



Critique of the Reasons for the Fabrication of the Succession Hadiths¹

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Abstract

Sunni scholars have accused the Shi'a of fabricating the hadiths of succession to prove the legitimacy of the caliphs' rule and have denied the appointment of Imam Ali (AS) as the successor by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). Contrary to the credible documents and sources available to them, they have cited reasons such as: The lack of objection from Imam Ali (AS), his voluntary allegiance to the caliphs, his failure to refer to the texts of succession, and the role of the Jewish Ibn Sabā' in this fabrication. The

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1. The following article, taken from the author's doctoral dissertation (Maedeh Akhoond), is entitled "Analysis of the Historical Course of the Attribution of Forgery of Hadith to Shia in the Field of Imamate" under the guidance of Dr. Muhammad Ali Tajari.

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present study, employing an analytical-critical method and considering credible Quranic, narrative, and historical sources, concludes that Imam Ali (AS) expressed his objection to the usurpation of the caliphate by the caliphs at various times and places and was never willing to pledge allegiance to them. He reminded others of the texts of succession and caliphate, engaged in discussions and arguments regarding this matter, and declared his qualifications for the succession of the Prophet (PBUH).

Keywords: Hadiths of Succession, Fabrication of Hadith, Fabricated Hadiths, Hadiths of Imamate.

Introduction

Succession is an important term in the political thought of Shi'a Islam. According to Shi'a belief, the Prophet (PBUH) appointed his successor by divine command. Based on evidence found in Sunni sources, they accept the principle of succession and the appointment of successors in previous prophets as a given, asserting that, according to God's command, all of them introduced their successors to the people (Zuhaylī, 1997 AD/1418 AD: 25, 37). However, it is noteworthy that Sunni scholars deny the implementation of this divine tradition by the Prophet of Islam and, in order to exclude the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) from the political scene—of which Imam Ali (AS) is at the forefront—they justify the caliphate, defend the caliphs, and create doubt and ambiguity in people's beliefs, asserting that the hadiths of succession were fabricated by the Shi'a.

Some Salafi scholars, such as *Ibn Taymīyyah*, claim that there is no authentic hadith indicating that the Prophet - as Shi'a claim - appointed Imam Ali (AS) as his successor. They argue that the narrations regarding

122 this matter, attributed to the Prophet (PBUH) and others, are weak and

fabricated by the Shi'a and the *Sabā'īyyah* (Dhahabī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 1, 130; Ibn Qayyim, n.d.: 1, 145; Ibn Taymīyyah, n.d.: 1, 150).

In some Sunni sources, this claim is made absolutely and unqualifiedly with phrases such as: "*Lam Yūṣa Rasūlullāh*: The Messenger of Allah did not appoint anyone." (Abī Dāwūd, n.d.: 198; Tirmidhī, n.d.: 3, 392)

Sarakhsī writes: People ask whether the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) made any appointments at the time of his passing. He then responds: "And the correct view among us is that he did not appoint anyone regarding anything." (Sarakhsī, n.d.: 27, 145) The view considered correct among us (the Sunnis) is that the Prophet did not appoint anyone for anything (Qazwīnī, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 706). Some attribute this to the narration of *Āyisha*: " *Āyisha*, may Allah be pleased with her, and her father said: The Messenger of Allah left neither a dirham, nor a dinar, nor a sheep, nor a camel, nor did he appoint anything." (Abū Nu'aym, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 232) In some sources, an addition is made to this, stating: "He did not appoint Ali as caliph." (Ibn Kathīr, 1992 AD/1412 AH: 7, 251)

Shawkānī, in recounting the denial of the Prophet's appointment, writes: "If it is said that an appointment is obligatory, then why did the Messenger of Allah leave it aside? We say that the meaning of the Prophet's not appointing anyone only negates the appointment in terms of the caliphate; otherwise, he did make appointments in other matters." (Shawkānī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 6, 144) Some also claim that the Prophet's appointment only referred to the Book of Allah: "I asked *Abdullah ibn Ubay* about whether the Messenger of Allah appointed

anyone. He said: No. I said: So he wrote to the Muslims or commanded the Muslims to make an appointment but did not appoint anyone. He said: He appointed regarding the Book of Allah." (Abū Nu'aym, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 233) According to the content of this report, the Prophet did not appoint anyone except regarding the Book of Allah. To justify the Prophet's lack of appointment in financial matters, there is a belief that the reason for not appointing regarding wealth was that he had left no wealth for himself (Mubārakfurī, n.d.: 6, 257).

Historical examination indicates that the denial of the evidence for the caliphate of Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) began in the early first century when the *Saqīfah* movement was initiated by the caliphs. By around the second century, they attempted to weaken, misinterpret, and distort the texts and chains of narrations regarding succession, attributing the fabrication of hadiths regarding the Imamate and the succession of Imam Ali (AS) to the Shi'a, a process that continued into contemporary times. Therefore, considering the denial of the hadiths of succession and the labeling of them as fabricated by prominent Sunni scholars, it is essential to examine and evaluate their reasons in this regard.

