



## **Conceptual Analysis, Identification, and Functional Study of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs***

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### **Abstract**

Shurṭat al-Khamīs was a military unit composed of elite soldiers loyal to Imam Ali (AS). This force was active at the beginning of his caliphate, before Kūfa became the administrative capital, between 35 and 40 AH. Although several studies have examined *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, further research into its concept, instances, and functions is

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necessary to provide a clearer, more precise understanding of the institution. The present study aims to elucidate the nature and rationale of this term's naming, aiming to offer a more accurate understanding of this institution through process tracing. Among those identified as members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* are *Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa*, *Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh*, and *Mālik al-Ashtar*. The most significant functions of this institution include: "Protecting the Imam's life, monitoring and supervising the marketplace, supporting military operations, pursuing criminals, enforcing legal punishments, boosting morale and assisting other military units, guarding the public treasury, combating internal security threats, and maintaining order in Kūfa." An examination of hadith, exegetical, and historical sources, alongside an analysis of the semantic range of the term, reveals that *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* does not refer merely to a military unit. Its policing and administrative dimensions are even more prominent, as several members possessed both military and non-military roles. By combining military and administrative duties, this institution often functioned as an executive arm of the government of the Commander of the Faithful (AS), playing a significant role in managing political and social crises.

**Keywords:** *Shurṭa*, *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, Companions of Imam Ali (AS), Police Force, Military Force.

## Introduction

**38** A close examination of the term *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* in and hadith texts

shows that its earliest usage refers to a military group composed of elite soldiers appointed by Imam Ali (AS) at the beginning of his caliphate. *Kashshī* transmits the following report from *Ghīyāth al-Hamadānī* regarding the status of this institution: "The Commander of the Faithful (AS) met us on the road and said: "Register yourselves among these *Shurṭa*. By God, after him every group that comes shall be the guardians of fire (i.e., guardians of falsehood), unless those who come act as they did." (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 5)

A careful reading of this report reveals several foundational points:

- 1) The Imam encouraged joining this institution;
- 2) Membership implied a mutual oath and binding commitment;
- 3) The Imam confirmed and approved the actions of this institution;
- 4) The nature of their activities was concealed or undisclosed.

The present study aims, after a conceptual and instance-based analysis, and with a brief overview of the conditions of the Imam's government, the position of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* as a military and administrative institution will be identified, and its functions will be clearly explained. Since precise information regarding the functions and responsibilities of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* is limited, and since this lack of detail may itself indicate the institution's importance, it is necessary to address the following questions:

- What is the conceptual scope of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* in the speech of the impeccable Imam (conceptual analysis)?
- Who are the individuals to whom the title *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* has 39

been applied (instance identification)?

- What functions did the most prominent examples of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* perform that led to the application of this term to them (functional analysis)?

## 1. Literature Review

The background of the term *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* may be evaluated on two levels: "Subject-based and research-based." In this study, the examination of reports on the term in early sources constitutes the subject-based background, while the analysis of modern research on *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* constitutes the research-based background. Table 1.

### Usage of the term *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* in early sources (subject-based background)

<b>3rd century AH</b>	'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211 AH), Ibn MuzāḤīm al-Minqarī (d. 212 AH), Ibn Sa'īd (d. 230 AH), Ibn Kayyāt (d. 240 AH), Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Barqī (d. 274 or 280 AH), al-Balādhurī (d. 279 AH), al-Thaqafī al-Kūfī (d. 283 AH)
<b>4th century AH</b>	al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH), al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH), al-Kashshāf (d. c. 340 AH), Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363 AH)
<b>5th century AH</b>	Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413 AH), Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Nadīm (d. 438 AH)

Modern studies indicate that the repeated use of the term across early and later sources has attracted scholarly attention, leading to multiple research efforts (research-based background). Among these are:

"The Organization of Military and Police Forces in the Government of the Commander of the Faithful," by Ali Akbar Zakeri (2010 AD/1389 SH), which examines military and police structures during

**40** Imam Ali's rule and argues, through descriptive-analytical method,

that *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* was an institutional innovation.

"*Shurṭat al-Khamīs* and Its Hadith-Evaluative Value," by Sayyid Kazem Tabataba'i (2010 AD/1389 SH), which compares available reports and assesses whether the entire group may be deemed reliable, ultimately rejecting such generalization.

"A Biographical Analysis of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*," by Nematullah Safari Foroushani and Abbas Mirzaei (2011 AD/1390 SH), which explores both historical and hagiographic approaches in Imami biographical sources

"*Shurṭat al-Khamīs* during the Caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful," by Ahjmad Nabavi (2012 AD/1391 SH), which surveys the history, status, and characteristics of this institution using hadith and historical analysis.

"A Conceptual Reassessment of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* in the Time of Imam Ali," by Safari Foroushani and Mirzaei (2012 AD/1391 SH), which evaluates reports through etymological and biographical approaches.

"Managerial Implications of the Conduct of the Commander of the Faithful in Organizational Structuring," by Meysam Latifi and Mahdi Azizi (2015 AD/1394 SH), which examines *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* as a model of organizational design used by Imam Ali (AS).

The present study, using process tracing, seeks to offer a more precise conceptualization of the term and to examine the institution's functions and instances in order to explain why the Imam employed this designation. In addition to adopting a different methodology, this **41**

article distinguishes itself by providing a semantic-range analysis of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*.

## 2. Methodology

Process tracing is a qualitative research method that enables scholars to explain how and why an event or phenomenon occurs by examining the causal processes involved step by step.<sup>1</sup> The method seeks to identify and analyze the causal pathways linking a given cause to a specific outcome. More precisely, process tracing aims to show how a particular cause, through various stages, results in a given effect, and what sequence of mechanisms, direct or indirect, connects the cause to the final result.

Researchers must first formulate a theory of the processes they are investigating; then they identify the relevant evidence related to those processes, examine it carefully, and finally analyze it in light of the proposed theory to reach conclusions. Although widely used in political science, sociology, history, and psychology, the present author applies this method to hadith-related topics.

## 3. The Concept of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*

Any inquiry must begin with a definition, for a definition removes semantic ambiguity. Conceptual clarification of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* is essential for elucidating its true meaning.

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1. Research methods books that specifically address qualitative research methods usually devote a chapter to process tracing. Books such as "Designing Social Inquiry" by Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, and "Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences" by Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett are among the most authoritative sources on this topic.

