

# 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib's Image among the Shi'ite<sup>1</sup> on YouTube<sup>2</sup>

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## Abstract

It is a solid fact that the image has its effect and its coding and guiding power on onlookers. It may grow stronger as it comes to modeling the political leader. It is, therefore, one of the visions with which Shi'ite political discourse represents the symbolism of its imams, to whom 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib has been the opening of every word since his advocacy by those who believed he was the imam after his cousin, the Prophet Muhammad, in response to the consensus of the Banu Sa'idacourtyard. The power of the image highlights the moment when it is more harmonious with the eloquence of digital creativity, which we see has also contributed to reassuring the Shi'ite perception of the mobilization of the murids and their emancipation from the authority of read text and taqiyya (precautionary dissimulation of one's beliefs). Today, YouTube sites have become their refuge and outlet to express what, as they maintain, the authority of the Sunni, the other, has concealed in order to preserve the sanctity of the Islamic holy site and its symbols. The Shi'ite perception on YouTube did not deviate from their vision of the symbolism of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib endorsed by the predecessors. His original image still revolves in place. Despite his reverence and symbolic might, his followers inflated the original image reaching the highest points of exaggeration turning him from a human being into a mythological figure transcending history and sacredness. 'Ali became the father of humanity, a prophet and a god as well, thus showing the preference of the political imagination only by shaping the image. Religion was not disabled to cope with the phenomenon just as history was incapacitated despite its reality.

**Keywords:** Image, 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, Shi'ite, YouTube, politics, exaggeration, Imam, and prophet.

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## I. Introduction

The image tempts the viewer, combining the obsessions of creativity with the expression of collective identity. It becomes more enticing whenever it represents a religious or political symbol because of the authority and charisma it encompasses. 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib is perhaps one of those symbols that captured the attention of the general Muslims, especially among those who sought him and agreed that he was the worthiest figure to attain succession (*caliphate or khilafah*) after the death of the Prophet. He inspired their political thinking and steered their religious belief.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the phenomenon of reverence and reification of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad continues in the Arab memory, until they have received a lot of attention. The production of their images in the Islamic imagination has remained the same, and we often see it has absented the historical facts, especially those that affected the period of their *khilafah* under the so-called the *Rashidun Caliphate* in order to preserve its holiness and symbolism because of its connection to the religious symbolism of the meaning of Muslims *khilafah* after the death of the Prophet. The caliphate in the sense portrayed in the Arab-Islamic literature is the reunification of the prophet's nation under the banner of Islam in belief and behavior as well as political practice. Arab-Islamic intellectuals have directed the general belief of Muslims to the destination it was desired to be: the sanctity of the actions of the Prophet's companions (*al-sahaba*) is a destination shared by both Sunnis and Shi'ites despite the difference of political vision. 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, *as-sahabi*, seems to be the only one whose image is consistent with the poles of Islamic sectarianism and has gained the same symbolism, but we see it exceeding the limits of the familiar among those who sought him and

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<sup>1</sup>The term Shi'ite in this article refers Twelver Shi'ism (*Ithna Ashriyyah*) known also as *Imamiyyah*.

<sup>2</sup>YouTube is a website that allows users to upload, share, comment, and so on free and live (instead of downloading). Founded on February 14, 2005 by three former PayPal employees, Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Good Cream, in San Bruno. It initially used Adobe Flash to display animated clips, but now it adopts HTML 5 technology. The content of the site varies from film clips, TV, and music, as well as the videos produced by amateurs, etc. It currently has more than 2,000 employees. In October 2006, Google announced an agreement to buy the site for \$1.65 billion, or 1.31 billion euros. Time magazine chose YouTube as an important figure in 2006 for its role in giving visitors the opportunity to produce the material they display on the site.

inspired his right to succeed the Prophet of Islam. The funny thing is that 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib's image, both for his holiness and his religious symbolism, inherent in Shi'ite discourses, and in the face of its multiplicity of spaces, was characterized by mythology and the field of tales. The digital revolution has opened the way for the transformation of that image from the text space<sup>3</sup> into the declared space<sup>4</sup>, and, in consequence, the Shi'a's perception has transformed *imam*'Ali's image a more dynamic figure. The image included on YouTube reveals both the stereotype of his image in the Shi'ite imagination as well as the impact of contemporary knowledge and its ability to internationalize the Shi'ite perception of the character of the prophet Muhammad's cousin. What YouTube contains is a descendant of the first level of Shi'ite belief. 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib's conception is a religious and cultural political perception, whose job is to harmonize the Shi'ite community. YouTube clips are nothing but a resumption of a collective representation of the past and of someone from whom they derive their origins and to whom they belong. The construction of the Shi'ite group emerged in the form of a political kernel, which is 'Ali, and from there its knowledge arose. This research will try to stand at the image of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, who has been overrated by Shi'ites on YouTube, and to show the aim of the Shi'ites behind this exaggeration.

### Research Question

What are the features of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib's YouTube photo? And how were these features formed?

### Research Methodology

Due to the nature of the study, the researcher endorsed the following approaches:

**Inductive Approach:** i.e. collecting notes related to the image of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib on YouTube sites under study, then classifying them and drawing judgments on the literature in accordance with the criteria of the study and this is followed during the research.

**Descriptive approach:** i.e. describing the content of YouTube videos, comparing them to each other to see the size of practical additions, the amount of duplicate information and topics, and to know which points still need further research and study, or the aspects that have not yet been discussed.

### 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib's Image and its Implications

The image<sup>5</sup> is a state of mental representation that reflects a collective identity, and the image of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, although formed from the first moments of the death of the Prophet Muhammad, remained firmly entrenched in the Shi'ite collective imagination. It transformed his character from historical to sacred, and we even see it passing the sanctity to the deification. YouTube reveals that the Shi'ite mind is over-formed and painted the image of its *imam*.

Among the topics that draw attention to the tweets of Shi'ites on YouTube when they talk about Imam 'Ali is their crowdedness to get the opportunity to express their loyalty to 'Ali and *Ahl al-Bayt* (People of the House) after him. The majority of them seek to glorify him, model his behavior and attitudes — particularly the political — and sanctify him. Unlike the rest of the Muslim tweeters, they care only about 'Ali neglecting the other companions of the Prophet. When they happen to mention the other companions they do either condemn them or criticize their positions that have confused 'Ali's political path. Despite the unity of belonging - 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, prince of believers and successor to the Prophet of Islam - there is a great disparity in words, representation, image and symbolism between the Sunni and Shi'ite conceptions in the image of the Fourth Caliph. The Sunni perception holds 'Ali as the companion who believed in Muhammad's prophecy and redeemed him in the grotto or cave of Hira' (*Ghar ʿHira'*) on top of *Jabal an-Nur* (Mountain of the Light or Hill of the Illumination),<sup>6</sup> while the Shi'ite perception sees him as the imam who was failed by all those who were in the Shed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The text was the only tool through which Shi'ites revealed their political identity and then their religious character while following the principle of *taqiyya* for fear of being persecuted by the Sunni, the Other. *Taqiyya* is the basis of their religion. As maintained by Abu Umar al-Ajami, "Abu Abdallah (Peace be upon him) said to me: Lo Aba Omar! More than nine tenths of religion is *taqiyya* and there is no religion to him that has no *taqiyya*." See: Al-Kulayni, Muḥammad Ibn Yaquḥ, Al-Kafi, Beirut: Al-Fajr Publications, 2007, 2:133.