1. Background

In the background of this research, in addition to the numerous books written to prove the succession and Imamate of Imam Ali (AS), such as "*al-Ghadīr*" by 'Allamah Amīnī, "*Dalā'il al-Şidq*" by *al-Muẓaffar*, "*Nahj al-Ḥaqq wa Kashf al-Şidq*" by 'Allamah Ḥillī, "*al-Şawārim al-Muhriqa fī al-Radd 'alā al-Şawā'iq al-Muhriqa*" by Qādī Nūrullāh

Shūshtarī, etc., there has been less focus on critiquing the reasons for attributing the fabrication of the hadiths of succession to the Shi‘a. The only work that can be found is the thesis "Critical Study of *al-Waḍ‘fī al-Ḥadīth* in Defense of the Shia in Fabricating Hadith" by Mohsen Karimi, which critiques and examines the specific views of ‘Umar Falātah regarding the fabrication of hadith and accusing the Shi‘a of leading in fabrication, along with some of his other ideological foundations.

With this background, it seems that until now, no specific research has been conducted regarding the attribution of the fabrication of the hadiths of succession to the Shi‘a, indicating a scientific gap in this area. Therefore, this research will descriptively, analytically, and critically examine the textual and chain aspects of the hadiths cited by the Sunnis.

2. Sunnis' Reasons for the Fabrication of the Hadiths of Succession

Prominent Sunni scholars, in justifying the caliphate of the caliphs, have accused the Shi‘a of fabricating the hadiths of succession and Imamate without referring to their own credible books and sources. In this article, their reasons will be examined and critiqued.

2.1. Imam Ali's (AS) Lack of Reference to the Hadiths of Succession

One of the reasons cited by the Sunnis for the fabricated nature of the hadiths of succession of Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) is his reference to narrations indicating his non-acceptance of the hadiths of his own

succession.

Abū Zahw, a Sunni writer, states: Since the issue of the Prophet's (PBUH) succession to Ali (AS) was prevalent among his followers during the time of Amir al-Mu'minin, some companions asked him about it, and Amir al-Mu'minin firmly denied the existence of such a prophetic appointment. He supports his statement by referencing a narration in which *Abū Juḥayfa* asks Amir al-Mu'minin: "Do you have a book?" He replies: "No, except for the book or understanding given to a man who has submitted, or what is in this scroll." The man asks: "What is in this scroll?" The Imam responds: "Reason, the freeing of captives, and no Muslim should be killed by a disbeliever." (*Abū Zahw*, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 94) The Sunnis consider this narration as evidence for the fabricated nature of the hadiths of succession and Imamate (*ibid.*). Although this narration has no connection to the succession of Amir al-Mu'minin, it is added that the reason for this question was the uproar that the Shi'a had raised regarding the succession and caliphate of Amir al-Mu'minin; while Amir al-Mu'minin, with that statement, meaning his response to *Abū Juḥayfa*, categorically denied it and even swore (*Abū Nu'aym*, 1995 AD/1415 AH: 232).¹

2.1.1. Critique and Analysis

The Sunni reliance on this hadith faces several issues. Furthermore, the reference to this report for the purpose they pursue is ineffective.

1. Cf. Critical analysis of *Abū Zahw*'s view on the authenticity of the hadiths of Imam Ali's will, p.50.

This hadith has no connection to the issue of caliphate; however, the Sunnis have linked the two, while there is no evidence in Sunni hadith sources indicating the reason for the issuance of the hadith. They themselves have pointed to it in other transmitters of the hadith. The situation is such that, given the closeness and proximity of Amir al-Mu'minin to the Prophet (PBUH), they wanted to know whether other verses of the Qur'an had been revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) that others might not have been able to write down, and that those verses would be present with Imam Ali (AS). Some narrations indicate this meaning. *Bukhārī* narrates in the chapter of "The Freeing of Captives": "From *Ibn Abī Juḥayfa*: I said to Ali (AS): Do you have anything regarding the revelation in the Book of Allah?" (*Bukhārī*, n.d.: 3, 357). The question of *Abī Juḥayfa* explicitly indicates that he is asking about the existence of verses from the Book of God that he suspected might not be with others, as the narrations in the chapter of "*al-Āqila*" in *Bukhārī* emphasize this meaning; there it says: "I heard *Abā Juḥayfa* say: I asked Ali: Do you have anything that is not in the Qur'an?" (*Bukhārī*, n.d.: 8, 365-368) Thus, the understanding of Sunni scholars regarding the cited hadith is mistaken and contradicts the general meaning of these narrations.