### 3-1. The Term *Shurṭa* in Lexicography

Various meanings have been proposed for *Shurṭa*, four of which are as follows:

- **Sign or mark:** *Sharṭ* (pl. *Ashrāṭ*) originally denotes a sign or distinguishing mark (Ibn Athīr, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2, 360; Ibn Manzūr, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 7, 329; Fīrūzābādī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 2, 386).
- **al-Sharṭ:** Any known ruling connected to an action, whose fulfillment is certain, thus functioning as a sign for the ruling.
- **Ashrāṭ al-sā'a:** The signs of the Resurrection.
- **Shurṭa:** Vanguards, heralds, or officers maintaining social order, called so because they bear distinctive marks by which they are recognized (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 3, 206; Jawhārī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 3, 136; Ibn Manzūr, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 7, 339).
- **Ashrāṭ al-Qawm:** The nobles of a tribe.
- **Ashrāṭ al-Ibil:** Camels marked on the neck.
- **Ashraṭa Nafsahu lil Halaka:** When one performs an act that is a sign of destruction or implies a pledge to perish (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 3, 260; Rāghib, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 450).
- **Commitment to an Undertaking:** (with *Sukūn* on the *Rā'*) denotes obligation and commitment (Ibn Manzūr, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 7, 330; Fīrūzābādī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 2, 543), and it is also used in the sense of making the performance of one action contingent upon another (Zabīdī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 10, 305). In light of what is **43**

reported in the tradition from Ibn Mas‘ud, "Wa tushraṭu shurṭatun lil mawt lā yarji‘ūna illā ghālibīn," (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, n.d.: 1, 435) it appears that they had obligated themselves not to return unless victorious or slain (Ibn Athīr, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2, 42; Turayhī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 2, 449).

- **The Pick or Elite of Anything:** *al-Shurṭah* (pl. shurṭ) and *Shurṭī*, attributed to *Shurṭah*, signify the beginning or foremost part of anything (Ibn Athīr, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2, 365, 459) or the elite of something (Azharī, 2000 ASD/1421 AH: 11, 212; Farāhīdī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 6, 235). The term is applied to a group of vanguards and advance guards of the army who are present in battle (Ibn Manzūr, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 7, 330). The first contingent of the army to engage in combat and be prepared for death is called *Shurṭah*. Likewise, when the ruler selects a group of elite soldiers whom he places above others in his forces, they are called *Shurṭ al-Sultān* (Ibn Athīr, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2, 460; Māzandarānī, 1962 AD/1382 AH: 6, 264).
- **Readiness:** Some lexicographers consider *Shurṭah* to be derived from *Shart* in the sense of readiness (Turayhī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 4, 7), since they are always prepared to repel the enemy. In this sense, when one says "*Ashraṭa Fulānun Nafsahu li Amr Kadhā*," it means he prepared himself for that matter (Jawharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: s.v. *Shart*).

### 3-2. The Lexical Meaning of *Khamīs*

The root (*kh m s*) is used for numbers (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 2,

to mean an army (Ibn Manzūr, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 6, 70; Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 2, 217). The connection between *Khamīs* and *Jaysh* (army) is explained as follows: "*Khamīs* refers to an army composed of five parts, vanguard, rear guard, right flank, left flank, and the center (Ibn Athīr, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2, 79; Māzandarānī, 1962 AD/1382 AH: 6, 264; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 42, 152).

With regard to what lexicographers and transmitters have reported concerning the expression *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, five explanations have been offered for the reason behind this naming:

1. *Aṣbagh ibn Nubātah* narrated that he asked him: "How did you come to be called *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, O! *Aṣbagh*?" He replied: "We pledged to remain with him until death and until the last drop of blood, and he (the Commander of the Faithful (AS)) guaranteed victory and deliverance for us." (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 103; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 9, 643; Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 65)
2. *Ali ibn Hakam* stated: "Those companions of the Commander of the Faithful (AS) to whom he said: "Make a covenant with me, and I will make a covenant only with you that you shall attain Paradise; I do not covenant with gold or silver." Our Prophet (PBUH) also said to his companions: "Make a covenant, for I covenant for nothing except Paradise..." (Ibn Nadīm, 1977 AD/1398 AH: 349; Barqī, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 34; Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 2-3; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 34, 272).
3. They were a security or police force that was reviewed by the 45

commander on Thursdays, when he passed before the troops to inspect them or when they gathered together (Baghdādī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 7, 120; Ibn Kalbī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 438).

4. *Khamīs* refers to an army composed of five parts, vanguard, rear guard, right flank, left flank, and center (Ibn Athīr, 1947 AD/1367 AH: 2, 79; Māzandarānī, 1962 AD/1382 AH: 6, 264; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 42, 152).
5. It has been said that the term derives from the division of war spoils into five parts among them (Ibn Athīr, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2, 79; Ibn Manzūr, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 6, 70).

*Shurṭat al-Khamīs* in the narrative and historical sources is a fixed, technical term. From the outset of its usage, it referred to a particular and distinguished military unit, carrying its own specialized meaning, one that cannot be deduced solely from the separate lexical meanings of *Shurṭah* and *Khamīs*. The aforementioned explanations for its naming are, in fact, diverse *Sharḥ al-Ism* accounts, attempts to justify the designation of one and the same military formation. Each source, according to its intellectual context or knowledge framework, sought to explain the rationale for the term: "Some emphasized the intense voluntary commitment of the unit's members; others highlighted their elite status and distinctive insignia; others considered the army's five-part structure to be the origin of the name; still others referred to the division of spoils or to Thursday inspections. Yet none of these statements reflects the independent meaning of the two component

words; rather, they attempt to explain why a pre-existing designation was applied to this group." Thus, the technical meaning of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* is as follows: "*Shurṭat al-Khamīs*" is the name of an elite combat unit with a specialized function within the army of the Commander of the Faithful (Ali (AS)).

#### 4. The Rationale for Establishing *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* in the Administrative Structure of the Commander of the Faithful (AS)

The establishment of the institution of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* by the Commander of the Faithful (Ṭabarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 5, 158), as a new executive arm within his government, constituted one of the Imam's significant and effective measures during a period marked by political turmoil and instability. Historical and hadith sources present the administrative apparatus of his governance as follows:

**Table 2: Administrative Structure of the Commander of the Faithful**

Title	Time Period	Sphere of Activity
<b>Jund (military force)</b>	Before and after the Imams' era	Participation in wars
<b>Wufūd (tribal deputations)</b>	From the time of the Prophet (PBUH)	Participation in wars
<b>Shurṭa (police or law-enforcement force)</b>	Before and after the Imams' era	Maintaining urban security; combating corruption; suppressing rebels
<b>Aḥrās (guards and protectors)</b>	From the time of Imam Ali (AS)	Protection of the Imam and military commanders
<b>A'wān (helpers/supporters)</b>	From the time of the Prophet (PBUH)	Voluntary protection and support

Title	Time Period	Sphere of Activity
‘Assas (night patrols)	From the time of the second Caliph	Maintaining urban security at night
‘Uyūn (intelligence agents)	From the time of Imam Ali (AS)	Identifying spies
Dīwān al-Istīfa’	From the time of Imam Ali (AS)	Recording the dates of tax revenues received by scribes
Dīwān al-Mazālim (Bayt al-Qiṣaṣ)	From the time of Imam Ali (AS)	An institution for hearing and addressing public complaints
Shurṭat al-Khamīs	Only during the era of Imam Ali and Imam Ḥasan	Resolving social problems and ensuring public security

The earliest use of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* dates back to the time of the Commander of the Faithful (Kātib, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 393), and the last recorded instance goes back to the period of Imam Ḥasan’s peace treaty with *Mu’āwīyah* (Ṭabarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 5, 164).

The key evidence supporting the innovative nature of this institution is that, in historical, hadith, and biographical works from the third century onward, the expression *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* is used exclusively for the period of the Imam’s rule and that of his immediate successor.

