its inhabitant with it is the fish that swallowed Yunus (Jonah). The creature not human or jinn that struck fear into its people was the ant that told the other ants to enter the nest so that Sulayman (Solomon) and his army would not tread upon them.”*

All three of the Jewish scholars became Muslim and named ‘Ali (‘a) the most knowledgeable man in the Islamic Ummah.<sup>76</sup>

## **Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and the Third Caliph**

The intellectual cooperation of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) with the caliphs was not limited to the incumbency of the first and second caliphs. All the Imam’s (‘a) endeavors aimed at preserving the unity and protecting the newly founded Islamic society. Thus, he also resolved the scientific and political needs of Islam and Muslims in the time of the third caliph who continuously benefited from the ideas and guidance of Imam ‘Ali (‘a). Here we shall introduce several cases of such cooperation.

### **A. Intellectual Safe Haven**

Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) thoughts were directed towards the dissemination of Islam in the world and stabilization of its foundations within the Islamic country. He would defend Islam by acquainting the people with the religious sciences and divine decrees. Therefore, whenever the third caliph asked Imam ‘Ali (‘a) for help, he would comply.

A man came to ‘Uthman asking him about coitus with two sibling bondswomen. ‘Uthman said, “One verse of the Qur’an regards it permissible whereas another prohibits it. Though I do not like doing such a thing, its permissibility is preferable to its impermissibility.” The man came out of the meeting and encountered Imam ‘Ali on his way. He asked the same question of the Imam who replied, “I caution you to avoid this act. If I were ruler and I found you or any other person perpetrating this act I would punish him.”<sup>77</sup>

The text of the following verse prohibits coitus with two bondswomen that are sisters, since the verse covers both free people and servants. For this reason, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) warned the inquirer against committing this act. The companions and other jurists also emphasize the unlawfulness of this act.<sup>78</sup>

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخْتِ وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمُ مِنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبَائِبُكُمُ اللَّاتِي فِي حُجُورِكُمْ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمُ اللَّاتِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ

بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ  
الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

***Forbidden to you are your mothers, your daughters and your sisters, your paternal aunts and your maternal aunts, your brother's daughters and your sister's daughters, your [foster-] mothers who have suckled you and your sisters through fosterage, your wives' mothers, and your stepdaughters who are under your care [born] of the wives whom you have gone into—but if you have not gone into them there is no sin upon you—and the wives of your sons who are from your own loins, and that you should marry two sisters at one time, except what has already passed; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (4:23)***

Now, let us consider 'Uthman's thoughts about the interpretation of the verse. Zamakhshari believes that the caliph had the following verses in mind:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ  
مَلُومِينَ

***...who guard their private parts except from their spouses or their bondswomen, for then they are not blameworthy. (23:5-6 and 70:29-30)***

If he had meant these verses, his reasoning regarding them was incorrect since these verses indicate the limits of modesty of the faithful. The faithful person does not have sexual relations with anyone except within the bounds of marriage or with bondswomen. This fact is not incompatible with the existence of conditions that may make delimitations on these two groups. Verse 23 of Surah Nisa' (see above 4:23) may be a stipulation on verses 5 and 6 of Surah Mu'minin (chapter 23). Thus, by setting these two verses together, we realize that coitus with two bondswomen that are sisters is forbidden.

## **B. Imam 'Ali ('a) and the Judgements of 'Uthman**

A woman gave birth six months after she was married. 'Uthman ordered her to be stoned. Imam 'Ali ('a) said to him, "Have you not read the Qur'an?" 'Uthman replied, "I have read it." Imam 'Ali ('a) declared, "Have you not heard that God has stated:

وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا

**...and the child's gestation and weaning take thirty months... (46: 15)**

And elsewhere He has stated:

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ

**[Mothers shall suckle their children] for two full years... (2:233)**

By this account, the duration of gestation can be six months.” ‘Uthman replied, “By God, I had not become aware of this truth until now.”<sup>79</sup> It must be noted that some Sunni scholars cite this same incident regarding both ‘Uthman and ‘Umar ibn Khattab with a little difference.

One of the rights of women in Islam is that if a man divorces his wife and dies during the *‘iddah* of the wife, she inherits from him like any other inheritor since the marital bond persists until the end of the wife’s *‘iddah*.