<sup>4</sup>The globalization of media discourses seemed to have lifted the blockade of restrictions on Shi'ites and allowed them to internationalize their ideology.

<sup>5</sup>According to Claude Elliott, all institutions whether primitive, old, intermediate or contemporary, represent their history through the image. See Claude Gilliot, "Imaginaire social et Magazi: Le "succès décisif" de La Mecque, *Journal Asiatique*, LXXXLV, 1987, p.61.

<sup>6</sup>It is located in *Jabal al-Nūr*, northeast of Mecca. The first time the Revelation came to the Prophet was in this mountain, and where the Prophet used to devote time each year to worship. Then, God sent him to deliver the Islamic message from there. For details see: Al-Azraqi, Muḥammad ibn Abdallah. *Akhbar Makka wama Ja'fha*

Shi'ite exaggeration stems from the political position, while the Sunni view is governed by the religious position. By invoking ideology, the Shi'a saying has become two: a saying in politics, and a saying in religion. Their position was supported by Qur'anic signs, and they attributed speeches to the Prophet Muhammad, whether correct or dubious. It is perhaps the difference of opinion between Sunnis and Shi'ites about 'Ali's political and religious role that created two different images in form and content between Sunnis and Shi'ites. Not surprisingly, the political factor has played a great role since the beginning of the Shi'ite perception, which is perceived as striking in the textual and media discourses. The picture has not changed as a result of the shift from textual news to the digital.

Shi'ites appear to have used the image as a protest space to respond to Sunni choice and perception. Although Shi'ites followed the principle of *taqiyya*, they included various images of their imams expressing their opposition to the Shi'a's output. It is well established that the Shi'ite image of the imam is less likely to be found by the rest of the Islamic groups, combining historical and mythological politics. This is something we have observed from the early days of Shi'ite thought to this day. It's like they're saying, "Come, nations, let's show you what's in our pride."<sup>8</sup> The realization of the depth of the Shi'a faith does not take place without considering the question of the imamate, which has guided belief and thought. Their excessive focus on it has led to a lack of reason to touch many facts, some of which we will discover in 'Ali's image. The Shi'ite mind was assassinated, as 'Ali al-Kash said.<sup>9</sup> The features of that assassination appeared to be evident in his formation of a portrait of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. Ultimately, the image is a fundamental interaction between belief, intellect and culture, despite the requirement of an element of creativity that the ideological may break its strength,<sup>10</sup> because what it aims to do is to establish the image in the collective memory. The best evidence is the tendency of Shi'ite imams to what is queer influenced by mythology despite their humanity.

#### **Picture of the beginnings: The Paternity of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib for Human Beings**

In their quest to deepen the rift of holiness between 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib and the rest of his companions, Shi'ite tweeters on YouTube did not lose sight of all the ingredients of sanctification, even if they were intertwined with excess. Inflating his holiness led them to say that 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib is the father of mankind, denying Adam that divine gift. In one video, one of them says that the customary history of 'Ali's birth is what

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*min al-Athar*. ed. Rushdi al-Salih Malhas, Beirut: Dar Al-Thaqafa Publications, 1403/1983, 2:288; and Al-Fasi, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad. *Shifa' al-Gharam bi'akhbar al-Balad al-Īaram*. Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-ilmīyya Publications, 1421/2000, 1:91, 199, 279, 280, 281.

<sup>7</sup>The courtyard is a roofed meeting place (a shaded position) or a place at the side of the city, and has an extended roof, and belonged to Sa'ida Ibn Ka'b al-Khazraji, and therefore it is known as the penthouse of Banu Sa'da. There, *al-Ansar*, ('The Helpers' or 'Those who bring victory') used to meet for advice and resolve their issues. It lies on the northwest side of the Prophet's Mosque between the residences of the Banu Sa'da tribe Ibn Ka'b Ibn Khazraj. The incident at the shed or the Banu Sa'ida's Shed Incident was named after what happened in the Banu Sa'ida shed after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, where a number of fellow immigrants and supporters met. The negotiations eventually ended with Abu Bakr al-Siddiq being chosen as the first Muslim caliph. There were many accounts of what happened specifically in this incident, and the visions differed on the validity of the choice or consultation in the negotiations. The shed incident is the most important root of the Sunni and Shi'ite dispute and a point of religious and historical disagreement. The Shi'ites believe that the meeting in the shed and its aftermath was a failure to express the Prophet's commandments about his succession to 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. See Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.28, 32-33.

<sup>8</sup>Giliot, Claude. "Imaginaire social et Magazi: Le "succès décisif" de La Mecque, *Journal Asiatique*, LXXXLV, 1987, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup>Al-Sijistani, Abu Ya'qub Ishaq ibn Ahmad. *Al-Iftikhār*. Ed. Mustafa Ghālib, Beirut: Dar Al-Dar 'Andalus Publications, 1980. 23.

<sup>10</sup>Al-Kash, 'Ali. *Ightiyal al-'aql al-Shi'i: Dirasatfī al-Fikr al-Shu'ubi*. London: E-Book Publications, 2015.

we see in the world only, "He was born on the 13th of *Rajab al-'Asabb*<sup>11</sup> in the tenth year before the Prophet's Mission, but this is what appears to us in the mundane world and it is the outward of what we know."<sup>12</sup>

This statement negates the date of 'Ali's birth, on which all sources are gathered. Put differently, it completely disregards the consensus of the customary and non-monotheistic religions, nations and cultures, which have unanimously agreed on Adam's primacy in the process of creation and his paternity to humanity. This consensus is not severely disrupted despite the overlapping myths about how the creation process was done.<sup>13</sup>

'Ali Ibn Abu Talib appeared to some Shi'ites before Adam, and it was 'Ali, who "taught the angels to swim and line up for God."<sup>14</sup> It was also said that when 'Ali came to the Prophet, he smiled at 'Ali and said, "Welcome to him that Allah created 40,000 years before his father Adam (Peace be upon him)."<sup>15</sup>