To understand why earlier military forces were insufficient and why *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* became necessary during his governance, the political and social conditions of that era must be examined. Based on what the historical and hadith sources report, the following factors may be regarded as reasons for establishing *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*:

#### **4-1. The Breach of Allegiance by *Talhah* and *Zubayr* and the Outbreak of the Battle of Jamal**

**48** The breach of allegiance by *Talhah* and *Zubayr* and the outbreak of the

Battle of Jamal at the outset of the Imam's rule in 36 AH (Ṭabarī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 4, 501), together with the fact that the earliest reports concerning the presence of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* relate to this very battle (Mufīd, n.d.: 218), allow one to note the simultaneity of these two events. Based on the words of the Commander of the Faithful in Sermon 148 of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, delivered regarding Basra, its people, *Talhah*, and *Zubayr*, one may identify "Their lust for power" and "Their rancor and ill-will" as two causes of the sedition and turmoil instigated by the opposition in the Battle of Jamal (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 1, 200).

#### 4-2. Organizing the Disorder in Basra and Stabilizing the City

After the Commander of the Faithful (AS) formally assumed the caliphate, *Mu‘awiyah* persistently opposed him by sending detachments of his forces into the Imam's territories to provoke unrest and disturbance. Those chosen for such missions were among his most ruthless and bloodthirsty agents, such as *‘Amr ibn ‘Āṣ* and *Mu‘awiyah ibn Hudayj*, who stirred chaos in Egypt and killed the Imam's governor, *Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr*, in the most brutal manner (Thaqafī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 11). Another victim was *Mālik Ashtar*, the loyal companion of the Imam, who was poisoned on his way to Egypt.

Efforts to organize and stabilize the disorderly situation of various cities, especially Basra, also contributed to the establishment of this force. The Imam remained in Basra for a month in order to restore stability (Shāmī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 358).

#### **4-3. The Transfer of the Capital from Medina to Kufa by the Imam**

After the Battle of Jamal, the Imam took up residence in Kufa (Dīnawarī, 1951 AD/1330 AH: 154). According to a report from the Commander of the Faithful (AS), he explained the reason for transferring the seat of the caliphate from Medina to Kufa to the leading figures of the *Ansār* as follows: "Wealth and men are in Iraq, and the people of Syria have rebelled; I prefer to be near them." (Dīnawarī, 1951 AD/1330 AH: 143) Accordingly, the geographical position of Kufa, its military significance, its economic status, and the extent of the Imam's influence and popularity there were determining factors in this decision.

The Shi'i School in Kufa had been remarkably extensive and active since the caliphate of 'Umar, when 'Ammār ibn Yāsir and 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd came to Iraq, together with Hudhayfa ibn al-Yamān and other prominent figures, to reform the affairs of Kufa and its dependencies. They laid the foundation of this school, which, owing to the favorable conditions of the Mesopotamian region and ancient Iran, rapidly flourished. By the end of the caliphate of 'Uthmān, it had reached a point at which Ali ibn Abī Tālib himself came to Kufa and assumed the supreme leadership of this school (Ibn Bābawayh, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 1, 53).

Since the regular military forces were designed for defensive duties and external warfare, and given the specific nature of their mission,

**50** they were unable to maintain continuous supervision over internal

order. This made the formation of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* necessary, so that, through organizing new efficient forces and assigning them policing and regulatory tasks consistent with the temporal circumstances, the conditions of Kufa, and the broader aims of the government, social order and internal security could be ensured.

## 5. The Number of Members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* and Some of Its Most Prominent Figures

Among the existing reports in Shi‘i and Sunni sources, *Rijāl al-Barqī* is the earliest text to introduce some members of this group, listing 12 individuals from *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*. Considering that one of the most salient features of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* is the pledge to face death, and given that some Shi‘i and Sunni sources identify *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* with those who pledged themselves unto death (Tabarī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 4, 121; Ibn ‘Asākir, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 49, 418; Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 384; Qādī Nu‘mān, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 2, 12), it appears that the two groups are identical.

The information gleaned from Shi‘i and Sunni texts concerning the number of members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* is summarized as follows:

**Table 3: Number of Members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs***

Title	Source of Report	Number	Time Period
<b>Shurṭat al-Khamīs</b>	Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī, <i>Kitāb Sulaym</i> , vol. 1, p. 50	5,000 persons	During the Battle of the Camel
	Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī, <i>Kitāb Sulaym</i> , vol. 1, p. 286	6,000 persons	-----

Title	Source of Report	Number	Time Period
	Ibn Sa'd, <i>al-Tabaqat al-Kubrā</i> , vol. 5, p. 321	12,000 persons	After the martyrdom of Imam Ali
	<i>Shurṭat al-Khamīs</i>	6,000 persons	-----
	al-Ṭabarī, <i>Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī</i> , vol. 5, p. 159	40,000 persons	After the Battle of Ḫiffīn
	al-Kashshī, <i>Rijāl al-Kashshī</i> , p. 6	5,000 or 6,000 persons	-----
	al-Mufid, <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , p. 2	6,000 persons	-----
	Ibn 'Asākir, <i>Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq</i> , vol. 13, p. 262	12,000 persons	Vanguard of Imam Ḥasan's army
	Ibn al-Jawzī, <i>al-Muntaẓam</i> , vol. 5, pp. 185–186	40,000 persons	At the time of Imam Ali's martyrdom
	al-Mizzī, <i>Tahdhīb al-Kamāl</i> , vol. 6, p. 244	12,000 persons	Vanguard of Imam Ḥasan's army
	al-Najafī, <i>Muntakhab al-Anwār al-Muḍī'a</i> , p. 139	70 persons	Companions of Imam Husayn
Those who pledged allegiance unto death	al-Thaqafī, <i>al-Ghārāt</i> , vol. 1, p. 223	12,000 persons	In the Battle of Ḫiffīn
	al-Kashshī, <i>Rijāl al-Kashshī</i> , p. 98	100 persons	In the Battle of Ḫiffīn
	al-Rāwandī, <i>al-Kharā'ij wa al-Jarā'ih</i> , vol. 1, p. 200	1,000 persons	In the Battle of the Camel
	Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, <i>Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha</i> , vol. 2, p. 187	6,000 persons	In the Battle of the Camel
	al-'Aynī, <i>'Umdat al-Qārī</i> , vol. 13, p. 284	40,000 persons	During the time of Imam Hasan

Reports on the number of members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* vary, and 52 no single figure is universally accepted. In some sources, such as

*Tabarī*, the number is given as 40,000 after the Battle of *Şiffīn*. This may be because the term has been used there in its broad sense, namely, to refer to the army or military forces in general, just as in some sources *shurṭat al-khamīs* is a scribal error for *shurṭat al-jaysh* (Tabarī, 1967 AD/1387 AH: 5, 158; Ibn ‘Asākir, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 49, 429; Ibn Jawzī: 5, 185). Also, the total number of the Imam’s troops after the Battle of *Şiffīn* is close to this figure. Likewise, reports stating that the vanguard of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* under Imam *Hasan* (AS) numbered 12,000 must also be understood in this broad sense.

