A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
TO THE RISE AND EVOLUTION OF SHİ‘ISM

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

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

خلفية تاريخية لنشأة التشيع وتطوره

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الملخص:
يؤمن جمهور علماء الإمامية الإثنا عشرية بوجود نص من النبي يوصي بالخلافة من بعده لعلي بن أبي طالب. وبالتالي تزعموا من الخلفاء الساقطين له. ويعتقد الإمامية أن علي وذريته وروثوا الديانة وان النبي يمكن أن تُرث. إن مفهوم الإمام بالإسلام بالنسبة لهم واجب إلهي مستمر ويشددون على وجوب خدمة الإمام وأنه معين من قبل الله. لكن دعواهم هذه عميلة للعامة السنة معتدلين قبله على خلافتهم والعمل تحت إمرتهم بالإضافة إلى تنسيقهم. إن الجماعات التي شكلت جيش علي حينها لم تمت حزبا مستقلًا مع أهداف ومؤامرات واحد من تولي أهل بيته. يؤكد علماء أهل السنة أن كلمة الشيعة استخدمت في هذا الوقت بمعنى نصير أو موالي. كما كان بقال شيعة علي وشيعة معاوية كوصف لأي من الفريقين. بدأ التشيع كحركة سياسية بعد مقتل الخليفة الثالث ثم تطور مفهومه إلى فرق دينية خاصة بعد مقتل الحسين. واتبع أن الشيعة فهم المعتدلين كما أنهم الفهم الغالبة وتمثل الإمامية الإثنا عشرية غالبية جمهور الشيعة في العصر الحاضر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نشأة التشيع، الإمامية، فرق الشيعة، السياق، العناصر الأجنبية، صنع التشيع.
INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

1.1. The lexical definition

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

"...Then after the death of ʿUthmān and the rebellion of Muʿāwiyah with his party against ʿAli asking the revenge for Uthmān's murder, Muʿāwiyah managed to recruit a great number of Muslims, who became known as ʿUthmānīs and the followers of ʿAli was called ʿAlawīs." (Al-Amīn 1983, 1/19) (Trans. is mine)

1.2 The definition of *Shiʿism* according to *Shiʿite* scholars

*Shiʿite* scholars insist on giving *Shiʿism* an earlier origin, claiming that its origin dates back to the time of the Prophet, or even before. The word *Shiʿah* is defined by al-Nawbakhtī as a reference to ʿAlī's party, called as *Shiʿah* of ʿAlī (ʿAlī's partisans) in the days of the prophet and after him, they are known for following ʿAlī and confessing his *Imamate* (succession to the prophet). (Al-Nawbakhtī 2012, 51) Almufīd- known as Shaykh of *Shiʿah*- claims that the word *Shiʿah* may be added to another word, for example: *Shiʿah* of ʿAlī or *Shiʿah* of Banū Umayyah, etc. but when the definite article (al-, the) is added, the term becomes special for the followers of ʿAlī, who believe that the succession to the prophet is his due right and denounce the succession of the former caliphs. (Al-Mufīd 1413 AH, 35) This definition explicitly repeals the succession of Abī Bakr and ʿUmar. As noticed also in other words of al-Mufīd in the book of *al- Irshād*; he states that The *Imamate* of ʿAlī after the prophet was supposed to be thirty years. For twenty-four years, he
was deprived of taking it over and did not demand it practicing *Taqiyyah* (dissimulation of faith), as it was the situation with the prophet who, out of fear, was forced to conceal his *Da’wah* for some years in *Makkah*. (Al-Mufid 2008, 1/9) This claim, no doubt, is vain as it opposes what the Muslim majority believe of the validity of the caliphate of Abû Bakr and ‘Umar. Besides, it is not expected from such a noble and courageous knight like ‘Alî to harbor a desire for succession, if found, for that long period out of fear or cowardice. Moreover, we do not need to fend off the false accusation of the prophet's concealment of ‘Alî's right to succession after him whatever reasons were found. All Muslims believe that the prophet delivered the message of Allah intact as revealed to him with no addition nor omission. Had this been the right of ‘Alî, it would have been mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an or the *Sunnah* of the prophet.

