

## Chapter 2: The Conversion Of Yemen To Islam

### Introduction

As observed above, Yemen has for millennia, been the site of prophetic missions and universal lessons. In keeping with the Arab tradition of poetry and storytelling, these remained as a pride and cultural bedrock of the tribes – both among themselves and when they travelled or were visited.

The generations immediately prior to the advent of Islam have a great history with regards to Yemen, such that much of the Hijazan-based Islam was built off of the movement of Yemeni tribes to Mecca and Medina.

It is narrated that the people of Yemen were the first to respond to the call of attending *Hajj* by Prophet Ibrahim (‘a) after he and Prophet Isma‘il (‘a) built the holy Ka‘bah. The narration says that Prophet Ibrahim (‘a) himself said,

“O people, I am Ibrahim, Khalilullah (the intimate friend of Allah). Verily Allah has commanded you to make the pilgrimage of *Hajj* to this House, so make your *Hajj* to it and those who perform the *Hajj* respond to him until the Day of Judgement; and those who were the first to respond were the people of Yemen.”<sup>1</sup>

This means that the awareness and popularity of Mecca as the hosts of the House of God, the holy Ka‘bah, was established through the Yemeni pilgrims. Their subsequent travels across Arabia and in welcoming visitors from the peninsula in turn developed Mecca into the thriving city that it became by virtue of their narrating the story of Prophet Ibrahim (‘a) and encouraging pilgrimage to Mecca.

Medina too, especially the Jewish heritage that it boasted, was a result of the migration of the Yemeni tribes. Banu Aws and Khazraj were originally of Yemeni descent, specifically Qahtani<sup>2</sup>, the descendants of Prophet Isma‘il (‘a)<sup>3</sup>. It was these two great tribes that invited Prophet Muhammad (S) to live in Medina and be the foundation of the Muslim–Medinan society. It appears that these characteristics were particular to the Yemeni tribes and of benefit to the prophetic mission, no matter which land their

ancestral tribes inhabited; the Prophet (S) saw goodness in his mission to them.

The people of Yemen were of such religious and welcoming nature that the Prophet (S) himself stated that had he not migrated to Medina, he would have likely moved to Yemen instead to be the centrality of his movement of spreading the Oneness of Allah (SwT). It is narrated that he said, “Had it not been for the migration (to Medina), I would have been one from the people of Yemen!”<sup>4</sup>

The warmth that the Prophet (S) had for the people of Yemen was evident for all to see. Whether it was tribes from that region or of descent, or living in different areas of Arabia, or whatever religion they were practising, the Prophet (S) seemed to praise their heritage and efforts. Ibn ʿAbbas states that groups of visitors still following ancient prophets would visit the holy Prophet Muhammad (S). He narrates that when people would come from Yemen, the Prophet (S) would say, “Welcome to the group of Prophet Shuʿayb and Rabbis of Prophet Musa!”<sup>5</sup> Another time the Prophet (S) was narrated to have welcomed a delegation saying, “A soft-hearted community, their hearts firmly established with their faith.”<sup>6</sup>

This appreciation of Yemeni tribes encouraged visitations to the Prophet (S), and also his dispatch of delegations to them. In this chapter we will review the story of the conversion of Yemen to Islam. Arguably it is not only one of the most profound stories in the history of Islam, but it is undoubtedly one of the events that has most impacted the shaping of Islam until today. Despite this, many Muslims are vastly unaware of the conversion story of Yemen or the role that it played on the collective psyche of the Muslim community in the final months of the life of Prophet Muhammad (S). This is because upon its conversion at the hands of ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa), it caused a number of companions who harboured enmity against him to use the conversion of Yemen to spread rumours about his **supposed** unethical behaviour. This is something we shall observe in the chapter and the way that it has shaped the reading of the event of Ghadir Khumm when the Prophet (S) announced his relationship to ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa).

Yemen’s many tribes were brought to Islam on one day – and what followed was a great service to Islam and inclusion in its history. Their conversion revealed an unmatched appreciation of Yemen from the Prophet (S) who said, “The best of men are the people of Yemen. Faith is Yemeni and I am Yemeni. Many of the tribes who will enter paradise on the Day of Judgement will be the Mad’hiji and Hadhra Mawti tribes (two of the tribes from Yemen).”<sup>7</sup>

This chapter will also review what transpired in Yemen after its conversion looking at its governance, the great companions that it produced, and some of their achievements and contributions to Islam. It will also look at how some of the tribes continued to interact with ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) during his caliphate. Therefore, this chapter is the main theme of this book and should elicit the most attention from the reader as to the role of Yemen in early Islamic history.