However, reports that distinguish the commander of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* from the commander of the Imam’s regular army (‘Aṣfārī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 151; Manqarī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 404), those identifying *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* as the Imam’s special companions (Barqī, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 34), and those indicating a special covenant between this unit and the Imam (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 5) all attest that *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* was an elite force of Imam Ali, distinct from his general army. Given the duties and characteristics of this institution, the events and circumstances of the Imam’s caliphate, and the historical evidence suggesting the small size of this group, the figure of 100 seems to best accord with the historical data regarding the number of members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*. Historical and hadith sources have preserved the names of only thirty of these individuals, which are presented in the following table:

**Table 4: List of Members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs***

Row	Members	Documentation of Membership
1	<b>Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa al-Mujāshi‘ī al-Kūfī</b>	<i>Waq‘at Ṣiffīn</i> , p. 406; <i>al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā</i> , vol. 6, p. 225; <i>Tārīkh Khalīfa b. Khayyāt</i> , p. 121; <i>al-Ghārāt</i> , vol. 1, p. 107; <i>Mukhtaṣar al-Baṣā’ir</i> , p. 128; <i>Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl</i> , p. 213; <i>Rijāl al-Kashshī</i> , pp. 5–103; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , p. 65; <i>Rijāl al-Najāshī</i> , p. 7; <i>Rijāl al-Ṭūsī</i> , vol. 1, p. 321; <i>Mīzān al-Itidāl</i> , vol. 1, p. 271; <i>Tarā’if al-Maqāl</i> , vol. 2, p. 74; <i>Rijāl al-Māmaqānī</i> , vol. 1, p. 150; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 1, p. 692; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 4, p. 133 and vol. 1, p. 51.
2	<b>Qays ibn Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubāda al-Anṣārī</b>	<i>al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā</i> , vol. 6, pp. 122, 321; <i>al-Ghārāt</i> , vol. 2, p. 489; <i>Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī</i> , vol. 5, p. 158 and vol. 4, p. 163; <i>Rijāl al-Kashshī</i> , p. 110; <i>Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq</i> , vol. 13, p. 262; <i>al-Muntaṣam</i> , vol. 5, p. 185; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 14, p. 95.
3	<b>Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , pp. 2–3; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 4, p. 330.
4	<b>Salmān al-Muhammadī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , pp. 2–3; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 9, p. 194.
5	<b>Ḥabīb ibn Muẓāhir al-Asadī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , p. 3; <i>Anṣār al-Ḥusayn</i> , p. 81; <i>al-Majālis al-Fākhira</i> , p. 192; <i>al-Taḥrīr al-Ṭāwūsī</i> , p. 17; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 5, p. 202.
6	<b>al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad al-Kindī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , p. 2; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 19, p. 344; <i>Qāmūs al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 10, p. 227.
7	<b>Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , p. 3; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , p. 2; <i>al-Taḥrīr al-Ṭāwūsī</i> , p. 117; <i>Mu‘jam al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 7, p. 139.
8	<b>Mālik ibn al-Ashtar al-Nakha‘ī</b>	<i>al-Muntaqā al-Nafīs</i> , p. 227; <i>Kitāb al-Rijāl</i> , p. 6.
9	<b>Abū al-Yaqzān ‘Ammār b. Yāsir</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , p. 3; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , p. 2; <i>Jāmi‘ al-Ruwāt</i> , vol. 1, p. 416; <i>Wasā’il al-Shī‘a</i> , vol. 30, p. 437; <i>Tarā’if al-Maqāl</i> , vol. 2, p. 146.

Row	Members	Documentation of Membership
10	<b>Abū Sinān / Abū Sāsān al-Anṣārī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , pp. 2–3; <i>Tārīkh al-Islām</i> , vol. 6, p. 520; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 7, p. 135; <i>Qāmūs al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 11, p. 361.
11	<b>Abū ‘Umra / Abū ‘Amr al-Anṣārī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , pp. 2–3; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 8, p. 428; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 4, pp. 314–315.
12	<b>Sahl ibn Ḥunāyf al-Anṣārī</b>	al-Uṣūl al-Sittata ‘Ashar, p. 258; <i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , pp. 2–3; <i>Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl</i> , pp. 343–344; <i>al-Wāfi</i> , vol. 24, p. 442; <i>Jāmi‘ al-Ruwāt</i> , vol. 1, p. 392; <i>al-Fawā’id al-Rijāliyya</i> , vol. 3, p. 35; <i>Ṭarā’if al-Maqāl</i> , vol. 3, p. 139; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 4, p. 173; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 9, p. 351.
13	<b>‘Uthmān ibn Ḥunāyf al-Anṣārī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , pp. 2–3; <i>Jāmi‘ al-Ruwāt</i> , vol. 1, p. 329; <i>al-Fawā’id al-Rijāliyya</i> , vol. 3, p. 78; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 5, p. 213; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 12, p. 117.
14	<b>‘Abd Allāh ibn Yaḥyā al-Haḍramī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , p. 3; <i>Rijāl al-Kashshī</i> , p. 6; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , p. 4; <i>Rijāl al-Tūsī</i> , vol. 1, p. 24; <i>al-Iḥtijāj</i> , vol. 1, p. 265; <i>Rijāl al-‘Allāma al-Hillī</i> , p. 104; <i>Wasā’il al-Shī‘a</i> , vol. 30, p. 508; <i>Jāmi‘ al-Ruwāt</i> , vol. 1, p. 156.
15	<b>Yaḥyā al-Haḍramī</b>	<i>Ṭarā’if al-Maqāl</i> , vol. 2, p. 198; <i>al-Rasā’il al-Rijāliyya</i> , vol. 3, p. 36; <i>Safīnat al-Bihār</i> , pp. 1, 695; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 10, p. 12; <i>Mu‘jam al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 11, p. 42; <i>Qāmūs al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 11, p. 44.
16	<b>Nu‘aym ibn Dajjāja al-Asadī</b>	<i>al-Ghārāt</i> , vol. 1, pp. 119–121; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 8, p. 85.
17	<b>‘Abīda ibn ‘Amr al-Salmānī al-Murādī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , p. 4; <i>al-Ikhtīṣāṣ</i> , p. 2; <i>Bihār al-Anwār</i> , vol. 34, p. 272; <i>Qāmūs al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 11, pp. 44, 329, 361.
18	<b>‘Abd Allāh ibn Usayd al-Kindī</b>	<i>Mukhtaṣar Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt</i> , p. 204; <i>Ta’wīl al-Āyāt al-Zāhira</i> , p. 400; <i>Bihār al-Anwār</i> , vol. 53, p. 108; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 4, p. 485.