In the book of *al-Zînah* of Abu Ḥâtim al-Razî, *Shî‘ah* is a term given to those who accompanied ‘Alî, in the days of the messenger of Allah and were affiliated to him…it was said *Shî‘ah* of ‘Alî. (Al-Amîn, 2001, 1/19) As noticed, these definitions have no reference whatsoever to the most prominent tenets of *Shî‘ism*, like the succession after ‘Alî, the chain of alleged *Imâms*, *Naşş* and *Waşiyah*. That means that these tenets crept into *Shî‘ism* by later generations of *Shî‘i* scholars.

### 1.3 The definition of *Shî‘ism* according to Orientalists

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

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

Julius Wellhausen asserts the late rise of the term *Shî‘ah* upon the murder of ‘Uthmân. At that time, he comments, Islam divided into two parties, the party of ‘Alî and that of Mu‘âwiyyah. The party in Arabic is called Shî‘ah. Thus the *Shî‘ah* of ‘Alî countered the *Shî‘ah* of Mu‘âwiyyah. But when Mu‘âwiyyah was appointed as ruler of Muslim state, the term *Shî‘ah* became confined to those who followed ‘Alî." (Wellhausen 1958, 146) The term, to orientalists, was merely political. The
opposition to ‘Uthmân was inherently a political and social revolt but later acquired a religious form. (Guillaume 1956, 117) It was used to differentiate between the two opposing parties: the party of ‘Alî confronting the party of Mu‘âwiyah. Thus it will be nonsense to claim that the term has any existence before ‘Alî’s caliphate.

1.4 The definition of Shi‘ism according to Sunnî scholars:

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

Al-Shahrastânî (d. 548 AH) says that Shi‘ah are those who give special adherence to ‘Alî Ibn Abû Ṭâlib and confess, secretly or publicly, his right to Imamate through Naṣṣ (a report from the Prophet) or Waṣiyah (by legacy). They believe, he continues, that Imamate should not fail any of his descendants, and if it were to fail any of them, it would be an act of oppression and usurpation by a rival or a practice of Taqiyah (dissimulation of faith). (Al-Shahrastânî n.d., 1/146) Though this definition mentions Naṣṣ and Waṣiyah, it is still free of other Shi‘î creeds like Ghaybah (occultation), Raj‘ah2 or Badâm. Al-Suyûtî (d. 911 AH) in his Tafsîr does not mention any special definition of the word Shi‘ah other than its general notion, as diverse parties. In Qur‘ân: (6: 65), al-Suyûtî interprets the word Shi‘ah as meaning "different parties". In (Q. 6: 159), he comments: "It means different parties, innovating sects and heretics. ‘Abdul-Razzâq narrated through his chain from Qatâdah who said: "They are the Jews and the Christians…” (Al-Suyûtî n.d., 3/403)

2 the belief that Shi‘ite Imams will return to this world before the day of resurrection to retaliate for their oppression and to enforce justice.
2. The emergence of Shī‘ism

2.1 The emergence of Shī‘ism according to Shī‘ite scholars

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

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

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

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3 a revolution against ‘Alī, during his reign, by some companions to demand the revenge for ‘Uthmān’s murder.
called Şi‘ah, as ‘Alî used to call them "my Şi‘ah". (Ibn al-Nadîm 1997, 217) As for al-Ṭabaṭaba‘î, he views that Şi‘ism started with a reference made for the first time to the partisans of ‘Ali (shi‘at ‘Ali), during the lifetime of the Prophet himself. (Al-Ṭabaṭaba‘î 1975, 34) However, in the following pages, he declares that the main cause behind the emergence of Şi‘ism was the difference about the right to succession after the Prophet. He says:

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

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

2.2 The emergence of Şi‘ism according to Orientalists:

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

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

Ahmad al- Ghâmidî in his book about Shi‘ism, concludes that Shi‘ism is of two kinds. First: political, that emerged because of political reasons and objectives. He says” political Shi‘ism rose at the time of ‘Uthmân; some people took the side of ‘Uthmân while others preferred ‘Ali without negating the previous caliphs…thus the term was not confined to the Shi‘ah of ‘Ali” (Al-Ghâmidî 2010, 22) Second: dogmatic, that has an earlier ideological basis started with the figure of ‘Abdullah Ibn Saba’ who was the main founder and indoctrinator of Shi‘ism. Al-Ghamidî states that a Jewish character appeared at the time of ‘Uthmân, claimed himself a Muslim
and injected new dogmas that later became the basis for Shīʿism. That character was ‘Abdullāh Ibn Saba'. (Al-Ghāmidī 2010, 23-24)