What is noteworthy about this claim is that it combines two contradictions: Adam's paternity of 'Ali and the birth of 'Ali before his father Adam. This contradiction underscores the strangeness and arrogance of the Shiite perception, for how does a son precede his father in childbirth? It is not thinkable that the Shi'ite mind is unaware of such pitfalls,<sup>16</sup> which have undermined all the religious assumptions and taboos have been found in the texts with which God has endowed his prophets. The story of creation presented by the Shi'ites was not oblivious or irrelevant to other stories of the ancients of the religious symbols in which history overlapped with mythology, especially those that are linked to the prophets and their followers.<sup>17</sup> This overlap may be justified by their religious symbolism, but on the other hand we cannot in any way forgive the Shiite mind for its propensity to the weird tendency in painting 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib as the father of mankind and that his birth preceded Adam's. That image has been exaggerated, and the reason for this is that the personality of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib is a human figure with a historical, religious and political presence, which is not denied by the majority of Muslims, but what they do deny is the conversion of that character from human to the sanctified among Shiites in line with their divine imamate faith. 'Ali's holiness, which is guaranteed by his company with the Prophet Muhammad, cannot transform him from human to mythological in any way.

It seems that the saturation of Shiite awareness with the saying of 'Ali's preference over all other creations after the Prophet Muhammad, until he became "the best human being of men and women after the Prophet, and he is the prince of believers..."<sup>18</sup> It has had a great role in finding a picture of the way we witness in the Shiite imagination. Imam 'Ali's image is formed by a strongly related mixture between the ideological and religious factors formation, for politics in its cunning ways and soft tools<sup>19</sup> was able to side with mythology against history. As a result, the Shi'ite self-reflection has been political from the outset. The Shi'ite follower remains restless until 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib becomes an imam for Muslims. We see the Shi'ite follower determined

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<sup>11</sup>Explaining the reason for this name, the Prophet said that the month of Rajab was called "al-'Asabb," 'the Pouring Rajab.' This is because Allah pours His numerous blessings and favors upon his nation. See: Al-Hurr Al-'Amili, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan. *Tafsil wasa'il al-Shi'a 'ila tahsil masa'il al-Shari'a*. ed. Lajnat al-bahth fi mu 'assasat Al al-Bayt 'Alayhim al-Salam, Qum: Mu assasat 'Al al-Bayt 'Alayhim al-salam Publications, 1409H/1988 E.C, 10: 512

<sup>12</sup>Sartre maintains that the image is a certain form through which the collective awareness gives itself a subject. See, Jean Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire*, Gallimard. Paris: Gallimard, 1940, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup>. See the video, "The Myths of the Shi'ites about 'Ali's birth 40,000 years before Adam, Exaggeration." Uploaded 15/1/2020.

Al-Sawwah Firas. *Mughamarat al-'Aql al-'Ula: Dirasah fi al-'Ustura- Suriyya fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed., Damascus: Maktabat al-Fikr al-Gadid Publications, 1988, 47.

<sup>14</sup>Al-Sawah, Firas. *Mughamart al-'aql al-'ula: dirasa fi al-'ustura- suriyyawabilad al-rafidayn*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Damascus: maktabat al-fikr al-jadid Publications, 1988, 47, They say that Man was created as a slave to the gods, providing them with food and drink, Ibid, 45.

<sup>15</sup>. See the video, "The Myths of the Shi'ites about 'Ali's birth 40, 000 years before Adam, Exaggeration." Uploaded 15/1/2020.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>This is evident to many contemporary Shi'ites who deny that the political obsession over Shi'ite thought and its guidance to all their knowledge, thus confirming the turning of red Shi'ism into black Shī'ism. The reference is the growing violence in Shi'ite religious discourse. See: Sharr'ati, 'Ali. *Al-Tashayyual-'Alawawaltashayyu al-Safawi*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Translated by 'Aydar Majid, Beirut: Dar al-'Amir ilthaqafawal'ulum Publication, 2007.

<sup>18</sup>Hamza, Muhammad. "fada'il al-sahababayna al-mutakhayyalwal-waqi' al-tarikhi", *Nadwat al-muslim fi al-tarikh* Publications, Casablanca, 1999.

<sup>19</sup>Ju'ayyit, Hisham. *Al-fitna*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Beirut: Dar al-tali'a Publications, 1995, 310.



to regain the right that was taken from 'Ali in the shed. The political aspect is the orbit in which Shiite thought moves. The Shi'ites' belief that *imamate*'Ali is a divine choice has made them continuously seek to give his *imamate* religious legitimacy, by finding textual evidence either by interpreting the verses of the Qur'an and uploading them new meanings commensurate with their faith or by attributing them to fabricated *hadiths* of the Prophet. The question is, what is the usefulness of the Shi'ites behind this perception? The formation of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib's image as the father of mankind instead of Adam may be the result of taken-for-granted beliefs<sup>20</sup> accumulated in the Shiite imagination. In other words, they are the result of accumulations of political, cultural and mythical overlap. Looking at Shi'a literature, we are led to the growing personality of the *imam* figure,<sup>21</sup> especially *imams* 'Ali and his son Hussein, which is turned into a gel character.

It is a given that has taken root in the Shiite collective consciousness that no claim can be made by God on his creation without an *imam*.<sup>22</sup> This belief is in fact a release of the *imam's* authority before the authority of God, which contributed to the modeling of 'Ali's personality and his reverence. The statements of the Shia ancestors<sup>23</sup> have become an argument endorsed by the contemporary Shi'ism. Perhaps it is worth mentioning the Shiite scholar 'Ali Shariati, who asks why the *imams* are inflated into godly figures, "Imams, what were they doing?"<sup>24</sup> The deification of *imams* did not appear in the Qur'anic text and was not supported by the Prophet's *hadiths*.

It can also be said that the view of 'Ali as the father of mankind was fed by what the Shi'ite scholars proposed in the past that "*imams* (peace upon them), are the successors of Allah Almighty in His land and the doors from which can one come."<sup>25</sup> This belief must have inspired their followers to interpret that view and restricting it to the meaning of God's succession in creation. It may also be the denial of the angels that Adam succeeds God in the earth, as reflected in *Surat Al-Baqarah*,<sup>2</sup> verse 30: where the Almighty says.

And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: Wilt Thou place therein one who will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not.