Row	Members	Documentation of Membership
19	<b>Abū Yaḥyā Ḥakīm ibn Sa‘īd al-Ḥanafī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , p. 4; <i>al-Ikhtiṣāṣ</i> , p. 2; <i>Rijāl al-Ṭūṣī</i> , p. 60; <i>Tārīkh Baghdād</i> , vol. 8, p. 268; <i>Rijāl Ibn Dāwūd</i> , p. 222; <i>Rijāl al-‘Allāma al-Hillī</i> , p. 192; <i>Khulāṣat al-Aqwāl</i> , p. 307; <i>Naqd al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 2, p. 146; <i>Jāmi‘ al-Ruwāt</i> , vol. 1, p. 268; <i>Wasā’il al-Shī‘a</i> , vol. 30, p. 529; <i>Bihār al-Anwār</i> , vol. 34, p. 272; <i>Tarā’if al-Maqāl</i> , vol. 2, pp. 81, 120; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 1, p. 28; <i>Mu‘jam al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 6, p. 188.
20	<b>Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī</b>	<i>Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays</i> , vol. 1, pp. 50, 263–265, 270, 280, 286, 728; <i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , p. 4; <i>al-Ikhtiṣāṣ</i> , p. 2; <i>Khulāṣat al-Aqwāl</i> , p. 83.
21	<b>‘Abbād ibn Nusayb al-Qaysī (kunya-based)</b>	<i>al-Tārīkh al-Ṣaghīr</i> , vol. 1, p. 275 and vol. 6, p. 31; <i>al-Jarḥ wa al-Ta‘dīl</i> , vol. 6, p. 87; <i>al-Thiqāt</i> , vol. 5, p. 141.
22	<b>‘Ifāq ibn Musayḥ al-Fazārī</b>	<i>Jumal min Ansāb al-Ashrāf</i> , vol. 13, p. 182; <i>Khizānat al-Adab</i> , vol. 7, p. 120.
23	<b>Bishr ibn ‘Amr / ‘Umra al-Hamdānī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Kashshī</i> , p. 5; <i>Naqd al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 1, p. 281; <i>Jāmi‘ al-Ruwāt</i> , vol. 1, p. 122; <i>Tarā’if al-Maqāl</i> , vol. 2, pp. 75, 342; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 2, pp. 32–33; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 4, p. 227.
24	<b>Sa‘d ibn Ḥārith al-Khuzā‘ī</b>	<i>al-Ghārāt</i> , vol. 2, pp. 472–473; <i>Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl</i> , vol. 30, p. 270; <i>Mustadrakāt ‘Ilm al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 4, p. 27.
25	<b>‘Amr ibn Ḥamq al-Khuzā‘ī</b>	<i>al-Uṣūl al-Sittata ‘Ashar</i> , p. 179; <i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , p. 4; <i>Mu‘jam al-Rijāl</i> , vol. 13, pp. 87, 91.
26	<b>Jāriya ibn Qudāma al-Tamīmī</b>	<i>al-Iṣtī‘āb</i> , vol. 1, p. 246; <i>Asad al-Ghāba</i> , vol. 1, p. 386; <i>al-Wāfi</i> , vol. 11, p. 37; <i>al-Isāba</i> , vol. 1, p. 219.
27	<b>Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtiṣāṣ</i> , pp. 2–3; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 14, p. 230.
28	<b>Maytham ibn Yaḥyā al-Tammār</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Barqī</i> , pp. 3–4; <i>al-Ikhtiṣāṣ</i> , pp. 2–3; <i>Mu‘jam Rijāl al-Hadīth</i> , vol. 19, p. 94.
29	<b>‘Adī ibn Ḥātim al-Tā‘ī</b>	<i>al-‘Iqd al-Naṣīd</i> , p. 162.
30	<b>Uways al-Qarānī</b>	<i>Rijāl al-Kashshī</i> , p. 98.

Nine of these individuals are mentioned as members of Shurṭat al-Khamīs only in Barqī's account; none of the earlier Shi'i texts includes them as members. These are: "*Salmān, Miqdād, Abū Dharr, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir, Abū Sinān, Abū ‘Amrah, Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh, Sahl ibn Hanīf, and ‘Uthmān ibn Hanīf.*" (Safari Foroushani and Mirzaei, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 42) And since *Salmān* and *Abū Dharr* passed away before the Imam's period of caliphate, it is evident that they could not have been members of a military unit established by the Imam during his rule in Iraq (Tabāṭabā’ī, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 181). However, because their names appear in Barqī's narration as belonging to Shurṭat al-Khamīs, they are also listed in this table.

#### **4. General Characteristics of the Institution of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs***

Although *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* is primarily a descriptive term applied in the sources to a group of individuals, it nevertheless indicates that its members constituted an organized body functioning as a governmental institution. Based on the extant reports, the following characteristics can be extracted regarding this group as a distinct entity. This group possessed unique features that distinguished them from other military forces of that period. Accordingly, the general characteristics of the institution of shurṭat al-khamīs are as follows:

##### **6-1. The Special Covenant of the Members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* with the Imam**

The members of shurṭat al-khamīs made a covenant with the 57

Commander of the Faithful (AS), founded upon religious and spiritual values, vowing to remain steadfast in his path until the last drop of their blood. The Imam, in turn, guaranteed Paradise (al-Mufid, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 2) and victory (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 103) for them. It is worth noting that, as mentioned in the previous section; several Sunni sources refer to *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* as "Those who pledged unto death." The following reports illuminate this special covenant:

- 1) *Muhammad ibn al-Husayn, from Muhammad ibn Ja'far, from Ahmad ibn Abī 'Abd Allāh*, said: "Alī ibn al-Hakam reported: The companions of the Commander of the Faithful (AS), those to whom he said, "Make your covenant, for I covenant with you upon Paradise; I do not covenant with you for gold or silver." Our Prophet in the past said to his companions: Make your covenant, for I covenant with you only upon Paradise." (Mufid, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 2)
- 2) From *Abū al-Jārūd*, who said: "I said to *Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa*: "What was the rank of this man among you?" He replied: "I do not know what you are asking, except that our swords were upon our shoulders, and whoever he pointed to, we struck with them." He used to say to us: "Make your covenant, for by God, your covenant is not for gold nor for silver; rather, your covenant is for death." A group among those before you from the Children of Israel covenanted among themselves, and none of them died except that he became the prophet of his people, or the prophet of his town, or the

prophet of his own self; and you are in the position they were in, except that you are not prophets." (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 5)

The content of these two narrations is similar: Imam Ali (AS), in describing the status and rank of shurṭat al-khamīs, explained that prior to them, among a group of the Children of Israel (all of whom possessed some degree of prophetic rank), such a covenant (the covenant of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*) was concluded; consequently, none of them was martyred except that he became either the prophet of his people, the prophet of his town, or the prophet of his own soul. "And you are in their position, except that you are not prophets." (Aliyari Tabrizi, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 2, 350)

## 6-2. The Effectiveness and Efficiency of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*

According to extant reports, this institution demonstrated its effectiveness at both the individual and collective levels. On the individual level, the Imam, by recruiting selected and distinguished individuals (Tabarī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 266) and by delegating authority and responsibility to them (Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 53), facilitated the flourishing of their capacities within the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*. It was precisely due to these cultivated and enhanced individual capabilities that the deployment of shurṭat al-khamīs in the military domain resulted in major victories, including the triumphs in the Battles of Jamal and *Sifīn*. Considering that, according to historical accounts, the Imam's army was significantly smaller than the army of Jamal (‘Āmilī, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 30, 158), and that the

enemy enjoyed more advantageous conditions in terms of readiness and support, this victory further highlights the efficiency of *shurṭat al-khamīs* (Madani, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 140). In addition, during the raids launched by *Mu‘awīya*, who sought to destabilize the government of the Commander of the Faithful (AS) through brutal surprise attacks, the utilization of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* proved to be an effective and desirable strategy (Ibn Athīr, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 375).