2.2. Imam Ali's Satisfaction and Lack of Objection to the Caliphs and Pledge of Allegiance to Them

Given that the thought of denying the appointment was put forth by Sunni scholars in response to the Shi'a claim regarding the appointment of Amir al-Mu'minin, one of the arguments the Sunnis

mention in denying the Prophet's appointment and the fabricated nature of the hadiths of Imamate and succession is that Ali (AS), after the establishment of *Abū Bakr's* caliphate, never objected. If the Prophet had appointed him to the caliphate, he should have claimed it for himself (Muẓaffar, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 4, 241; Abū Zahw, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 88; al-Najdī, n.d.: 6).¹

Shawkānī writes in this regard:

"The Shi'a have fabricated hadiths stating that the Messenger of Allah appointed the caliphate for Amir al-Mu'minin. This claim has been rejected by a group of companions and successors. The evidence for the incorrectness of this claim is that Ali never claimed, in situations such as after obtaining the caliphate or even before that on the day of *Saqīfah*, that the Prophet had appointed him to the caliphate." (Shawkānī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 6, 144)

They provide another hadith indicating that Imam Ali (AS) pledged allegiance to the three caliphs without objecting to their caliphate: "When Allah took His Prophet (PBUH), we considered our affairs and chose for our worldly matters the one whom the Prophet of Allah was pleased with for our religion, and since prayer is the essence of Islam and the foundation of the religion, we pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr..." (Abū Zahw, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 95; al-Malaṭī, n.d.: 164; al-Ḥanbalī, 1981 AD/1402 AH: 2, 50) The conclusion that the authors draw from this narration is that this hadith refutes the delusions and falsehoods of the Shi'a regarding the appointment of Imam Ali (AS)

1. Cf. al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-‘Adl, p. 125.

and that the first three caliphs did not usurp the caliphate.

Ibn Hajar 'Asqalānī states: "The hadith regarding Amir al-Mu'minin Ali being the appointed successor is not authentic among us, and our evidence for this claim is that Ali himself never claimed that the Messenger of Allah appointed him as a successor. Those who claim the appointment of Ali are actually belittling him, because if he were truly the appointee, how could he, with the courage and rigor he displayed in the path of religion, overlook his own right?" ('Asqalānī, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 5, 269) Elsewhere, he considers the hadiths of succession to be fabricated (ibid: 8, 150; al-Bayhaqī, 1998 A/1419 AH: 8, 34).

Therefore, Ali's (AS) acceptance of the caliphate of others is one of the defensive strategies of Sunni scholars to present the caliphs they support as legitimate in contrast to Ali's (AS) caliphate.

2.2.1. Critique and Analysis

A) Imam Ali's Argument with *Abū Bakr*

Numerous narrations and historical accounts indicate that Imam Ali (AS) was dissatisfied with the caliphate of the three caliphs and expressed his objections at appropriate times, considering himself the appointed successor of the Prophet. Among these objections, one can observe the argument of Amir al-Mu'minin with *Abū Bakr*, where he recounted his virtues to prove his superiority for the caliphate (Ibn Qutayba, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 2; Khārazmī, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 313; Juwaynī, 1978: 1, 320).

B) Objection in the Sermon of *Shiqshiqīyya*

The third sermon of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, known as the Sermon of

Shiqshiqīyya, is one of Amir al-Mu'minin's objections and complaints regarding the caliphate of the three caliphs. Therefore, when he explicitly states in the Sermon of Shiqshiqīyyah: " Beware, I swear by God that the son of *Abī Quḥāfa* has worn the caliphate like a shirt, while he knows that I am the center of the caliphate like the millstone," (Şubḥī Şālīḥ, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 1, 48) this narration clearly indicates the usurpation of the caliphate by another and even explains the reason for this priority in the following phrases, which provide the highest rational standard for choosing leaders.

Imam (AS) said: "I was contemplating whether to take up arms against a few men or to endure the darkness of ignorance and the misguidance of the people." (ibid: 1, 48) This narration clearly indicates the usurpation of the caliphate. It can also be found in Sunni sources (al-Ābī, 2003 AD/1424 AH: 1, 186; Sabṭ ibn al-Jawzī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 117; Ibn Mardawīyih, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 134).

C) Imam Ali's Objections to the Caliphs

Moreover, he never ceased to introduce himself as the appointed successor and heir of the Prophet (PBUH). Rather, whenever the situation warranted, he spoke of his position as the appointed successor and sought to illuminate the illegitimacy of others' rule. In this regard, numerous hadiths from him can be found, including the account of the Hadith of *Yawm al-Dār*, where he reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "Indeed, this (Ali) is my brother and my successor..." (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 1, 216; al-Baghawī,

AD/1404 AH: 3, 91)

Furthermore, after attaining the caliphate, he stated: "No one can be compared to the family of the Messenger (PBUH). They (the Prophet's 'Itrat) are the foundation of the religion and the steadfast pillars of certainty. The hastening one should return to them, and the lagging one should join them because the characteristics of true leadership are exclusive to them. The Prophet's testament regarding the caliphate and the legacy of the mission belongs to them; the rightful claim has now returned to its rightful owners and has been restored to the position it had been distanced from." (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 6, 384)