They rely on this verse and see it as a proof that deepened their vision that *imam*'Ali is God's successor. This is what appears in their saying: "It is 'Ali who taught the angels to praise God and line up to worship the One Who is the Omni-potent."<sup>26</sup>

Since its beginnings, Shi'a consciousness, in its response to deniers of 'Ali's entitlement to succeed the Prophet of Islam, has contributed to deepening the gap of holiness between him and the companions of the Prophet Muhammad to the point of considering him the father of mankind. It seems that Adam's luck in enjoying the immunity of divine creation was not supported by Shiite tweeters on YouTube, nor did the idea appeal to them. They negate the origin of Adam's historical paternity to human creation,<sup>27</sup> as well as the religious belief as agreed by all religious texts. The depiction of the image of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib as the father of mankind is rejected by the human mind just as it is denied by religious literature. The path of human creation — both the historical and mythical — strongly refutes what the Shiite mind imagines about the possibility of 'Ali's paternity to humanity, and, therefore, this statement has been extremely exaggerated the same other images. As a result, the belief has become so complex that it carries the claim and its antithesis. We can recognize that what the

<sup>20</sup>Al-Baridi, 'Abdallah. *Al-Salafiyya al-shi'iyawwal-suniyya: Bahth fi ta'thirihā'ala al-'Indimaj al-'Ijtima'i*, Beirut: al-Shabaka al-'Arabiyyalil'abhathwal-nashr Publications, 2013, 8.

<sup>21</sup>There was a consensus among the Shi'ites that the *imams'* words and *hadiths* were true, even if they opposed the Prophet's *hadiths*, just as "the Jews believed that the Torah was a plank that had been given as a gift by God." Al-Sa'fi, Wahid. *fiqira'at al-Khitabal-Dini*. Tunis: Najmat al-Dir'As'Atwa-Inashrwal-tawzi Publications, 2008.

<sup>22</sup>. When talking about the process of creation, the fanatical Shi'a thought singled out *imams* as great. It took the status of *imam* as proof of their uniqueness and superiority to other beings and their occupation of a privileged position entitling them to rise above the ranks of humanity. It is not strange, therefore, that one of the elements of the radical vision is that the *imams* were created in an abstract way that brings them closer to the holy and separates them from creation. See: Jarad, Muhammad Ibn Sadiq. *Al-Fikr al-Shi'i al-ghali'ilanihayat al-qarn al-thanililhijra*. Ph.D. Dissertation submitted at The Faculty of Humanities in Sousse University Tunisia, 2009, 190. (unpublished).

<sup>23</sup>Al-Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub . al-Kafi. Beirut: Manshurat al-Fajr Publications, 2007, 1: 114.

<sup>24</sup>. They say: "It is a saying of righteousness not a saying of forgery; an eyewitness testimony about the unknown world of the unseen. see: Al-Sa'fi, *fiqira'at al-Khitab al-Dini*, 19.

<sup>25</sup>Shari'ati, Al-Tashayyu'al-Alawiwaltashayyu al-Safawi, 48.

<sup>26</sup>Al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, 1: 114.

<sup>27</sup>Shi'a myths, 'Ali was born forty thousand years before Adam: Exaggeration. Posted on September 15, 2011.

creators of 'Alī's image desire is the "mobilization of the masses"<sup>28</sup> of Shi'ite believers by controlling them "by the power of their inference and the magic of their words."<sup>29</sup> We find that these images become more enticing as they elaborate on the strange and supernatural merits of 'Alī. We do not think that the presence of the strange and queer in the stories of *imams* is a purely Shiite practice. Rather, the Arab-Islamic heritage has been full of the Arabs' interest in depicting what is queer in their writings, whether literature, religion or interpretation.<sup>30</sup> It is as if the super-miracle has a special elegance among the Arabs.

### 'Alī Ibn Ḥabūṭālib's Worldly Image: Military Command

The news books tell us about the historic presence of 'Alī Ibn Ḥabūṭālib, the companion and the fourth *rashidi* caliph. While this news focused on his religious symbolism, others highlighted his political side. The books of history, biography and interpretations agreed beyond a shadow of a doubt, on 'Alī's possession of a number of moral qualities that are either equivalent to what other companions have acquired or outperformed, according to the Sunni perception. However, because of political exclusion,<sup>31</sup> Shi'ites seemed more stereotyped and modelled by modifying what the Sunni view had seized to prove a truth that might be hidden from them. The image was transformed by the "amplification of the Shi'ite ego"<sup>32</sup> into a "transcendent mythology from which a wealthy religious political imagination arose."<sup>33</sup> As a result, the Sunni- Shi'ite conflict appeared to the surface: a religious political imagination from the Sunni side and another religious political on the Shiite side. This conflict was enough to shape the image of *Imam*'Alī, contrary to what we found in the Sunni perception. From the outset, YouTube tweeters tell us about 'Alī's courage and present him as the perfected person: "This man was the sign of perfection".<sup>34</sup>

The affirmation of 'Alī's perfection is only a reinforcement of the idea of the *imam*'Alī's succession to God on earth. In Hisham Ju'ayit's opinion, 'Alī is the excellent hero;<sup>35</sup> "If he takes a man's hand, he takes man's self."<sup>36</sup> The Shi'ite imagination tried to prove that status in defense of its political vision, especially since it has referred 'Alī's strength and courage to the power of his faith as "he derives his faith from an infinite power."<sup>37</sup> The power of faith and courage must be present in the figure of the political leader so that he can manage the affairs of his parish. Faith, therefore, is a divine choice and courage is a political skill. "'Alī seemed to be one of the strong believers in such a manner that loving him became a sign of faith."<sup>38</sup> We glimpse the intense influence of the political imagination when it comes to talking about 'Alī's military courage. The Shi'ite's goal is to adapt all of 'Alī's merits, *al-bayt* physically, to his political choice. This approach focused on the modelling of his virtues because better management of the parish requires the intuition of differential existence. This is exactly what the Shi'ites focused on in their drawing of 'Alī' character, who is introduced as a just *imam* and a distinguished military commander. We see that this image "was a picture of the complete caliph who is the shadow of (God) on earth."<sup>39</sup> According to the Shi'ite perception, "imams are the pillars of the earth."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>28</sup>For more details See: Al-Makhlabi, 'Alī. 'Adam wal-tarikh. Ph.D. Dissertation submitted at The Faculty of Humanities in Manouba University Tunisia, 2014, (unpublished).

<sup>29</sup>Shari'ati, al-'Alawi waltashayyu al-Safawi, 32.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 43.

<sup>31</sup>Al-Sa 'fi, fiqira'at al-Khitab al-dini, 91.

<sup>32</sup>Hamza, Muhammad. "fada'il al-sahababayna al-mutakhayyal wal-waqi' al-tarikh", *Nadwat al-muslimfi al-tarikh*, Casablanca, 1999, 91.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>See the video titled. "The courage and strength of 'Alī Ibn Ḥabūṭālib with a Shi'ite view", posted on April 21, 2013.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Al-Yusufi, Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab. *Surat 'Uthman wa'ali fisahiha al-bukhari wamuslim: qira' fi al-judhur wal-khasa' wal-dalalat*. Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a Publications, 2009, 90.