### **6-3. Competence and Capabilities of the Members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs***

After identifying capable and qualified individuals for recruitment into *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, their training involved assigning responsibilities and granting authority based on each person's abilities. The fundamental criteria were presented to them, while the identification of specific instances and appropriate action in various circumstances was delegated to the members themselves (Ibn Ṭāwūs, 1979 AD/1400 AH: 136; Daylamī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 296). This trust in the capabilities of these worthy members enhanced their efficiency and enabled them to act with flexibility in carrying out tasks under varying conditions. Among the signs of this high degree of flexibility are the multiple and diverse functions attributed to this group. Their ability to perform various tasks simultaneously in different roles is a key indicator of their functional versatility.

### **6-4. Obedience and Loyalty to the Commander of the Faithful (AS)**

**60** Obedience and loyalty to the Imam constituted one of the most

distinguished characteristics of the members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*. Obedience and loyalty are complementary dimensions of following the Imam. Obedience denotes carrying out the Imam's commands without regard to internal motivations and may remain at a merely external level. Loyalty (or conscious followership), however, denotes voluntary, informed adherence to the Imam's conduct and example in all aspects of life, arising from profound understanding and love. The highest form of following the Imam combines both obedience and loyalty: "The follower carries out the Imam's instructions while also modeling his path and character." The following reports illustrate examples of obedience and loyalty among *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*:

- 1) *Ja'far ibn Bashīr*, from *Dhurayh*, reported: "I heard Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) say: "Qays ibn Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda, the commander of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, entered upon *Mu'āwiya*." *Mu'āwiya* said to him: "Pledge allegiance." Qays looked toward Imam *Hasan* (AS) to understand his view and said: "O! *Abā Muhammad*, have you pledged?" *Mu'āwiya* said to him: "Will you not desist? What shall I say? What shall I do with you?" Qays replied: "Whatever you wish." "By God, if you wish, you may crush me." He said this, though he was as massive as a camel and had a sparse beard. Then Imam *Hasan* (AS) rose, went toward him, and said: "Pledge allegiance, O! *Qays*!" So Qays pledged allegiance." (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 110).
- 2) Concerning *Mālik ibn Habīb*, who was the city overseer and fortress- **61**

keeper for Ali (AS) and held the reins of his mount, it is reported that he said to the Commander of the Faithful: "O! Commander of the Faithful, you go forth to battle with these Muslims, and they attain the reward of struggle, while you leave me here with a group of people?" The Imam replied that whatever reward they attained in battle, he would share in it, because his presence here was more necessary and would earn him a greater reward than going with them. *Mālik* then said: "O! Commander of the Faithful, I hear and obey." (Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 131–133)

3) *Naṣr ibn Muzāhim al-Tamīmī* reported that after the victory over *Talha* and *Zubayr* in the Battle of Jamal, the Commander of the Faithful (AS) went from Basra to Kufa... When he entered the Great Mosque, he prayed two units, then ascended the pulpit, praised God, sent blessings upon His Messenger, and said: "O! People of Kufa..." *Mālik ibn Habīb Yarbuī*, the commander of his shurṭa, rose and said: "By God, if you command us, we shall kill them." (Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 4)

4) *Aṣṭar* said: "O! People of Iraq, is there no one who will sell his soul for the sake of God?" *Ithāl ibn Hījl* came forth and cried out between the two armies: "Is there anyone to fight me?" *Mu‘āwīya* summoned *Hījl* and told him: "Go and retrieve this man." Each stood firm in his belief. They advanced against one another. The elder struck first, but the youth struck him, and then revealed his identity, he was his son. They dismounted, embraced, and wept. The father

said: "O! *Ithāl*, come to this worldly side." The son replied: "Father, come to the hereafter. By God, father, if my view were to return to the people of Syria, then it would be obligatory upon you to forbid me from it. Woe unto me, what would I say to Ali and the righteous believers? Remain upon your belief, and I shall remain upon mine." *Hijl* returned to the people of Syria, and *Ithāl* returned to the people of Iraq, each recounting the incident to his companions (Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 443). The emphasis on loyalty and adherence to the Imam, even in the face of powerful personal emotions, is a central theme of this report.

## 7. Functions of Shurṭat al-Khamīs

This section outlines the institution's primary military and security functions, with relevant reports cited under each heading.

### 7-1. Protection of the Imam's Life

One of the principal duties of shurṭat al-khamīs was the protection of the life of Imam Ali (AS). Members of this group stood alongside the Imam in various battles and defended him in moments of crisis. In the Battles of Jamal and *Ṣiffīn*, where significant threats to the Imam's life existed, the members of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* were known as his close guards and protectors. In the Musnad of *Aḥmad ibn Hanbal*, it is mentioned that during the Battle of *Ṣiffīn*, several members of shurṭat al-khamīs, through their vigilance, prevented actions that might have endangered the Imam (Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, n.d.: 4, 93). The following

reports are examples of this function—namely, safeguarding the Imam's life by *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*:

- 1) *Tāhir ibn Īsā*, citing his own chain of transmission regarding *Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa*, reports: "I said to Aṣbagh: "To what degree is the status of this man with you?" He replied: "I do not understand what you are saying." Only know this: "our swords hang over our own necks; thus, whoever intends evil against him, or even gestures toward him, we will strike him down." (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 103)
- 2) One day, Ali (AS) was in the Mosque of Kūfa. When the darkness of night enveloped everything, a man wearing a white garment entered through the door. At that moment, the guards and the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* appeared. The Imam said to them, "What do you want?" They said: "We saw this man coming toward us, and we feared he might harm you." The Imam replied: "Enough go back; may God have mercy on you." Do you protect me from the people of the earth? Then who will protect me from the people of heaven?" (Dhahabī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 5, 549; Ibn Shahrāshūb, 1959 AD/1379 AH: 2, 247; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 39, 132; Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 408)
- 3) After the Battle of Jamal, when Imam Ali (AS) finished his address and conversation with the people of Baṣra, he mounted his mule, and a group of Special Forces (*Shurṭat al-Khamīs*), along with groups from among the people, gathered around him (Mufīd, 1992 AD/1413

AH: 408). The presence of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* alongside Imam Ali underscores the significance of this institution in safeguarding his security and executing his directives.

## 7-2. Supervision and Oversight of the Market

The practice of the Commander of the Faithful (AS) in watching over the markets, inspecting them, and instructing others to ensure oversight is well known. When *Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa* said to the Imam: "I will do this task on your behalf; you remain at home!" The Imam replied: "You have not advised me, O! *Aṣbagh*!" And it is reported that he would ride the grey mule of the Messenger of God and personally go through each market... (Qādī Nu‘mān, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 2, 538) His strictness regarding Ibn Hurmah, who committed treachery in supervising the market of Ahwāz, is also recorded in history (Hakimi, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 6, 702).

Another example is the report transmitted by *‘Abd al-Karīm ibn ‘Amr al-Khath‘Amī* from *Habbābah al-Wālibiyya*, who said: "I saw Ali (AS) among the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, holding a whip in his hand, striking the sellers of eel-fish, snake-fish, small fish, and dead fish..." (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 346; 2, 178; Ṣadūq, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 2, 536)

*Shurṭat al-Khamīs* was the special elite and security force of the Commander of the Faithful; thus, the translator's interpretation of it as merely a location in Kūfa is mistaken (Ardakani, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 2, 201). This report clearly indicates the presence of the Imam and *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* in the market, as well as their supervisory role.