It will become clear to the respected reader that when we combine the pre-Islamic role of Yemen in Islam, the love the Prophet (S) had for Yemen, and the regions’ contribution to Islam, that when we see such tragedy unfolding in Yemen today, our duty to serve the humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people

become all the more necessary and crucial.

## **Imam ؑAli's ('A) Description Of Arabia Before Islam**

At that time people had fallen into vices whereby the rope of religion had been broken, the pillars of belief had been shaken, principles had been sacrilege, the system had become topsy turvy, openings were narrow, passage was dark, guidance was unknown, and darkness prevailed. Allah was being disobeyed, Satan was given support, and belief had been forsaken. As a result, the pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay. People obeyed Satan and treaded his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them Satan's emblems got flying and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and treaded upon them with their feet. The vices stood on their toes (in full stature) and the people immersed in them were strayed, perplexed, ignorant and seduced, as though in a good house with bad neighbours. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness, and instead of antimony they had tears in their eyes. They were in a land where the learned were in bridle (keeping their mouths shut), while the ignorant were honoured.”<sup>8</sup>

## **The Story Of Tubba' – The King Of Arabia**

Hundreds of years prior to the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S) there lived a man by the name of Tubba' who was a great leader or de facto ruler across much of Arabia, including Yemen. Earlier it was mentioned that the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, who invited and welcomed the Prophet (S) to Medina and would be known as the Ansaar, or the great helpers of Islam, were of Yemeni descent. In this section we will investigate this further by understanding why they migrated from Yemen.

Initially Tubba' had sought to destroy the Ka'bah. It was upon his approach that he learned from a Rabbinic scholar that Mecca was the place of the coming of Prophet Muhammad (S), and his mission to migrate to the city of Medina and establish Islam. We will see that the prophecy of the coming of the Prophet (S) inspired Tubba' so greatly, that he commissioned the Aws and Khazraj to move to Medina and await the Prophet (S) so that this would be his contribution to Islam.

It has been narrated from Ibn al-Walid from al-Saffar from Ibn 'Eisa from al-Hasan son of ؑAli from ؑAmr ibn Aban with the chain going up to Tubba', that he said the following poem during his travels:

Until came to me from Quraydha a Rabbinic scholar;

(I said) I swear by your existence in the Jewish community, certainly he is assisted (by Allah).

He said (to me): Go away, be gone from the forbidden city which belongs to the Prophet of Mecca from the tribe of Quraysh, the guided one;

I forgave him without scolding him; I left him to be punished on the Day that is Eternal.

I left my right to punish him leaving it to God on the Day of Judgement, when the fire shall be stoked;

I left for the Prophet from my people a few high standing, noble elites, those who are praised.

A people, their victory will be in their descent, hoping I may gain the rewards of the Lord of Muhammad; I did not expect there was a pure House of the Lord, present in Mecca that God is worshiped in. They said: In Mecca you would find a House of wealth that is in ruin, the treasures inside are from pearls and aquamarine;

I came on a mission, but the Lord stopped me from accomplishing it. Certainly Allah is the One who pushes away people from ruining the Grand Mosque.

So I left what I hoped to accomplish as an example to the people that will see.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) said, “The report would come out of this Mecca, a prophet, who would migrate to Yathrib (Medina) so he (Tubba) chose people from Yemen to reside with the Jews so they may be able to aid the Prophet (S) when he came.”