<sup>38</sup>Al-Hamami. Nadir. *Surat al-sahabifikutub al-hadith*. Casablanca: al-markaz al-thaqafial'arabi Publications, 2014, 51.

<sup>39</sup>Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, 1: 116.

<sup>40</sup>Khalil 'Abd al-Karim's book about the conditions of the Sahaba remains one of the most important books that have been a significant milestone in breaking the aura of holiness that surrounded the companions among Muslims, Al-Hamami. Nadir. *Surat al-sahabifikutub al-hadith*, p.19.

The Shi'a consciousness discussed all the justifications for the differentiation between 'Ali and the rest of the companions, in dedication to the theory of the *Imamate* as a divine choice. Although 'Ali's historical military courage has been proven, like other fellow *Sahaba*, the proof of the power of faith being associated with military power is not without political preponderance over religion. Although the companions formed the Islamic religious institution at the time of the Rashid caliphate, appreciating their rank in the considerations of the Shi'a is not without political considerations. This factor has had a significant impact in the Shiite transformation of the image of some of the companions, like 'Umar and 'Uthman, from the sanctified to the profane<sup>41</sup> - and the elevation of 'Ali from the profane to the holy by directing all his attributes to the theological destination. More often than not, these attributes were close to the image of the Prophet Muhammad in the Islamic imagination and at other times taking from Muhammad the status of prophecy forwarding it to 'Ali.

### The Association of Imamate and Prophecy in the Form of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib

The aim of the Shi'ite perception was to break the stereotype of some of the prophet's companions and highlight 'Ali's political charisma, and behind it 'Ali's religious charisma extended to the denial of the path of prophecy itself.<sup>42</sup> For them, 'Ali was the first to whom God inspired the miracle of the Qur'an. The Shi'a's claim 'Ali was delivered by his mother while reading Surat of the Believers<sup>43</sup>, and the claim that the revelation came upon him before the Prophet.<sup>44</sup> In so doing, the Shi'ites distanced prophecy from the Prophet and attached it to 'Ali.

The Shi'ites' claim to the prophecy of 'Ali is summarized in two aspects: the first which completely denies prophecy, and the second which legitimizes its continuation.<sup>45</sup> Between the two sayings there is an insistence on the absence of Muhammad's prophecy and not recognizing it, despite the attempt to ease the religious tension among them and with their Sunni counterparts which emerges from their attachment of the prophecy to 'Ali by giving him the qualities of perfection and infallibility (*Al-Isma*) and knowledge in an endeavor to "remove the differences between the Prophet and the *Imam* in order to exhort their function to divine appearances."<sup>46</sup>

It might be thought that the invention<sup>47</sup> of the idea of the prophecy of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib is modern though in fact it is the product of old perceptions or views either composed or interpreted by late Shi'ites. The consideration of the book "*Al-Kafi*" for the Al-Kulayni, for example, refers to us on the same point: "It is stated that Abu Ja'far said: "'Ali (Peace be upon him) by God, was God's entrusted person on His creatures, His absence and His religion, which He accepted for Himself."<sup>48</sup> This statement has aided the bases of the idea of 'Ali's prophecy.

Our characterization of that perception of innovation (*'ibtida'*) has led us to its strangeness. Everything in it forces us to consider it a heresy (*bid'a*), as the speakers of 'Ali's prophecy disagreed with all people who believe in the stories of the prophets<sup>49</sup> and the path of prophecy decided by Allah almighty. Despite the historical and mythical overlap in the story of Muhammad's prophecy in the Islamic imagination which affirm

<sup>41</sup>In most Shi'ite literature, it has been evident that the Shi'ites differ in their perception of the issue of prophecy, whether what was related to Muhammad's faith before the mission or what was related to its course. The Shi'as "departed from the vision that became the tradition of the Muslim factions." For details see: Amir Jihan. "'Aqidat Muhammad qabl al-mab'athlada al-shi'a al-'ithany'ashriyyabih' al-'anwar lil majlisi' un mudhajan", *Hawliyyat al-jami'a al-tunisiyya*, vol. 54, 2009, 229-253.

<sup>42</sup>See the video titled: "Shi'ite myths: Revelation was revealed to 'Ali before the Messenger", posted on July 18, 2013.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

See the video titled: "Shi'ite myths: Revelation was revealed to 'Alibefore the Messenger", posted on July 18, 2013.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>For more detail see: Jarad Muhammad Ibn Sadiq. *Al-Fikr al-Shi'i al-Ghali'lanihayat al-Qarn al-thanililhijra*. Ph.D. Dissertation submitted at The Faculty of Humanites in Sousse University Tunisia, 2009, (unpublished), 96-101.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid. 102

<sup>48</sup>Heresy, in our view, is one of the important codes for understanding and representing the features of Arab-Islamic thought in the light of its political and cultural mixture, so innovation has become one of the most important joints of difference between Islamic groups and the effect of the exchange of violence between them, as the mutual violence between them is not the result of the charge of innovation.

<sup>49</sup>Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, 1:175

his holiness and religious symbolism, his miracles and dignities,<sup>50</sup> it cannot allow the Shi'a conception - particularly the extremist - to deny that prophecy, or to consider 'Alī the Prophet and doubt Gabriel's performance of his mission to the fullest.

Despite trying to stave off the rift between the Shi'ite perception of 'Alī as the seal of prophecy with their Sunni counterpart, we believe that the denial of Muhammad's prophecy appears in the context of his lack of recommendation that 'Alī succeeds him or the absence of a report to whom he the task of ruling should go. The political factor has taken away from the religious the power to direct knowledge, including the religion itself. However, the Shi'ite perception managed to adapt the belief of the general Shi'ites with their political choice, even if it endangers the most sacred institutions in the Islamic imagination. Not surprisingly, Shi'ite tweeters on YouTube view 'Alī as the Prophet with supporting evidence from the Qur'an. It is narrated that Dawūd Al-Raqqī<sup>51</sup> said: I asked Abu'Abdallāh about the saying of Allah, blessed and exalted, "But revelations and warnings avail not folk who will not believe" (Surat Yunus 10: Verse: 101). He said: The verses are the imams and the warnings are the prophets peace be upon them."<sup>52</sup>

The recognition of Muhammad's prophecy is largely contrary to the foundations of Shi'ite Islam despite its political origins. In his analysis of the components of Shi'ite Islam, Jan Richard believes that Shi'ites have proven to agree with Sunnis in the unity of the Holy Text of the Qur'an, as well as that the Prophet Muhammad is the prophet of all Muslims.<sup>53</sup> Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi alluded to the cause of this contradiction, the source of which is their considering the narrated talk about imams as a more sacred textual argument than the Qur'an. He says, "Shi'ites agreed with Sunnis that the Qur'an was the holy book of Islam, but disagreed with them on the level of hadith narrations. Unlike Sunnis, they only take from hadith what has been narrated by fourteen people: the twelve imams, the Prophet and his daughter Fatima."<sup>54</sup> The question to be asked is: Can their sincerity to their past symbols reach the extent where the Shi'ite are willing to undermine all religious

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<sup>50</sup>Sam'ā' Hamza thinks, "The phenomenon of prophecy is not the preserve of monotheism religions... However, each religion has a specific image of its prophets that differs from that of other religions, even if the names are similar and the stories". For detail see: Hamza, Samah. "fi al-nabi al-insan wal-nabi al-munamdhaj", *Hawliyyat al-jami'a al-tunisiyya*, vol. 55, 2010, 163-183.