In the time of ‘Uthman’s caliphate, a man died who had two wives, one from the Ansar and the other from Bani Hashim. He had divorced his Ansari wife before he died. She went to the caliph and said, “My *‘iddah* is not yet concluded and I want my inheritance.” ‘Uthman was at a loss and informed Imam ‘Ali (‘a) about the matter. The Imam stated, “If the Ansari wife swears that she has not had three periods of menstruation after her husband divorced her, she can inherit from her husband.”

‘Uthman said to the Hashimi wife, “This judgement is from your cousin ‘Ali (‘a) and I have no opinion in this regard.” She replied, “I am satisfied with the arbitration of ‘Ali (‘a). She may swear and inherit.”<sup>80</sup>

## **C. Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and Those Dissatisfied with the Caliph**

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) encountered three different rulers in three different periods. Each necessitated a specific stance. During the incumbency of the first and second caliphs, the people were relatively at peace and satisfied. However, during the time of the third caliph, the people had become weary and could not tolerate the prevailing conditions.

### **1. Arbitration**

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) had taken the role of arbitrator and peacemaker between the caliph and the malcontent. This did not mean that the Imam accepted the actions of the caliph. Rather, ‘Ali (‘a) endeavored to prevent riots and sedition in the society by his mediation.

When the discontented citizens of Egypt gathered outside the home of ‘Uthman, the caliph who had been saved many times by the mediation of the Imam sent someone to ‘Ali (‘a) notifying him of the possibility of his own assassination. He asked the Imam to speak with the people and guarantee that

their demands would be met. Imam 'Ali ('a) went to the discontented people and relayed the caliph's promise. The people consented to leave the perimeter of the caliph's home and give him a three-day grace period to carry out their demands on the condition that he sign a written agreement thereof.<sup>81</sup>

## 2. Water

When revolutionaries surrounded the home of 'Uthman, the endeavors of Imam 'Ali ('a) were unsuccessful. The besiegers resolutely demanded that Marwan be handed over and that the caliph step down. However, the caliph would not surrender Marwan since he feared that they would murder him and he also refused to step down.

Again 'Uthman sent Imam 'Ali ('a) a message that these people would kill him and that they had closed off his water supply. He also requested water from the Imam ('a).<sup>82</sup> Imam 'Ali ('a) sent the caliph water-skins through his sons Hasan and Husayn ('a). When the besiegers saw that they were the sons of Imam 'Ali ('a), they did not stop them from taking the water. The caliph later sent the Imam the following poem:

If I am to be eaten then you eat me, else deliver me!<sup>83</sup>

## 3. Prevention of the Assassination of the Caliph

When Imam 'Ali ('a) was notified that the people had resolved to kill 'Uthman, the Imam instructed his sons, Hasan and Husayn ('a) thus:

اذهبوا بسيفكما حتي تقوما علي باب عثمان فلا تدعا احداً يصل اليه

*Go with your swords and stand before the doors of 'Uthman's house. Do not allow anyone to reach him.*<sup>84</sup>

The sons of Imam 'Ali ('a) rushed to the house of 'Uthman and battled the attackers such that Imam Hasan's ('a) head was bloodied and Qambar, the bondsman of Imam 'Ali ('a), was severely wounded.<sup>85</sup>

## 4. Burial of 'Uthman

When 'Ali ('a) heard news of the assassination of the caliph, he hastened to the house of the caliph and remonstrated against those guarding the house including his two sons Hasan and Husayn ('a).

Imam 'Ali ('a) and his son Hasan ('a) endeavored to gain permission from the attackers to bury the caliph. The attackers upheld respect for Imam 'Ali ('a) and let the Imam bury the caliph with several of the companions.<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusion

During the affair of Saqifah after the passing of the Prophet (s), some opportunists came to the home of ‘Ali (‘a) to give him their allegiance with the aim of bringing about conflict, but he refused. Moreover, he cooperated with the caliphs in order to preserve the unity of the Islamic Ummah.

During his 52 years of silence regarding his just rights, ‘Ali (‘a) endeavored to carry out his divine mandate and social responsibilities in the form of military, political, scientific, judicial, economic, and other types of counsel to safeguard the religion and help stabilize the newly formed Islamic society. He could not disregard the various problems that had befallen Islam and the Islamic Ummah—problems that had seriously endangered the survival of the religion and Muslims—on pretext that his right to the caliphate had been usurped.