Furthermore, according to *Khārazmī*, he stated: "O! people, I am the brother of the Messenger of Allah and his successor, and the heir to his knowledge. The Prophet chose me from among his companions and appointed me as his successor." (Akḥṭab Khārazmī, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 222)

Ibn *Qutayba* writes: When Ali (AS) was brought to the mosque, he, while refusing to pledge allegiance, said to *Abū Bakr* and *'Umar*: "It is you who should pledge allegiance to me regarding the caliphate, not I to you; because you took the caliphate from the *Anṣār*, and this is due to your being close relatives of the Prophet. Now you want to take this right from us, the Ahl al-Bayt. Since this is the case, I will argue just as you argued with the *Anṣār*, that we, the Ahl al-Bayt, are more deserving of the Prophet both during his lifetime and after him. So let us be fair and do not knowingly wrong us." *'Umar* replied to him:

"We will not let go of you unless you pledge allegiance to *Abū Bakr*." The Imam said: "O! *Umar*! Today you are doing well, as you will benefit from it; strengthen the matter for him today so that he may return it to you tomorrow." Then he said: "I swear by God, I will neither accept your words nor pledge allegiance." After that, *Abū Bakr* intervened and said to him: "We do not compel you to pledge allegiance." (Ibn Qutayba, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 9 and 10)

D) Imam Ali's Argument Using the Hadith of *Ghadīr* in Various Situations

According to Sunni sources, Imam Ali (AS) referred to the Hadith of *Ghadīr* at different times and places to draw people's attention to his authority. Among these instances are the following:

1. On the Day of the Council

It is narrated from *Abū Ṭufayl 'Āmir ibn Wa'ilah* that on the day of the council, I was standing with Ali by the door of his house and heard him say to them: "Indeed, today I will argue with you in a way that neither any Arab nor non-Arab among you can change or oppose its content. I swear to you by God, is there anyone among you to whom the Messenger of Allah said: Whoever I am his master, then Ali is his master. O! God, love whoever loves Ali, and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him, and support whoever supports Ali, and the Prophet commanded that everyone present that day inform those who were absent?" They all said: "We bear witness to God." (Akḥṭab Khārazmī, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 313; Juwaynī, 1978: 1, 319)

2. During the Caliphate of 'Uthmān

132 *Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī* says: During the caliphate of 'Uthmān, I

saw Ali in the mosque of the Messenger of Allah, who said: "I urge you by God, do you know about whom verse 16 of Surah *al-Tawbah* was revealed?" And when the people asked the Messenger of Allah whether these verses were specific to some believers or included all believers, Allah instructed His Prophet to announce to them that just as he explained prayer, almsgiving, and pilgrimage for them, he should also explain the leadership (*wilāyah*) to them. This was realized with my appointment on the day of *Ghadīr*. Then, by the command of the Messenger of Allah, the people were called to establish congregational prayer. After the prayer, in a sermon he said: "O! people, do you know that Allah is my Master and the Master of the believers? And I am more deserving of them than they are of themselves?" They said: "Yes, O! Messenger of Allah." Then he said: "O! Ali, stand up." When I stood, he said: "Whoever I am his master, then this Ali is his master." At the end of Imam Ali's words, they all said: "O! God, we heard these words, and we bear witness to what you conveyed as it was stated." Some said: "We remember most of what you said, and we have forgotten some." (Juwaynī, 1978: 1, 312, Hadith 250)

2.3. Citing Narrations from *‘Āyisha* and *‘Umar*

Another argument from the Sunnis in denying the testament of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and deeming the hadiths regarding the appointment of Imam Ali (AS) fabricated is based on narrations attributed to *‘Āyisha* and *‘Umar*. In the hadith and historical sources of the Sunnis, it is narrated from *Aswad ibn Yazīd* that: When it was

mentioned to *‘Āyisha* that Ali was the appointed successor, she said: "When did he bequeath to him? For I was leaning against his chest, and I did not realize that he had passed away. So when did he bequeath to Ali?" A group of people told Aisha: "Ali was the successor," and Aisha responded to them: "In which time did he bequeath to him, while he (the Prophet) was resting on my chest, and I did not understand that he had died? So when did he bequeath to Ali?" This narration has been reported in many Sunni sources with variations in the wording (Bukhārī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 3, 93, Chapter on Testaments; Humaydī, n.d.: 4, 123; Ibn Ḥanbal, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 6, 32; al-Nīshābūrī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 5, 75; Ibn Mājah, n.d.: 5, 194; Ibn Abī Shayba, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 6, 228).