3. Foreign elements in making Shīʿism

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

3.1 The Persian element

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

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

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

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4 appeared in medieval Zoroastrian texts as Gayōmard or Gayōmart
system and dynasticism, he suggests, reflects a notable influence of the Persian system that lead to the *shī‘ite* prejudice to a ruling family. (Abū Zahrah n.d., 34-35) This resemblance was affirmed by the author of *al-Tuhfah al-İthna’ashariyyah* as well. (Dahlawī 1373 AH, 300)

### 2.3 The Jewish and Christian elements:

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

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

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

4. Shi‘ite sects

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

4.1.1 The Saba‘îs

Many contemporary shi‘ite scholars attempt to deny the existence of ‘Abdullâh Ibn Saba' as a true historical figure. They have written a great number of books that primarily aim at denying that such person ever existed in history. In all their writings, they describe the story of ‘Abdullâh Ibn Saba' to be a "fairytale," "legendary," "mythical" etc. for instance, Ḥasan al-Amîn writes that the story of ‘Abdullâh Ibn Saba’ was made by the enemies of Islam whose goal is to split the Muslims. According to al-Amîn, those so-called "enemies of Islam" claim that Shi‘ah is a sect originated by ‘Abdullâh Ibn Saba’. It is stated in the shi‘ite encyclopedia that Saba‘îs were affiliated to the tribe of Saba' in ancient Yemen whose story was mentioned in (Q34:15) and they were known as such till the middle of the second century (of Muslim calendar). As for the character of Ibn Saba', he argues that it was invented by a man named Sayf Ibn ‘Umar al-Tamîmî, who ascribed to Ibn Saba' the introducing of shi‘ite doctrines. (Al-Amîn, 2001, 13/182-185) This is a fail and invalid attempt made by shi‘ite scholars to deny the influence of Saba‘îs in injecting alien beliefs, on which the present shi‘ite doctrines are based. The reality of Ibn Saba' was proved in many of shi‘ite sources. For example, in his book on Shi‘ite sects, al-Nawbakhtî declares that the first sect to show extremism was Saba‘îs, the disciples of ‘Abdullâh Ibn Saba' who disparaged Abû Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmân and other companions of the Prophet and rejected them.
as legitimate rulers. Confessing that, ‘Alî condemned him to death; some people asked ‘Alî: "O, Commander of the Faithful, are you killing a man who calls people for loving you, the household of the Prophet, for allying with you and disassociating themselves from your enemies? Instead, ‘Alî banished him to al-Madâ’in. (Al-Nawbakhtî 2012, 57) Ibn Saba' went to the far extreme to claim Prophethood to himself and divinity to ‘Alî. Al-Ţūsî reports through his chain from Abu Ja‘far (Muḥammad al-Bâqîr) his saying: "‘Abdullah Ibn Saba' claimed he was a prophet and ‘Alî was God (Allah)!! When this news reached ‘Alî, he asked that Ibn Saba' be brought to his presence. Having confessed his crime, ‘Alî ordered that he be burnt to death" (Al-Ţūsî, 1427 AH, 102) & (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 4/142)

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

Al-Shahrastȃnȋ substantiates the existence of a sect named Saba'îs, the disciples of ‘Abdullȃh Ibn Saba' who said to the noble ‘Alî ‘you, you are the one (God). ‘Alî exiled him to al-Madâ’in…he was the first one to invent a text assuming the legacy to ‘Alî and from him, the extreme denominations emerged. He assumed that ‘Alî is still alive, is partly man and partly God (God-man), and will return to this life to fill the earth with justice. (Al-Shahrastȃnȋ n.d., 1/174) Al- Baghdadi also mentions the Saba'îs, the followers of ‘Abdullȃh Ibn Saba', he says that Ibn Saba' was exiled to al-Madâ’in. When ‘Alî was murdered, Ibn Saba' claimed that the dead body was not ‘Alî’s, but was a demon in his image. As for ‘Alî, Ibn Saba' assumes, he ascended to
heaven as did Jesus, the son of Mary. (Al-Baghdādī 1977, 223-224) Thus, the Sunnī scholars assert the historical existence of the Saba'īs, and emphasize their influence on most of the present Shi‘ite beliefs.