It should be noted of course that the cooperation of ‘Ali (‘a) with the caliphs was not to the extent that they could use it to their own benefit and legitimize themselves.

‘Ali (‘a) faced three different persons, each of which necessitated a specific stance. Thus, in addition to the fact that he was a scholarly and judicial counsellor to the third caliph, he also played the role of mediator. He delivered water to the caliph when his home was besieged and sent his sons to the caliph’s house to protect him. In the end, ‘Ali even performed the burial ceremony of the caliph.

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  10. Subhani, Ja'far (1991), *Mabani Hukumat Islami* [Fundamentals of Islamic Government], Davud Ilhami [tr.], p. 130 (footnotes).
  11. Some of the Companions of the Prophet (s) who did not swear fealty include Abu dhar, Salman, Miqdad, 'Ammar, Abu Ayyub Ansari, 'Abbas (the Prophet's (s) paternal uncle), Farwah ibn 'Amr, Abi ibn Ka'b, BaraP ibn 'Azib, Abu al-Haytham ibn al-Tayhan, Khalid ibn Sa'id, Buraydah Aslami, Khaziah ibn Thabit. (Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, Ahmad (1989), *'Aqd al-farid*, vol. 4, p. 247).
  12. Ja'far Subhani, *Furugh-e Vilayat* (The Refulgence of Leadership), p. 166.
  13. See for example Surah Anfal (8:63).
  14. Ibn Abi al-Hadid MadaPini, *Sharh nahj al-balaghah* (Commentary on the Nahj al-Balaghah), vol. 2, p. 45; Ahmad ibn 'Abd Rabbih Undulusi, *al-'Aqd al-farid*, vol. 4, p. 245; and Muhammad ibn Jurayr ibn Yazid, *Tarikh Tabari* (The History of Tabari), vol. 3, p. 209.
  15. Ibn Shahr Ashub, *al-Darajat al-rafi'ah*, p. 77.
  16. Yusuf ibn 'Abd al-Bir Qurtabi Maliki, *Al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifah al-Ashab*, vol. 2, p. 690.
  17. Ibn Shahr Ashub, *ibid*, p. 87.
  18. Muhammad Tabari, *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 3, p. 209; Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh nahj al-balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 45; and 'Ali ibn Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 2, p. 7.
  19. *Nahj al-balaghah*, sermon 5.