<sup>51</sup>Dawūd Ibn Abu Khalid Kathir al-Raqqī Abu Sulayman, a Kufi client of the Banu Asad, a compiler and transmitter of *hadith*, lived in the times of the imams al-Sadiq, al-Kazim and al-Rida, and transmitted their sayings. He died shortly after the year 200/815, just after the imam al-Rida was killed. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi considered him reliable and described him as "a client of the Banu'Asad", and so did al-Kishshi. Others, such as al-Najashi and Ibn al-Ghada'iri, considered him unreliable. Abu'Amr al-Kishshi quoted a number of *hadiths* that praised him, including a statement by the imam al-Sadiq, who said that "whoever would gladly look at a companion of 'the standing one' (*al-qa'im*, a title of Imam al-Mahdi) should look at this one". Al-Shaykh al-Mufid in his book *al-'Irshad* counts him among those who quoted texts from the imamate of 'Alī Rida in his father's name. He notes that he was among his close associates, a pious legist from his faction (*shi'a*). Al-Shaykh al-Saduq wrote in his book on the imam al-Sadiq, *Mashyakhat al-faqih*, as follows: "They made Dawūd al-Raqqī occupy the same position with me as al-Miqdad had with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah pray for him and his family". for more detail see: Al-Tusi Muhammad Ibn al-hasan. *Rijal al-Kishshi* (*'khtiyarma'rifat al-rijal*). Mashahd: mu'assasat al-nashr fijami'at mashhad Publications, 1348/1929, 402, *Hadith* no. 750, 751; 407 *Hadith* no. 765, 766; Al-Najashi, 'Ahmad Ibn 'Alī. *Rijal al-najashi*. Ed. Mu'ammad Jawad al-na'ini, Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-'islami Publications, 1407/1986, 112; Al-Tusi Muhammad Ibn al-hasan. *Rijal al-Kishshi* (*'khtiyarma'rifat al-rijal*). Mashahd: mu'assasat al-nashr fijami'at mashhad Publications, 1348/1929, 190, 349; Al-Tusi Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan. *Al-fihrist*. ed. Mahmud Ramyar, Mashhad: University of Mashhad Publications 1351/1932, 68; Ibn Shahrashub. muhammad Ibn 'Alī. *Ma'alim al-'ulama'*. ed. Muhammad Jalali. Beirut: Dar al-mahajja al-bayda liltiba'awal-nashr wamaktabat dar'ulum al-qur'an Publications, 2012, 48; Al-Mufid, muhammad Ibn muhammad al-nu'mān. *Al-'Irshad fima'rifathujajallah'ala al-'ibad*. Qom: The World Conference of the Millennium of al-Shaykh al-Mufid Publications, 1413/1992, 304; Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, Muhammad Ibn 'Alī. *Mashyakhat al-Faqih*. Explanation, translation and commentary by Muhammad Ja'far Shams al-Din, Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf li lmatbu'at Publications, 2005, 94; Al-Barqi, Ahmad Ibn 'Abdallāh. *Kitab al-rijal*. Tehran: Mu'assasat al-nashr fi Jami'at Tehran Publications, 1983/1963, 32; Ibn Dawūd, taqiyy al-din al-hasan Ibn 'Alī. *Kitab al-rijal*. Tehran: Mu'assasat al-Nashr fi Jami'at Tehran Publications, 1383/1963, 91, 245.

<sup>52</sup>For more detail see: Al-Jazzar, Munsif. *Al-Mikhyal al-'arabi fi al-'ahadith al-mansubalilrasul*. Tunisia: Dar al-hamiin association with mu'assasat al-'intishar al-'arabi Publications, 2007.

<sup>53</sup>Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, 1:123.

<sup>54</sup>Yann Richard, *L'islam chiite: Croyances et idéologies* (Paris: Fayard, 1991), p.17.



Muslim major and solid pillars<sup>55</sup> and conceptions? Or is the image of the imam their way of knowing the image of the Prophet. In other words, they can only know the apostolic behavior, symbolism and holiness through the imam.<sup>56</sup> We strongly note the conflict between the political and religious considerations of the Shi'ite perception: the political factor is the crucial element that defines all the views of the Shi'ites. That perception cannot form Imam 'Ali's political charisma no matter how much it tries to retain it under the umbrella of sacred religious legitimacy,<sup>57</sup> especially if that legitimacy is clashed with the most revered religious institutions among the Muslim community, i. e. the institution of Muhammad's prophecy.

As already indicated, 'Alī Ibn 'Abū Ṭālib's character in The Shi'ite consciousness rose over the profane level and was a flawless figure. Interestingly, that awareness was not confused even after what might be called their political childhood or the moment the Shi'ite discovered their leader 'Alī Ibn 'Abū Ṭālib. It is still attracting them while they are hastily awaiting the emergence of their awaited Mahdi imam. It became clear that the Shi'ite individual's difficulty in accepting the existence of an imamate other than Imam 'Ali and the imams who succeed him. From the Shi'ite individual, the imam symbolizes the "policy of sanctification, or the sacred in politics."<sup>58</sup> He is even "the leader pure of all abomination."<sup>59</sup> Although the time of the imamate has passed, contemporary Shi'ite consciousness has remained tight to the same perceptions of the ancestors, and fascinated by them.

I do not think that the Shi'a perception of the personality of 'Alī Ibn 'Abū Ṭālib, despite the confusion of religion on the modern side of prophecy, has entered into the door of sanctifying comparison, whose followers usually move within a circle of faith.<sup>60</sup> This is absent from Imam 'Ali's image on YouTube, which we find to be in stark contrast to the foundations of faith based on the oneness of God and the prophecy of Muhammad, the conclusion of prophecy. It is remarkable that this image is contrary to what the Shi'a faith was founded on, and the sources from which they derive the religious and political legitimacy of the imamate theory. It is recorded in *Al-Kaḥf* by Al-Kulayni,<sup>61</sup> that the Shi'ites testify "that there is no God but Allah, Muhammad, the Messenger of God, and that 'Ali is the guardian of the Messenger of God."<sup>62</sup> This religious and textual evidence denies what the fundamentalists insist on in 'Ali's character.