4.1.2 Saba'ī doctrines

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

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

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

During the imamate of ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn. Shī‘ah did not undergo any divisions. Subdivisions arose after the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn, the majority of Shī‘ah adhered to the imamate of ‘Alī Ibn al-Ḥusayn, al-Sajjād, while Kīsāniyyah accepted Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah as the fourth Imam as well as the promised Mahdī, and that he had gone into occultation and would reappear. After the death of al-Sajjād, the majority of Shī‘ah accepted his son, Muhammad al-Bâqir, while a minority followed Zayd and became known as Zaydis. Following al-Bâqir, the Shī‘ah accepted his son Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, then Mūsȃ al-Kâẓim, the seventh Imam. At that stage, one group followed the older son of the sixth Imam, Ismā’īl and became

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⁵ Joshua, the leader of the Israelites after the death of Moses
known as Ismāʿīlīs. After al-Kāẓim, the majority followed his son, ‘Alī al-Riḍā. The chain continued to the twelfth Imam, whom the majority of Shīʿah believe to be the promised Mahdī. Any following division was not so significant. The majority of the Shīʿite sects disappeared within a short period, except three ones: Zaydīs, Ismāʿīlīs and Twelvers, who represent the majority of Shīʿah nowadays. We shall limit our discussion to these three subdivisions, which continue to exist until now.

4.2.1 The Zaydīs

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

Ismāʿīlīs is a branch from Imāmīs and was named after Ismāʿīl, the oldest son of the sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. Ismāʿīl died during the lifetime of his father. Concerning this question, some believed that Ismāʿīl did not die but went into occultation, and would appear again as the promised Mahdī. Another group believed that the true Imam was Ismāʿīl whose death meant the imamate would transfer to his son Muḥammad and his descendants. (Al-Nawbakhtī 2012, 114-115)& (Al-Shahrastānī n.d., 167) Ismāʿīlīs has undergone a certain divisions. Sabʿiyah (related to number "seven"), as they believe that Ismāʿīl was the seventh and the seal in the chain of Imams, albeit his descendants may inherit the position. They also assume that the system of the Underworld, i.e. the Orbit, owes to the role of the major seven planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and finally, the Moon. (Al-Ghazālī n.d., 16) This philosophy is similar to that of the Ṣābiʿah (star worshippers). (Al-Ṭabaṭabāʾī 1975, 70) There are another two sects within Ismāʿīlīs: Muḥammirah, it is thought they were named as such because they used to paint their clothes in red, or because they stigmatized their rivals as Ḥamīr (donkeys). Taʿlimiyyah (the masters of teaching) is another sect characterized by the need for an infallible Imam who has the absolute right to teach and instruct. They deny knowledge obtained through reason and mere opinion. (Al-Ghazālī n.d., 17) This description also fits the Bāṭinīs who believe that each exterior teaching (Ẓāhir) has an inner aspect (Bāṭin) and each element of revelation (Tanzīl) has a hermeneutic and esoteric exegesis (Taʿwīl). (Al-Ṭabaṭabāʾī 1975, 71)