20. Ibid., letter 62.
21. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 308.
22. Ibid, p. 307; also Muhammad ibn Na'man Mufid, *Musnifat*, vol. 13, p. 155.
23. *Nahj al-balaghah*, sermon 74; also Muhammad ibn Jurayr ibn Yazid, *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 4, p. 228.
24. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 191; also Ahmad ibn 'Abd Rabbih Undulusi, *al-'Aqd al-farid*, vol. 4, p. 260.
25. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 113.
26. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 157.
27. In sermon 3 of the *Nahj al-balaghah*, the Imam criticized the first caliph four times. Also, in parts 6 to 8 of the same sermon, the second caliph was criticized and in parts 10 to 11 the third caliph was criticized.
28. By cleansing and burying the body of his wife at night, 'Ali ('a) proclaimed his own disapproval and that of the daughter of the Prophet (s). Muhammad ibn Jurayr ibn Yazid, *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 3, p. 208; and Isma'il al-Bukhari, *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 3, p. 142.
29. *Kala'i al-Balansi and Hadhabah*, *Tarikh al-Raddah*, p. 17.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
31. Ibn Kathir al-Qarashi al-Dimishqi, *al-Bidayah wa al-nihayah fi al-tarikh*, vol. 6, p. 315.
32. These included people such as Musaylamah Kadhdhab, Talhah ibn Khuwaylid, and Sajah bint Sulami who had gathered to themselves various tribes namely Asad, Bani Salim, and Ghatafan. See: Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub, *Tarikh Ya'qubi*, Ibrahim Ayati [trans.], vol. 2, p. 4.
33. These include tribes such as Kandah, Hadhramut, and Bani Yarbu'. Their chiefs included Malik ibn Nuwayrah, Qays ibn 'Asim, and Harithah ibn Suraqah. *Kala'i al-Balansi and Hadhabah*, *Tarikh al-Raddah*, pp. 3 and 10.
34. 'Ali ('a) has declared: "By God! If all the Arabs face me in battle I shall not turn my back on them." (*Nahj al-balaghah* 'Abduh, letter 45, p. 81.)
35. Qazwini Razi, *Ba'dh matalib al-nawasib*, Sayyid Jalal ad-Din Muhaddith [trans.], p. 310.
36. Ibn 'Asakir ibn 'Ali ibn Hasan al-Shafi'i, *Tarikh Madinah Dimishq* (The History of the City of Damascus), p. 444; also Azdi Basri, *Futuh ash-Sham* (The Conquests of Damascus), William N. Lees [ed.], p. 3.
37. Ibn A'tham Kufi, *Al-Futuh* (Conquests), vol. 1, p. 97.
38. Muhammad Mufid, *Al-Irshad* (Guidance), *Al-Bab al-thani* (section two), chap. 58, p. 108.
39. The shahadatayn (literally: the two testimonies) are the testimonies a person makes to become Muslim: *Ashhadu an la ilaha ill Allah wa ashhadu anna Muhammad al-Rasulu-llah* (I testify that there is no god save Allah and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). [Tr.]
40. Muhammad ibn Darid Azdi, *Al-Mujtaba* (The Chosen), p. 44.
41. Muhammad ibn Hasan Tusi, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, correction and gloss by 'Ali Akbar Ghifari, vol. 10, p. 108, *Kitab al-Hudud* (The Book of Punishment), hadith 359.
42. Mas'udi, *Murawwij al-dhahab*, vol. 2, p. 318-9.
43. Waqidi, *Futuh ash-Sham* (The Conquests of Damascus), p. 108.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
45. Ibn A'tham, *al-Futuh* (Conquests), vol. 2, p. 78.
46. Murtadha 'Amuli, *Faslnamah tarikh* (History, Quarterly Journal), vol. 1, issue 3, p. 378.
47. Ahmad ibn Dawud Dinwari, *Akhbar al-tawal* (News of the Ages), p. 120.
48. Ibn A'tham, *al-Futuh* (Conquests), vol. 1, p. 34.
49. Ahmad ibn 'Uthman Dhahabi, *al-'Ibar fi Khabar Man 'Abar* (Guidance from the Stories of those who have been Guided), vol. 1, p. 25.
50. Ahmad ibn Dawud Dinwari, *Akhbarat tawal* (News of the Ages), p. 135.
51. Ibn A'tham, *Al-Futuh* (Conquests), vol. 2, p. 36.
52. Waqidi, *Futuh ash-Sham* (The Conquests of Damascus), p. 144.
53. Tahir ibn Mutahhar Muqaddasi, *al-Badw al-tarikh* (The Beginning of History), vol. 5, p. 182.
54. Ahmad ibn Ya'qub, *Tarikh Ya'qubi* (Ya'qub's History), vol. 2, p. 120.
55. Ibn A'tham Kufi, *Al-Futuh* (Conquests), vol. 1, p. 286.