One of the main arguments that Sunni scholars have used to deny Ali's position as the successor after the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and to consider the hadiths of his succession as fabricated is noted by *al-Shawkānī*, who writes: "The Shi'a claim that the Messenger of Allah appointed Ali as his successor, and this claim is refuted by the narration from Aisha stating that the Messenger of Allah did not make such a testament. "(al-Shawkānī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 6, 144; ‘Asqalānī, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 8, 114)

Another narration involves *‘Umar*, who made this argument in his final moments. In the days leading up to the end of the caliph's life, those around him had realized that he would soon pass away, and discussions and suggestions had begun from every side regarding the appointment of a successor. When someone asked him what he would say to God if he died without appointing a successor and left the

community like a flock without a shepherd, he replied: "If I appoint someone, I have appointed one who is better than me - *Abū Bakr*. And if I leave it, I have left someone who is better than me - the Messenger of Allah." (Bukhārī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 8, 126; Ibn Ḥibbān, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 10, 331; Ibn ‘Asākir, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 44, 425; al-Dhahabī, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 9, 267; al-Ṭabarī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 3, 292)

Many Sunni scholars have taken this statement of ‘*Umar* as evidence that the Messenger of Allah did not appoint a successor for after his death. *Nawawī* states: "Whenever the signs of death appear for a caliph, it is permissible for him to make a testament regarding his successor, but it is also permissible that he does not make a testament, as he initially followed Abu Bakr and secondly followed the Messenger of Allah." (al-Nawawī, 1972 AD/1392 AH: 12, 205)

In some sources, with reference to ‘*Umar*'s son, it is reported: "When my father mentioned the name of the Messenger of Allah, I knew that he, like that Prophet, would not make a testament for a successor." (Abī Ya‘lī, n.d.: 1, 182; Muttaqī Hindī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 5, 727; Ibn ‘Asākir, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 44, 433) Similarly, Ṣāliḥī Shāmī has emphasized, based on ‘*Umar*'s statement, that the Messenger of Allah did not make a testament, saying, "‘*Umar*'s statement indicates that he did not make a testament." (al-Ṣāliḥī al-Shāmī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 12, 309)

Ibn Khaldūn states: "The Shi'a claim that the Messenger of Allah appointed Ali as his successor is incorrect; for ‘*Umar*, after being wounded, said: If I appoint, I have appointed one better than me,

meaning *Abū Bakr*, and if I leave it, I have left one better than me, meaning the Prophet." (Introduction of Ibn Khaldūn)

2.3.1. Critique and Analysis

A) Contradiction of Narrations

In examining these narrations, two aspects can be discussed: Firstly, in contrast to this statement, there are other narrations that deny the financial testament of the Prophet (PBUH) and do not mention a testament regarding the caliphate. In this regard, it is narrated from *‘Āsim ibn Zur* that when *‘Āyisha* was asked whether the Prophet had made a testament, she replied: "He left neither a dinar nor a dirham, nor a sheep nor a camel, nor did he bequeath anything." (Ibn Ḥibbān, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 14, 572; al-Nīshābūrī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 2, 15) The Prophet left no dirham, dinar, sheep, or camel, and did not make a testament regarding anything.

Additionally, this narration is also reported in Sunni sources from *Ibn Abil Awfā*, stating that the Prophet passed away without making a testament. The narrator, upon hearing this statement, is surprised at how the Prophet could have left out a testament. He responds: "The Prophet made a testament regarding the Book of Allah." (al-Nawawī, n.d.: 15, 399; Bayhaqī, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 6, 266)

If the intention behind denying the testament of the Prophet at the time of his passing is an absolute denial of any testament, then this claim is entirely incorrect; as this assertion contradicts the narrations that have been reliably transmitted, indicating that he made three testaments at the time of his passing. As *Bukhārī* narrates from *Ibn*

'*Abbās*: "...And he made a testament at his death regarding three matters... Expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula, and sending delegations to the areas they were supposed to go to, and a third matter that I forgot!" (Bukhārī, 1989 AD/1401 AH: 4, 69)

However, if the intention is that the Prophet did not make a testament regarding Imam Ali (AS), this also seems very unlikely. We have no doubt that the third matter referred to in the above narration, which was said to have been forgotten, was a testament regarding Imam Ali (AS), as there is no justification for forgetting that part of the narration except for opposing the prevailing atmosphere at that time. Proving the succession of Imam Ali (AS) would have undermined the legitimacy of the Umayyad rulers; therefore, the narrator feared the occurrence of difficult and unfortunate events for himself and for this reason, he claimed to have forgotten the third testament.

In addition, in the text of the narration that denies the testament regarding Ali (AS) from the words of '*Āyisha*', it is mentioned that the Prophet passed away while his head was in my lap (and according to some reports, his head was on my chest) (Bukhārī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 3, 93; al-Nīshābūrī, 2005 AD/1426 AH: 5, 75; Ibn Ḥanbal, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 6, 32; Ibn Mājah, n.d.: 5, 194; al-Nasā'ī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 4, 260; 'Asqalānī, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 8, 107; Muttaqī al-Hindī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 7, 253; Ibn Sa'd, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 2, 263).