Ismāʿīlīs believe that the earth can never fail to have Ḥujjah (Proof) of Allah. Ḥujjah is two kinds: "speaker" (nāṭiq) and "silent one" (Ṣāmiṭ). The speaker is a prophet and the silent one is an Imām who is Waṣī, the executor of the testament of a prophet. A prophet, they believe, who is the perfect manifestation of God, has the esoteric power of initiating men into the divine Mysteries. After him, they claim, there are seven Waṣīs who possess the power of executing his testament and the power of esoteric initiation into the Divine Mysteries. (Al-Ṭabaṭabāʾī 1975, 71) Ismāʿīlīs believe that Adam was sent as a prophet with Prophethood and esoteric guidance and that he had seven executors of whom the seventh was Noah. Likewise, Abraham was the seventh executor of Noah, Moses was the seventh executor of Abraham, Jesus was the seventh executor of Moses, Muḥammad was the seventh executor of Jesus, and likewise, Muḥammad Ibn Ismāʿīl was the seventh executor of Muḥammad. They claim that the waṣīs of the Prophet are counted seven, the chain of whom starts with ‘Alī, al-Ḥusayn… and ends with
Ismā‘īl Ibn Ja‘far. After this series, they assume, there are seven descendants of Muḥammad Ibn Ismā‘īl whose names are hidden and secret. Ismā‘īlīs also believe that beside the Proof of Allah (Ḥujjah), there should always be on earth twelve Naqibs (chiefs) who are the elite followers of the Ḥujjah. (Al-Salūmī 2001, 1/585-590)

5.1 Al-Ithnā‘ashariyah (The Twelvers or Imāmīs)

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

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6 they rule Imam al-Ḥasan, the brother of al-Ḥusayn, out of the chain
Ibn al-Ḥasan is still alive and will never die, but will reappear to fill the earth with justice. To them, he is the promised Mahdī. (Ibn Ḥazm n.d., 4/138)

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

5.2 The status of Imamate

To Imamīs, an Imam has the full authority to legislate and enact the laws; every single word he says is a faith, as he is not expected to contradict the faith. They assume that Imamate is a position like prophethood; should be treated as the divine revelation. They add that Imams were to be selected out by God as prophets were. A prophet receives laws through divine revelation, but Imam, who bears the duty to complete the prophet's job, is believed to receive them through prophetic inspiration. (Al-Ghiṭā' 1990, 134) Being so serious position, Imamīs argue, Imamate entails an infallible and wise Imam. This means that Imam is neither expected to err or commit a foolish act, nor does it fit him to forget. Al-Ṭūsī views Infallibility is a vital prerequisite for him (Imam) as well as great knowledge. Since Imam, in Imamīs faith, is veritably well-versed in every single thing his community may need; it does not suit him to be less knowledgeable or inferior in rank than any one of his community." (Al-Ṭūsī, 1928, 1/80) Moreover, Imamīs claim the occurrence of supernatural matters at the hands of Imam as a sign of his Imamate and, incline to call this Mu'jizah (a miracle given to a prophet as a sign of his Prophethood) exactly like what happened with the prophets of Allah. Al-Ṭūsī claims that Because infallibility cannot be perceived through senses, proves for it cannot be set except through a clear text, or through the exhibition of miracles –as an alternative of a text- to substantiate the Imamate of an Imam. (Al-Ṭūsī, 1928, 1/276)
Imam not only have to be infallible, but also, he should have a good command of everything related to Sharî’ah (Islamic theology), the knowledge of the explicit, the implicit, the outward and the inward meanings of legal texts. He is believed to be responsible for all religious matters, be they serious or trivial. His knowledge is believed to be divinely inspired, and not gained through human teaching; as Imam is, as believed, not expected to exert his effort in issues above his capacity and still there probability of error of judgment; i.e. he is not apt to involve in uncertain knowledge, rather, his judgments is based on doubtless knowledge through inspiration. (Abū Zahrah n.d., 49) Imâmîs, though diverse, agree on the sacredness of the position of Imamate; the status of an Imam should not be questioned. To them, it is close to that of a prophet, equals it or even, as some assume, excels it. Those who view the status of Imam as superior to or higher in rank than that of a Prophet make use of the Qur'anic Ayah (Q2:124), there in Abraham was tried by Allah with commands and he fulfilled them. Thereafter, Allah said that Abraham will be made an Imam (leader) for people. They infer from this Ayah that Abraham was granted Imamate as a higher degree after he has completed the mission as a prophet! They argue that the above Ayah refers to the tests to which Allah exposed the Prophet Abraham after his Prophethood at the end of his life. Having successfully passed these tests and patiently withstood the great hardships, they assume, he was granted the position of Imamate. (kardan n.d., 15)

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

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

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

Saber Fouad Muḥammad

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A Historical Background To The Rise And Evolution Of Shi‘ism

Saber Fouad Muḥammad

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