56. Tahir ibn Mutahhar Muqaddasi, al-Badw al-tarikh (The Beginning of History), vol. 5, p. 180.
57. Ibn Athir, al-Kamil fi al-tarikh (The Complete History), vol. 2, p. 348, under: Dhikr Fath Bayt al-Muqaddas (On the Conquest of Bayt al-Muqaddas), Beirut: Dar al-Fikr; 'Abdar-Rahman ibn Khuldun, Tarikh (History), vol. 2, part 2, p. 91; and Muhammad Tabari, Tarikh Tabari, vol. 3, p. 480.
58. Ahmad ibn A'tham Kufi, Al-futuh (Conquests), vol. 1, p. 225.
59. Ibn Athir, Al-kamil fi at-tarikh (The Complete History), vol. 2, p. 309, under: Dhikr Ibtida PAmr al-Qadisiyyah (On the Beginning of the Qadisiyyah Issue).
60. Waqidi, Futuh ash-Sham (The Conquests of Damascus), p. 149.
61. Sharif Radhi, Al-KhasaPis (The Characteristics), p. 77.
62. The Ahl al-Dhimmah were non-Muslims who paid tribute to live in Islamic territories. [Tr.]
63. Shaykh Muhammad Mufid, Al-Irshad (Guidance), Al-Bab al-thani (section two), chap. 60.
64. Ibn 'Asakir, Tarikh Madinah (The History of Madinah), vol. 1, p. 36, Damascus; and Hakim Nayshaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-sahihayn, vol. 2, p. 14.
65. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh nahj al-balaghah (Commentary on the Nahj al-Balaghah), vol. 12, p. 220; also Abu al-Faraj Jawzi, Tarikh 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (The History of 'Umar ibn Khattab), p. 97.
66. 'Abd al-Husayn Amini, Al-Ghadir, vol. 1, p. 177; also Sayyid Muhsin Amin, A'yan ash-Shi'ah (The Notables of the Shi'ah), vol. 1, p. 436.
67. Ahmad ibn Ya'qub, Tarikh Ya'qub, vol. 2, p. 151.
68. Muhammad Aus Qal'ahchi, Mawsu'ah-ye 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, vol. 1, p. 29.
69. 'Iddah is the period that a woman must wait after the divorce or death of her husband before she can remarry. [Tr.]
70. Ahmad ibn Husayn Bayhaqi, al-Sunan al-kubra (Great Traditions), vol. 11, p. 436.
71. Muhammad ibn Abi Ya'la al-Farra, al-Ahkam as-sultaniyyah, p. 228.
72. "لو لاعلي لهلك عمر". 'Abd al-Husayn Amini, al-Ghadir, vol. 3, p. 97.
73. 'Abd al-Husayn Amini, al-Ghadir, vol. 3, p. 98; also Ahmad Tabari, DhakhaPir al-'Uqba, p. 79.
74. Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. 40, p. 119.
75. أَعْتِ الاسلام
76. 'Abdul Husayn Amini, Al-Ghadir, vol. 6, p. 154.
77. Ahmad ibn Husayn Bayhaqi, Al-Sunan al-kubra (Great Traditions), vol. 7, p. 164; Muhammad Qurtubi, Al-Jami' al-Ahkam al-QurPan, vol. 5, p. 117; Jalal ad-Din Suyuti, al-Durr al-Manthur, vol. 2, p. 136; Mahmud Zamakhshari, al-Kashshaf, vol. 1, p. 518; Ibn Hazm, Al-Muhallab al-athar, vol. 9, p. 133; Fakhr Razi, At-Tafsir al-kabir, vol. 10, p. 36; and Shaykh Mufid, al-Irshad, Al-Babath-Thani (part two), chap. 60.
78. Fakhr Razi, At-Tafsir al-kabir (The Great Commentary), vol. 10, pp. 36-7; Jalal ad-Din Suyuti, al-Durr al-Manthur, vol. 2, p. 137; and Muhammad Qurtubi, al-Jami' al-ahkam al-QurPan, vol. 5, p. 117.
79. Ahmad ibn Husayn Bayhaqi, al-Sunan al-kubra (Great Traditions), vol. 11, p. 428.
80. Mirza Husayn Nuriat-Tabarsi, Mustadrak al-wasaPil, vol. 17, p. 200, hadith no. 21145.
81. Muhammad Tabari, Tarikh Tabari, vol. 3, p. 377-394.
82. Baladhuri, Ansab al-ishraf (Pedigrees of the Great), vol. 5, p. 68-69.
83. Ibn Khuldun, Al-'Ibar wa diwan al-mubtada wa al-khabar, vol. 2, p. 1047.
84. Jalal al-Din Suyuti, Tarikh al-khulafaP (History of the Caliphs), p. 159; and Baladhuri, Ansab al-ishraf (Pedigrees of the Great), vol. 6, p. 185.
85. Jalal al-Din Suyuti, Tarikh al-khulafaP (History of the Caliphs), p. 160; and 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Mas'udi, Muzawwij al-dhahab, vol. 2, p. 348.
86. Ibn A'tham Kufi, Al-Futuh (Conquests), vol. 2, p. 242; Muhammad Tabari, Tarikh Tabari, vol. 3, p. 438, Dhikr Ba'dhi Siyar 'Uthman ibn 'Affan (On Some Actions of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan).

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