### 7-3. Participation in Warfare

The *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* consisted of courageous, steadfast, and front-line warriors (Qummī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 162). By strengthening military morale and instilling confidence in the army, they were involved in selecting and appointing military commanders for Imam Ali's forces and served as frontline fighters in battles. Many were considered chief advisers to the Imam on military matters and in the appointment of distinguished commanders such as *Mālik Ashtar* and *Qays ibn Sa‘d*. Reflection on the following reports confirms this:

- 1) After the Commander of the Faithful (AS) encouraged his companions to fight the Syrians, *Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa Tamīmī*, one of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, stood and said: "O! Commander of the Faithful! You have appointed me as guardian of the army and have placed a trust in me that you have placed in no one else. Today, I will not withhold my steadfastness and my effort to bring victory. As for the Syrians, they have already been defeated by us, while among us there remain brave men. Command us, and allow us to advance." The Imam replied: "Advance, in the name of God." (Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 406; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 32, 511)
- 2) Another account transmitted from *Aṣbagh* illustrates his obedience in both word and deed. After the Battle of Jamal, someone asked him why they did not kill the survivors of the Basran forces: "Were they not among the people of Jamal?" *Aṣbagh* replied: "By God, our hands were upon the hilts of our swords, and our eyes were upon his

command, waiting for him to order us regarding this group. He did not command it, and with his pardon, he released them." (Qādī Nu'mān, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 1, 395)

3) In another report regarding *Mālik Ashtar*, also among the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, when the people of *al-Raqqa* disobeyed the command of the Commander of the Faithful, he boldly went among them, spoke to them sternly, and compelled them to carry out the Imam's order (Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 152).

4) *Yahyā ibn Sālih* reports that when the districts of *Sawād* were attacked and plundered, Ali (AS) called the people to battle and the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* volunteered for combat. He then appointed *Qays ibn Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda al-Anṣārī* as their commander and dispatched them, and they advanced until they reached the borders of Syria (Thaqafī, 1973 AD/1353 SH: 2, 489).

5) 'Abd Allāh ibn Yahyā said: "The Commander of the Faithful (AS) said to him on the Day of Jamal: "Rejoice, O! Son of Yahyā! You and your father are among the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, God named you thus in heaven." (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 6)

#### 7-4. Apprehending Criminals

*Abū Bakr ibn 'Abbās* narrates that Ali (AS) sent someone to bring *Labīd ibn 'Atārid Tamīmī* to him. On the way, they passed by one of the residences of *Banū Asad*, where *Na'im ibn Dajjāja* was present. *Na'im* stood up and freed *Labīd*. They came to Ali (AS) and said: "We arrested *Labīd* and were

bringing him, but when we passed by *Na'im ibn Dajjāja*, he released him." And *Na'im* was one of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*. Ali (AS) ordered that *Na'im* be brought and he was severely beaten. As they were taking him away, *Na'im* said: "O! Commander of the Faithful! To stand beside you is humiliation, and to be separated from you is disbelief." Ali said: "Is that truly the case?" He replied: "Yes." Ali said: "Release him; I have pardoned you, for God says: "Repel evil with that which is better." But as for your statement that standing beside me is humiliation, this is a sin you have committed. Yet your statement that separation from me is disbelief, this is correct and worthy; therefore, your sin has been erased by your good word." (Thaqafī, 1932 AD/1353 AH: 1, 121, 72; Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 7, 268; Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 90)

### **7-5. Enforcement of Legal Punishments**

One of the primary duties of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* was the enforcement of the divinely mandated legal punishments. These fixed penalties, prescribed in the sharī'a for specific crimes, were implemented by the ruling authority and its appointed forces.

During the government of Imam Ali, the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* imposed these penalties to establish justice and ensure public security. A report illustrates this:

- 1) Imam *Bāqir* (AS) narrated that one day Ali (AS) entered the mosque and encountered a young man who was crying, accusing a group of merchants of having killed his father. During the

interrogation, the Imam ordered Qanbar, his servant: "O! Qanbar, summon for me the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*!" He summoned them, and the Imam assigned one officer from among the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* to each of the men! So [Qanbar] summoned them, and he appointed one man from among the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* over each one of this group. Then the Imam said: "Separate them from one another and cover their heads..." (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 346; 4, 181; Ṣadūq, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 3, 25; Ṭūsī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 6, 316; Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 408)

2) Imam *Sādiq* (AS) said: "Ali (AS) was sitting in the Mosque of Kūfa when a group of people who had been arrested while eating during the month of Ramaḍān were brought before him. For the execution of the legal rulings and the punishment of these individuals, "...If you do so, then place them under the supervision of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, and take them outside to the hinterland of Kūfa, and command that two pits be dug side-by-side, joined together like a passage..." (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 4, 181; Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 38, 60; 40, 287).

## 7-6. Reinforcing Morale and Supporting Other Military Units

Under severe wartime conditions, especially when the enemy exerted heavy pressure, the members of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* strengthened the morale of the Imam's troops through their courageous and active presence. As exemplary models of sacrifice and steadfastness, they **69**

contributed to cohesion and spiritual fortitude among the rest of the army and prevented internal disputes from weakening it. A report regarding the role of *Mālik Ashtar* in keeping the people on the battlefield during the war with *Mu‘āwiya* states that when the pressure of *Mu‘āwiya*'s forces intensified, *Mālik Ashtar* launched a courageous attack, drove back his troops, and reversed the course of the battle (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 32, 509). Other reports also depict *Mālik Ashtar*'s effective presence on the battlefield and his ability to confront seditions, illustrating his bravery and valor in the Battle of *Şiffîn* (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 32, 513, 515). These individuals were particularly trained for warfare and possessed notable military skills. In some reports, it is stated that the Imam, to instill confidence and preparedness in his companions, provided them with specific instructions on combat methods (Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 123-124). In *Da‘ā’im al-Islām*, it is recorded that Imam Ali, during the Battle of *Şiffîn*, instructed some of his companions, who served as *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, to make use of particular weapons in critical positions, indicating their high level of expertise and military proficiency. The Imam states: "When you intend to attack, the commander of the vanguard must begin; if he falters, then the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* must support him." (Qādī Nu‘mān, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 3, 151) The members of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* were also individuals of insight and awareness (Qummī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 162). According to one report, when the people of Başra revolted against the Imam's

governor and killed him, *Ziyād ibn ‘Ubayd* wrote to the Commander of the Faithful, saying that in his view, if the Imam deemed it appropriate, he should send *Jāriyah ibn Qudāmah*, for he was a man of discernment, obeyed by his clan, and a fierce enemy of the enemies of the Commander of the Faithful. If *Jāriyah* were to come, he would, by God's permission, disperse them (Thaqafī, 1932 AD/1353 AH: 2, 401).