Meanwhile, it is reported in authentic Sunni sources that the Prophet passed away with his head in the lap of Ali (AS). In Sunan *al-Nasā'ī*, it is narrated based on *Ummi Salama* that she swore that at the time of the Prophet's passing, the closest person to him was Ali (AS),

and in the last moments of his life, the Prophet called Ali (AS) three times. When he came next to him, we (the wives of the Prophet) realized that the Prophet needed Ali (AS); thus, we went out, and only Ali (AS) remained with him; he was the last person to be separated from the Messenger of Allah (al- Nasā'ī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 4, 260).

It is also narrated from *Ibn 'Atfān* that *Ibn 'Abbās* said: "The Prophet passed away with his head on Ali's chest." *Ibn 'Abbās* further emphasized that the Prophet passed away with his head on Ali's chest ('Asqalānī, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 8, 107; Muttaqī Hindī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 7, 253; Ibn Sa'd, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 2, 263).

Secondly, an important point that exists here is that these two statements contradict a multitude of narrations found in both Shi'a and Sunni sources concerning the appointment of a successor by the Prophet. Here, we will refer to some of those narrations based on Sunni sources.

The Hadith of *Yawm al-Dār* is one of the most famous narrations regarding the testament, wherein the Prophet introduced the appointment of Ali (AS) at the beginning of his prophethood. According to what has been transmitted in sources, when the verse "*Wa Andhir 'Ashīratal Aqrabīn*" (And warn your closest relatives) (al-Shu'arā/214) was revealed to the Prophet, he said, "O! Children of 'Abd al-Muṭallib, by God, I do not know anyone among the Arabs who has brought for his people anything better than what I have brought for you. I have brought you the good of this world and the hereafter. God Almighty has commanded me to call you to Him; now, who among you will assist me in this matter so that he can be my

brother, heir, and successor among you?" The narrator - Imam Ali (AS) - says:

The attendees at the gathering refrained from cooperation, but I - who was younger, less experienced, with a larger belly, and thinner legs than all - offered: "O! Messenger of Allah! I wholeheartedly accept your ministry and will spare no assistance." The Prophet joyfully placed his hand around my neck and said, "This esteemed person is my brother, my successor, and my caliph among you; now listen to him and obey his commands." The attendees stood up, laughing (Ibn 'Asākir, 1977 AD/1398 AH: 1, 86; al-Baghawī, 2002 AD/1423 AH: 4, 278; al-Ṭabarī al-Shī'ī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 2, 319; Ibn al-Athīr, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 487; Ibn Kathīr, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 1, 116; al-Nasā'ī, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 5, 125; Ibn 'Asākir, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 42, 48; al-Ḥalabī al-Shāfi'ī, n.d.: 1, 286; Muttaqī Hindī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 13, 149).

B) Sunni Acknowledgment of the Title "Successor" for Imam Ali (AS)

Some Sunni scholars have stated, based on these same narrations and historical evidence, that the issue of the succession of Imam Ali (AS) was widely recognized and known among Muslims in the early days of Islam (al-Azharī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 12, 18; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 15, 394; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 1, 142; Ḥusaynī, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 1, 140). *Muḥammad 'Arafa al-Disūqī* writes about this: "The story of the succession of Imam Ali (AS) was so well-known in the early Islam that after the rise of *Abū Bakr's* caliphate, some stopped giving *zakāt*, for they claimed that he (the

Prophet) bequeathed the caliphate to Ali." (al-Disūqī, n.d.: 4, 299)
This is because they (the *zakāt* withholders) believed that the Prophet had entrusted the caliphate to Ali (AS).

2.4. Silence and Lack of Transmission by the Companions

Some Sunni scholars have regarded the narration of "The establishment of the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful on the day of *Ghadīr*" as fabricated due to the silence of the companions regarding its transmission or adherence to its content (Ibn Qayyim, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 57; Abul Maḥāsīn, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 232; Abū ‘Abdul Raḥmān, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 337). *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyyah* narrates that the Shi‘as claim that the Prophet appointed Imam Ali (AS) as his successor and caliph in the presence of the companions on the day of *Ghadīr*; however, all the companions suppressed this matter. Thus, he considers this general concealment as evidence of the fabricated nature of the *Ghadīr* narration:

An Yadda‘ī ‘alā al-Nabīyy annahū Fa‘ala Amran Zāhiran bi Maḥḍarin minal Ṣaḥābah Kullihim wa Annahum Ittafaqu ‘alā Kitmānihī wa lam Yanqulūhu kamā Yaz‘umu Akdhabu al-Ṭawā’if: Annahū Akhadha bi Yadi Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib bi Maḥḍarin minal Ṣaḥābati Kullihim wa Hum Rāji‘ūna min Ḥajjatil Widā‘i fa Aqāmahū Baynahum Ḥattā ‘Arifahul Jamī‘i Thumma Qāla: Hādhā Waṣīyyī wa Akhī wal Khalīfatu min Ba‘dī fasma‘ū lahū wa Aṭī‘ū Thumma Ittafaqal Kullu ‘alā Kitmāni Dhālika wa Taghyīrihī wa Mukhālafatihī fa La‘natullāhi ‘alal Kādhībīn (Ibn Qayyim, 1970 AD/1390 AH: 57).