This image also contradicts the foundations of the Imamate conception, which believes that "his holy family is made up of the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima, and the twelve imams."<sup>63</sup>

It seems that the childish and diligent search for the father-leader<sup>64</sup> has assassinated the Shi'ite mind, just as it assassinated the Arab mind in general. So, it created a picture of the "Lord" that is different from beliefs of all the religious intellectuals: a picture entitled "Ali as the After World Shi'ite God. Just as the Shi'ites believed in the prophecy of 'Ali, they believed in his godhood.

### **"Alī Ibn 'Abū Ṭālib's Image in the Other World: 'Ali's Godhood**

It is noted that there is an intensification of the imam's image among Shi'ites, and this intensification may be welcome by some who are looking for "the only charismatic one leader,"<sup>65</sup> while some who relate to the Holy One may deny it because it affects his sanctity. Its denial is only the result of the competition between the political and the religious imaginations. The reference is to that the imagination whereby the imam has become

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<sup>55</sup> Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "L'islamchiite," *Revue Le monde des religions hors-série* No 2, Janvier 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Richard, *L'islamchiite: Croyances et ideologies*, p.24.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Juwayli, Muhammad. *Al-Za'im al-siyasī al-mikhyal al-'Islamī bayna al-muqaddas wal-mudannas*, Tunisia: Siras Publications, 1992, 17.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Al-Jamal Bassam. "Al-muqaraba al-'Antrubulujiyyal-sira al-nabawīyya". *Majallat Muqaddimat al-Maghribiyya*, vol. 25, 2005, p. 27.

<sup>62</sup> Richard believes that *Al-Kaḥf* by Al-Kulayni and the book *Who is not Attended by the Jurist* by Sheikh Saduq are among the four books on which the Shi'a belief was founded. See: Richard, *L'islamchiite: Croyances et ideologies*, p.24. The hadith books, like all textbooks in religion, had teachings, judgments and rituals under which religion was formed. :see: Al-Sa'fī, Wahid. *Fiqira'at al-Khitab al-Dini*, 42.

<sup>63</sup> Al-Kulayni, *Al-Kaḥf*, 1: 52.

<sup>64</sup> Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin dans le shī'isme originel aux sources de l'ésotérisme en islam* (Paris, Verdier, collection) "Islam spirituel Études", 1992, p.73.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Juwayli, *Al-Za'im al-Siyasī al-Mikhyal al-'Islamī bayna al-Muqaddas wal-mudannas*, 17.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 17

the embodiment of the image of God, and soon he became God.<sup>66</sup> This is not surprising as long as the Shi'ite mind does not seek to dismantle the symmetry between the imam's and the holy images. We may justify the Shi'a reverence of the imam on the grounds that he is god's evidence on the ground.

The Shi'ite perception is still determined to elevate the symbolic imam to the ranks of divinity after he was portrayed as a prophet who is religiously active and politically present as a leader. Eventually, he shifts from the political to the religious arena, and this shift seems to be not without purpose, as the plotters of 'Ali's image seek to direct the content of the image to be more enticing. Holding on to the image of a just political leader<sup>67</sup> can no longer guide belief in the imamate.

Therefore, they took a road other than that, but it was fraught with religious dangers, and the viewer could not lose sight of the authority of the holy one among all Muslims and among Shi'ites themselves. The sanctity of the Prophet's companions may also be possible, in spite of the dangers involved even here, but there will inevitably be no power to touch God. No matter how capable the political imagination may be to model the image of a political leader, it remains "for the imaginative person his own reasonableness and its inner logic."<sup>68</sup> It is a reasonableness capable of curbing mythological imagination despite its ability to transform most speeches from historical to non-historical, and to raise human beings to holiness. The reasonableness of imagining person was present in some images, especially the historical because they were available in reality, but they failed to limit the political imagination of "Ali's YouTube photo. He is the God; he is the God of the other world for the Shi'ite. It was not enough for some Shi'ite YouTube tweeters to show a picture that disturbs the symbolic, historical and religious purity in the conscience of the Muslim community, but also portrayed him as the father of mankind, the seal prophet, and a god. The godhood image of 'Ali is manifested in the belief that he is the god speaking the language of heaven. From the outset, they sought to think that God would step down from his throne and the sultanate,<sup>69</sup> i. e. the heavenly throne that He formulated with His wisdom, and which He created for seven consecutive heavens. 'Ali's characterization as the voice of heaven is not more than an attempt to unleash his greatness and power that transcends the boundaries of the earthly world. It is as if controlling the earthly world by 'Ali no longer appeals to his followers. It is as if, they say, "If you have prevented him from leading the world of the Earth, it is time for him to lead the world of heaven."

The claim that 'Ali is the god of heavens is not more than a preparation for his other world caliphate. So, it was not enough for them to say that 'Ali is the god of heavens, but we found them believe in his ruling of the other world. 'Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir, for example, says, "The imam 'Ali will return and rule forty-four thousand years."<sup>70</sup> This statement, like other statements, is based on a lot of contradiction, as the saying that 'Ali returns to the world is contrary to the dialectic of life and death, although in part is consistent with the theory of "Reappearance" (*Al-raj'ah*) in Shi'ite thought. The belief that 'Ali's 44,000-year-old succession is exaggerated in terms of its launch of the principle of succession, and it seems that it was the result of the political control over the Shi'ite consciousness that drew that consideration. That consciousness was not stripped of the consciousness of the idea of the imamate, so it is open to the world of the hereafter.

To say that 'Ali will return to the world includes intimidation of violators who have denied his worldly succession. This depiction of him is linked to the doctrine of "Reappearance" (*Al-raj'ah*,) when Allah conquer those who assaulted 'Ali before his death, and God will heal their anger from him for the curses He settles.<sup>71</sup> This statement is in harmony with the political thought of the Shi'ites, indicating that the divine Imamate of 'Ali is inevitable, and that divine choice will inevitably be achieved. On the one hand, the saying that God is the one who gives the opportunity to take revenge on the enemy by returning is an offense of divine justice in relation to the question of punishment. It is a fact that God's punishment for the sinners will take place only in the other world.

It is noteworthy that the saying of The Shi'ites about 'Ali's return and succession and revenge from the enemies of his Shi'ites is not considered eerie in the Shi'ite literature, but rather a depiction that establishes the character of 'Ali in the other world, a conception which presents him in the image of a god. It is an image that hides a Shi'ite goal of compensating for worldly injustice and oppression. For them 'Ali is the Lord of the

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, 16.

<sup>67</sup>Leigh N. B. Chopman, "Mythic Aspects of the Process of Adam's Creation in Judaism and Islam," In memorial Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studia Islamica*, vol. 93, 2001, p. 21.