### 7-7. Guarding and Protecting the Public Treasury

It is reported that *‘Ā’isha* ordered *Zubayr* to kill seventy guards of the public treasury, saying: "I have been informed that these were the ones who prevented you in the mosque." Seventy of them were killed. Some of them continued to hold the treasury of Baṣra and declared that they would not hand it over until the Commander of the Faithful arrived. But *Zubayr* launched a nighttime attack with his army, captured fifty of them, and they were all put to death. This act of treachery and deception by *‘Ā’isha*'s followers toward *‘Uthmān b. Hunayf*, who was among the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, was the first instance of such betrayal in Islam. The killing of the guards of the public treasury was the first time a group of Muslims was slain after having been granted safety. Their number was 120, though according to *Ibn Abī al-Hadīd*'s *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, they were 400 (Mūsawī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 333).

### 7-8. Combating Internal Instability and Establishing Security in Kūfa

Imam Ali (AS), to counter sedition and preserve internal order, formed special units known as *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, who assisted him **71**

under various political and military circumstances (*al-Imāma wa al-Sīyāsa, Ibn Qutayba Dīnawarī*). This group also supported the Imam's political principles and objectives. They stood by him not only on the battlefield but also in confronting internal crises and political upheavals, fighting resolutely against those who rose against him (such as *Talha* and *Zubayr* in the Battle of *Jamal*, or the forces of *Mu'āwīya* in the Battle of *Ṣiffīn*). Their loyalty to the Imam and to his aims distinguished them from all other groups. They remained at his side in the most difficult circumstances and continued to support him.

During the campaigns of *al-Ghārāt*, following the Syrian forces' attacks on Iraq, Imam Ali dispatched this group to repel them (Thaqafī, 1973 AD/1353 SH: 2, 489). When the Imam returned from *Ṣiffīn*, he sent Mālik al-Ashtar to the administrative district of *Jazīrah* and instructed *Qays ibn Sa'd*: "You remain in Kūfa and take charge of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* until the arbitration is concluded; then proceed to Azerbaijan." (Thaqafī, 1973 AD/1353 SH: 1, 257)

## 8. An Analysis of the Semantic Range of *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*

The semantic range of a word or term<sup>1</sup> refers to the set of meanings,

1. **Semantics: A Coursebook** by *James R. Hurford*. This book provides a comprehensive treatment of linguistics and semantics, and the semantic range of words is one of its important topics.

**Semantics** by *John I. Saeed*. This is a well-established and authoritative reference in the field of semantics, in which semantic range, semantic change, and different types of semantic relations are discussed in detail.

**Introduction to Semantics** by *Katherine K. E. Derbyshire*. It is an excellent resource for becoming familiar with the fundamentals of semantics and for analyzing word meaning.

concepts, or interpretations that it may denote across different contexts, situations, or periods. In other words, the semantic range encompasses all the concepts and meanings included within a term and applicable under its linguistic umbrella. A term may have a narrow or broad semantic field, and its meanings may shift depending on context or usage. To analyze the semantic range of a term, one must consider the various dimensions of its meaning across different contexts, such as historical setting, function, linguistic usage, and semantic evolution. The semantic range of the term Shurṭat al-Khamīs refers to the process by which the term's original and primary meaning, designating a specific military unit during the time of Imam Ali (AS), expanded, across different contexts and conditions, to encompass additional meanings in political, social, and security domains. In its primary sense, the term denotes a group of elite special-forces soldiers whose role was protective and military in wartime. They were front-line fighters of exceptional courage who advanced before others and entered battle with full readiness, resolving not to return from the battlefield except in victory (Kashshī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 103). As noted earlier, *Mālik Ashtar*, one of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, when seeing that the people of *al-Raqqa* were disobeying the order of the Commander of the Faithful, went boldly among them, spoke to them sternly, and compelled them to obey the Imam's command (Manqarī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 152). Thus, the term came to be applied to any protective force entrusted with safeguarding 73

prominent individuals during critical moments. By undertaking highly sensitive missions, this group, symbolizing loyalty, protection, order, and governmental authority, served as an embodiment of Imam Ali's administrative and security power, not merely as a military detachment (Sayyid Rađī, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 439). Therefore, *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* was an institution with social and political functions, tasked with establishing order and authority within the community. Their diverse roles, as well as the Imam's reliance on them for critical, demanding, and forward-looking missions requiring precision, strength, and trust, indicate that the consolidation of the religious community and its transmission to later generations was carried out through these trusted, capable, and motivated individuals. Given the position of the Commander of the Faithful as the Imam and religious leader of the Muslims, who was firmly committed to the implementation of divine commands and the Sunnah of the Messenger of God, the term *shurṭat al-khamees* may also be applied, in its religious dimension, to those who safeguarded Islamic principles and values against intellectual and cultural threats. Accordingly, members of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*, such as *Sulaym ibn Qays* and *Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa* were among the prominent Shī'i transmitters of tradition and authors of early works. From the earliest days of Islam, the primary vehicle for transmitting religious teachings throughout the Muslim community, responsible for disseminating and expanding sacred knowledge across the Islamic realm, was the hadith. The transmitters

of traditions, through immense hardship and perseverance, conveyed this invaluable legacy to subsequent generations, thereby establishing the central pillar of Shī‘i religious identity and its enduring intellectual heritage. Biographical scholars describe *Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa* as follows: "*Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa* was among the prominent figures of the followers, one of the intimate companions of the Commander of the Faithful, and the commander of the *Shurṭat al-Khamīs*." He learned extensively from the Imam and lived for some time after him. It is said that he was *Mashkūr*, meaning that he exerted exceptional effort in the path of truth, and he transmitted the famous epistle of *Mālik Ashtar* (Hillī, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 128). He also narrated the Imam's decree appointing *Mālik Ashtar* as governor of Egypt, as well as the Imam's counsel to his son *Muhammad al-Hanafīyya*. In the Battle of *Sifīn*, he served as the commander of the "*Shurṭat al-Khamīs*." He was present at the death of *Salmān*, and the accounts of his weeping in the presence of the Imam, who, after the strike of *Ibn Muljam* the accursed, had wrapped a yellow turban around his head, and whose blood loss had left his complexion the same yellow as the cloth, are well known, as is his final audience with the Imam.

## Conclusion

Reflection on the foregoing makes the following points about *shurṭat al-khamīs* abundantly clear:

A comparative and analytical study of the historical and hadith sources

demonstrates that the institution of *shurṭat al-khamees* was one of the 'Alid government's military, security, and political innovations, established in response to the complex and turbulent circumstances of the Muslim community after the third caliphate. This institution comprised carefully selected, loyal, and perceptive individuals who entered into a spiritual and sacred covenant with Imam Ali (AS). They were entrusted with safeguarding the life of the Imam, protecting the Islamic order, enforcing divine punishments, maintaining internal security, supervising the marketplace, and defending the public treasury. Numerous historical reports document the role of its members in the Battles of *Jamal* and *Siffin*, in suppressing sedition, and in maintaining social order, attesting to its structural efficiency and functional effectiveness. - Semantic analysis of the term reveals that its meaning expanded from a strictly military designation to a multi-dimensional institution with social, political, and religious functions. Members of this group, such as *Mālik Ashtar* and *Aṣbagh ibn Nubāṭa*, not only demonstrated exceptional military valor but also served as transmitters and preservers of the teachings of Imam Ali. Thus, *Shurṭat al-Khamīs* must be understood as a composite and effective institution that embodied the integration of political authority and religious legitimacy in the governance of Imam Ali (AS). Studying it provides deeper insight into the administrative structure and security system of the 'Alid government.

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