He claims that the Prophet performed a public action in front of all

the companions, and they all agreed to conceal it, failing to convey it and opposing it.

2.4.1. Critique and Analysis

First Point: If we accept this statement, it can be argued that the criteria mentioned are not acceptable; because concerning the *Ghadīr* narration, the companions did not conceal these statements but rather conveyed and disseminated them. Therefore, this narration cannot be considered an example of this criterion. Moreover, there are other narrations among the Sunni sources that also mention the succession and caliphate of Imam Ali (AS) (al-Ṭabarānī, n.d.: 6, 221; ‘Asqalānī, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 1, 535; al-Qundūzī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 1, 235).

It may be that their intended meaning regarding the concealment is that the companions did not act according to this narration and did not acknowledge the Commander of the Faithful as the successor to the Prophet (Ibn Ḥajar, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 331).

In response to this claim, we say: Firstly, aside from Medina, the people of other Islamic regions did not have significant roles in determining the successor of the Prophet. Secondly, in Medina, after the *Saqīfah* incident, *Banī Hāshim* and a group of the *Muhājirīn* and *Anṣār* took refuge in Fatimah's house in opposition to *Abū Bakr*'s succession and in support of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) (Ibn Abī Shaybah, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 7, 432; Ibn Qutaybah, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 28; Ibn ‘Abd Rabbah, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 5, 13). Thus, it is not true that all the companions acted contrary to the words of the

Prophet (PBUH) and did not adhere to them.¹

Second Point: It can also be mentioned that the Prophet selected Imam Ali (AS) as his caliph, but many of the companions denied and concealed this. Numerous Sunni books have reported this concealment by the companions, including *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, who narrates in his *Musnad* that '*Abdul Raḥmān ibn Laylī* said:

"Imam Ali (AS) said: I urge you, anyone who witnessed and heard the words of the Prophet at *Ghadīr Khumm*, to stand up. Those who saw stood up, and twelve people stood up... all stood up except for three who did not rise and concealed it; Imam Ali cursed them, and the curse of him befell them." (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 1, 119; Muqaddasī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 2, 274)

The names of some of those who concealed the truth are also mentioned, such as *Yazīd ibn Wadī'ah* and '*Abdul Raḥmān ibn Mulij ibn Athīr Jazarī*, *Abul Ḥasan 'Izzuddīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdul Karīm* (Ibn al-Athīr, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 3, 321). *Zayd ibn Arqam* (Bilādhuṛī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 2, 386) and *Anas ibn Mālik* concealed *Ghadīr* and fell ill with leprosy (Ibn Qutaybah, 1992: 1, 580).²

2.5. Attributing the Hadith of Succession to *Ibn Sabā'*

Some Sunni scholars believe that the hadiths regarding succession were fabricated by *Ibn Sabā'*. *Ibn Jawzī*, at the beginning of his discussion on fabricated hadiths, claims that the hadith of succession was created by *Ibn*

1 . For more information cf. "Criticism and Review of Mullā Ali Qārī's Opinion about Imam Ali's Virtues Hadiths" in the book "al-Asrār al-Marfū'ah fil Akhbār al-Mawḍū'ah."

2. For more information cf. *Khārij of Symmetrical Theology*, Ḥusaynī Qazwīnī, 162.

Sabā', who was born a Jew, drawing a parallel between Jews and Shias (Ibn Jawzī, 1966: 2, 92-94). Unfortunately, Sunni scholars have followed him without examining and evaluating the narrations (Ibn Taymīyyah, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 1, 3; Aḥmad Amīn, 2012: 291; Abū Shahbah, n.d.: 20; Falātah, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 1, 241).

The origin of attributing the hadiths to *Ibn Sabā'* goes back to a narration from Ṭabarī. It is said that a Jew from Yemen named '*Abdullah ibn Sabā'*', nicknamed "*Ibn al-Amatul Sawdā'*," pretended to be a Muslim during the time of '*Uthmān*' and claimed that Ali was the successor of the Prophet and that he was the last of the successors, just as Muhammad is the last of the prophets, and that '*Uthmān*' was usurping the caliphate (al-Ṭabarī al-Shī'ī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 3, 378).

2.5.1. Critique and Analysis

The aforementioned idea is a type of interpretation of Ṭabarī's narration that some historians have included in their works, without paying attention to its chain of transmission and content. In any case, what Ṭabarī has narrated here is rejected for several reasons:

1) How could an unknown Jewish individual pretend to be a Muslim and then, alone, persuade a group of companions and followers throughout the Islamic lands to align with him, to the extent that they would enter Medina in front of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and assassinate the current caliph while introducing Ali as his successor?! This matter is never compatible with historical calculations, and the reason for the caliph's assassination in Medina must be derived from examining the history of his life.