<sup>68</sup>The Shi'ites added to divine justice the justice of the imams, for more detail see: Richard, *L'islam Chi'ite: Croyances et ideologies*, p.18.

<sup>69</sup>Al-Jamal Bassam. "Al-muqaraba al-'Antrubulujijiyalilsira al-nabawiyya". *Majallat Muqaddimat al-Maghribiyya*, vol. 25, 2005, p.28.

<sup>70</sup>Al-Sa'fi, *fiqira'at al-Khitab al-Dini*, 55.

<sup>71</sup>See the video titled: "The migrant: 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib he returns to the world and rules for 44,000 years", posted on August 18, 2013.

Shi'ites on the Day of Resurrection: " 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, is our Lord on the Day of Resurrection... And he will make you enter the hellfire."<sup>72</sup> This statement insists on deification of the image of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, despite his humanity, which the news books of all Muslims and some Shi'ites as well agree upon.

These images are incompatible with what we found in all religious texts that believed in God as lord of the world and the hereafter, and contradict what the majority of Shi'ites agreed on, especially their *hadith* leaders. Imam V, Muhammad al-Baqir (Died, 733 AD), for example, says,

My Lord, be blessed and exalted, is still and continues to live without how... and He was in nothing and He did not invent a place for His place.... And He does not resemble anything mentioned and or empty of His sovereignty before it was created and it will not be empty is no retreat after His departure.... He was first without how and He would be last without how and He is far removed from suspicions.<sup>73</sup>

If this is the statement of their major *hadith* leaders who believed in their faith and committed themselves to their rulings, it is strange how 'Ali became a god according to the perception of the tweeters on YouTube sites, a god "who takes over the divine functions without claiming divinity."<sup>74</sup>

"'Ali then shared the image of godhood with God, the creator of the universe, thus making the Lord rolls over to become a follower of the imams,<sup>75</sup> subject to their command. The fate of The Shi'ites of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib determined only by 'Ali's order who will save them despite their disobedience. Commenting on this perception, 'Abd Allah Jannuf says: "God becomes on the Day of Resurrection one rank in the ranks of the imams to Whom people will turn for matters of order and prohibition."<sup>76</sup>

The Lord of the Shi'ite extremists on YouTube is not a god that all human beings believe in. He is the lord of an image woven by the overly Shi'ite political imagination. Despite the authenticity of the Lord's wisdom and Lordship of the worlds of the earth and sky, and this mundane world and the hereafter, we have found a still image of the lordship of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib on YouTube. The hyperbole of the Image of 'Ali's lordship reveals the extent to which the political mind is involved in adapting 'Ali's image to its purpose and perception.

According to the vision of the extremists 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib has acquired all the qualities of holiness, as he is the father of mankind, the seal prophet and the god of the other world. Wherever sanctification is found, 'Ali is its master.

We may find in the image of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib something related in some of its dimensions to religion, but we do not accuse the religious mind of forming it as it is. The point is that it is neither in his image as a companion nor in his image as the successor to the Prophet Muhammad. The removal of the accusation from the religious mind is justified by the disability of this mind to harm its religious symbols if it seeks to model them and give them the highest degree of holiness. Its submission to the available image is a violation of the sanctity of the holy which it cares for. It seems that the association of imagination with political unawareness and illusion<sup>77</sup> has placed the image of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib on opposite sides to historical knowledge. It did not help 'Ali, the religious and political leader, but presented him in an alienating manner, especially to those who believed in him as a religious leader. This image could marginalize the religious aspect of the prophet's cousin "for overcoming our creative energies."<sup>78</sup> Perhaps its influence by the "rhetorical symbolic amplification"<sup>79</sup> of Shi'a literature since its first appearance, as well as its influence by the exaggerated side of the political imagination are some of the most important reasons why 'Ali's image is inclined to mythology.

## II. Conclusion

Although 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib's character is not a realm confined to the Shi'ites, for 'Ali has a historical and symbolic presence in the Islamic imagination in general. Yet, we have found the Shi'a perception, particularly on YouTube, to be largely exaggerated in modeling the image of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. From one text to another, 'Ali's image changed, his features changed, and he became a prophet, and, hence, the god. And we

<sup>72</sup>Al-Mufid, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-nu'man. *'Awa'l al-maqalat*. Ed. Ibrahim al-'Ansari, Qom: The World Conference of the Millennium of al-Shaykh al-Mufid Publications, 1413/1992, 78.

<sup>73</sup>See the video titled: " Rafidi (rejector) Shi'ite wearing a turban: 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, our Lord, on the Day of Resurrection, and He will enter you into Hellfire", posted on August 29, 2013.

<sup>74</sup>Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, 1: 52.

<sup>75</sup>Jannuf, 'Abdallah. 'Aqa'id al-shi'a al-'ithnay'ashriyya wa Pathar al-jadal finash'atihawatatawurihahattanihayat al-qarn al-sabi' min al-hijra. Beirut: Dar al-tali'a Publications, 2013, 385.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, 388.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 389.

<sup>78</sup>Al-Juwayli, *Al-Za'im al-Siyasi fial-Mikhyal al-Islam* bayna al-Muqaddas wal-mudannas, 29.

<sup>79</sup>Gilbert Durand, *L'imaginaire symbolique*, PUF, Paris, 1968, p.47.

are aware that the speakers of the character of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib did not present his image so that it would respond to his religious symbolism and to the resumption of what the memory of the Islamic society used to have. They didn't also present his image to answer his political symbolism among Shi'ites. What was presented on YouTube as a picture of 'Ali, we see it as a picture of an alternative figure: the character that Shi'ites initially imagined politically, then they inflated it in the other world in response to all religious texts. It was - on YouTube sites - an inflated image based on reference and excitement despite awareness of the existence of "a receiver, who knows the truth very well."<sup>80</sup> There is a Shi'ite who believed a lot of what was contained in the blog news of the infallible, and a Sunni who blessed "Ali the companion and the fourth *rashid* caliph. It is no wonder that this image transcends the historical text, as the political imagination has taken control of the authority of the religious imagination, and, therefore, imagination and its reasonableness have not neglected the legitimacy of existence. Neither the historical nor the political has stood up to the vehemence of the overrated political trend. The preference of the political side in 'Ali's YouTube image has caused much embarrassment to the Shi'ite believer. Is it permissible for him to doubt the origin of creation? Can he believe in other than God and make him a partner? How can he believe in a non-Prophet Muhammad as a prophet? The settlement of that embarrassment can be seen in 'Ali Shari'ati's statement, "If 'Ali had been an expert ... in the affairs of society and skilled at the matters of Muslims in the emergence of Islam, he would not have remained alone and lonesome."<sup>81</sup>

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