2) The conduct of *‘Uthmān* and *Mu‘āwīyah* indicates that they never allowed objections to their actions and would punish dissenters severely. For instance, *Abūdhār* faced *‘Uthmān*'s wrath for criticizing his hoarding of wealth and was exiled to *Rabdhah*, where he eventually passed away.

‘Ammār Yāsir, who was one of the opponents of *‘Uthmān*'s policies, faced great anger; *‘Uthmān*'s servants beat him so severely that one of his ribs was broken. Other opponents, such as *‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd*, also faced beatings during *‘Uthmān*'s caliphate. In such circumstances, could the Islamic caliphate, with all its power, allow a Jewish individual to incite chaos across various cities and territories of the Islamic world, trampling upon regions like Syria, Egypt, Basra, and *Kūfa*, and enter Medina with an army to overthrow the caliph and install another caliph in his place?

3) Those who are fixated on this part of *Ṭabarī*'s history should recognize that, if this claim is correct, one of their fundamental beliefs would be shaken. According to Sunni beliefs, the companions of the Prophet are just and honorable, and no kind of criticism or adjustment is permitted against them. How is it then possible for prominent companions and followers like *Abūdhār*, *‘Ammār*, and *Muḥammad ibn Hudhayfah*, along with a group of distinguished followers, to be deceived by a single Jewish individual and instigate a chaos that results in the assassination of the caliph?

3. Examination of the Chain of Transmission for This Narration

- 1) *Sarīyy*: In the Sunni scholars' records, there are two individuals well-known by this name.
 - A) *Sarīyy ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Hamdānī: Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd*, a Sunni *Rijālī* scholar, considered him to be a liar and weak (Mizān al-I‘tidāl, 2/117).
 - B) *Sarīyy ibn ‘Aṣim ibn Sahl al-Hamdānī*, residing in Baghdad, who died in 258; part of his life is documented by the historian *Ṭabarī*. It is sufficient to note that the scholars state about him that he is a liar and a thief of hadith (Mizān al-I‘tidāl, 2, 117; Ibn Ḥajar, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 3, 145).
- 2) *Shu‘ayb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kūfī*: He is an unknown figure; Dhahabī states that this man is a narrator of the books of *Sayf ibn ‘Umar*, but he is not recognized by us.
- 3) *Sayf ibn ‘Umar*: The weakness of this chain of transmission primarily relates to this man. *Ibn Ḥibbān* states that *Sayf ibn ‘Umar* attributed fabricated hadiths and histories to well-known figures and was accused of heresy (lack of faith). *Ibn ‘Adīyy* says that all his narrations are unknown and unacceptable (Mizān al-I‘tidāl, 2, 275; Ibn Ḥajar, 1985 AD/1406 AH: 3, 145). Major historians have questioned the character of *Ibn Sabā’*, considering him a historical myth¹; they have deemed this story to be fabricated by historical and hadith forgers like *Sayf ibn ‘Umar al-Tamīmī*.

Conclusion

1. For more information cf. al-Fitnah al-Kubrā, p. 134; Aṣl al-Shī‘ah wa Uṣūlihā, p. 73; al-Ghadīr, Allamah Amīnī, vol. 9, p. 220-221.

The issue of whether the successor of the Prophet is appointed or elected is the greatest point of contention between the Imamiyah and the followers of the Caliphate school. The Imamiyah believe in the issuance of a text for the appointment of an Imam after the Messenger of God (PBUH) and, considering the narrations, evidence, and strong arguments, they assert that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) introduced *Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib* (AS) as his immediate successor in governing the Islamic community by divine command. In contrast, Sunni scholars deny the realization of this text in this matter, and some of them have historically accused the Shias of fabricating hadiths regarding the succession of Imam Ali (AS).

Based on the studies conducted, it can be observed that Sunni scholars, with considerable bias against the Shias and political motivations, have denied the hadiths of Imamate and succession without thorough investigation and by relying on weak narrations to legitimize and defend the caliphate of the caliphs. Some of them have deemed the hadiths of succession as fabricated regarding the presence of Shia narrators or by considering the narrators weak for mentioning the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS). They have used completely flawed arguments, including the lack of objection from Imam Ali (AS), his acceptance of the caliphate of the caliphs, his voluntary allegiance to the caliphs, the absence of any claim of a text from Imam Ali (AS), attributing the fabrication of the hadith of succession to *Ibn Sabā'*, narrations from *Āyisha* and *Umar* denying the text from the Prophet (PBUH), and the claim that the companions concealed the narrations of succession. However, considering the credible Quranic, narrative,

and historical sources, the political nature and baselessness of these accusations have been demonstrated.

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