Tubba (continues in his poetry):

I testify that Ahmad is the Prophet of Allah, the Creator of souls,  
So if my life was extended to see the Prophet, I would be a minister to him and a cousin (support him).  
And I would be a torment to the polytheists, feeding them a cup of death and sorrow.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) stated, “Tubba said to Aws and Khazraj, ‘Stay here until this Prophet comes. As for me, if I would have lived until his time, I would have served him and went on the mission with him.’”<sup>9</sup>

## **A Delegation From Yemen Visits Prophet Muhammad (S)**

Al-Waqidi states that a delegation from Yemen consisting of 13 men came to visit Prophet Muhammad (S) in the 9th year after the migration (hijrah). The Prophet (S) honoured and welcomed them with gifts greater than he would normally bestow upon other delegations. A youth was among them, and the Messenger of Allah (S) asked him what gift he would like. He replied, “O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah to forgive me, to have mercy upon me, and to place my wealth in my heart.” The Messenger of Allah responded, “O Allah, forgive him, have mercy upon him, and place his wealth in his heart.” After that he became one of the most pious and ascetic man.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Group From Hadhr Mawt Visit Prophet Muhammad (S)**

It has been narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas that, “People from Hadhr Mawt including the tribes of Waliat Hamza, Muharrish, Mashrah and Absa’ah, and a sister tribe among them visited the Prophet (S). Among them was al-As’ab ibn Qays, who was the youngest among.

They said to him (S), “It is not possible to curse you, but the curse will not reach you?”

The Prophet (S) replied, “I am not a king. I am Muhammad, the son of ‘Abdullah!”

They responded, “Did you give yourself this name?”

He replied, “No Allah gave me this name; and I am Abul Qasim.”

Wanting to test his Prophethood they said, “O Abul Qasim, we have hidden from you something, what is it?” Ibn ʿAbbas says that they had hidden a locust in a pottery of ghee.

The Prophet (S) responded, “Glory be to Allah, this is something you do to a soothsayer; and the whole system of soothsaying and the soothsayer is destined for hell!”

So the group asked, “O Prophet! How do we know that you are the Prophet?”

So the Prophet (S) took a handful of rocks and said this will attest Prophethood to me. The rocks began to praise him while in his hand saying, ‘We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah.’ The Prophet (S) continued, “Allah sent me with the truth and revealed upon me a book which falsehood cannot come near, from in front nor behind. It is a revelation from the Wise and Worthy of all Praise. It is weightier in scale than a huge mountain and in the darkest night it has the light of a shooting star.”

The delegation asked, “Let us hear it!” So the Prophet (S) read the following verses:

***(I swear) by those [angels] lined up in rows. And those who drive the clouds. And those who recite the Remembrance (Qur'an). Indeed your God is One. Lord of the heavens and the earth and that which is between them and the Lord of the sunrises. (Surah al-Saffat, 37: 1-5).***

The Prophet (S) then paused. He changed from an agitated state to a state of calm and did not move at all. Then he began to cry such that tears fell on his beard.

The group asked, “We see you crying; are you afraid of the one who sent you?”

He replied, “It is not fear, it is sincerity and awe that made me cry. He has sent me on the Right Path like the tip of a blade; if I was to stray, I would be doomed.”

Then he read:

***And if We willed, We could surely do away with that which We revealed to you. Then you would not find for yourself concerning it an advocate against Us. (Surah al-Isra', 17:86).***

## **[The Deputation Of Imam ʿAli \(A\) By Prophet Muhammad \(S\) To The People Of Yemen](#)**

The historian and scholar of hadith, Sheikh Al-Mufid states, “It is agreed upon by all of the historians (biographers of Prophet Muhammad (S) known as Ahl al-Sirah) that the Prophet (S) sent Khalid b. Walid to the people of Yemen to call them to Islam. With him, he sent a group of Muslims, among whom was

al-Bara' b. ʿAzib, may Allah have mercy on him. Khalid stayed with the people for six months calling them (to Islam), but not one of them responded. That aggrieved the Apostle of Allah (S) [11](#). This was in the 8th year after hijrah.

He summoned the Commander of the Faithful (ʿAli ibn Abi Talib) (ʿa) and ordered him to bring back Khalid and those who were with him. However, he told him that if anyone of those who had been with Khalid wanted to stay, then he should let him.

Al-Bara' ibn ʿAzib reported, “The Prophet (S) sent Khalid ibn Walid to Yemen in order to invite their people to the faith. I was one of the people sent with him. He stayed there for six months, but no one paid any heed to him.” [12](#)

Mufti Jaʿfar Husayn says, “When the Yemenis learned that Khalid ibn Walid was going and ʿAli was replacing him, they were keenly interested and gathered at one place. After the morning prayers ʿAli went to them and read the letter that the Prophet had sent for the people of Yemen. Then he delivered a sermon on the virtues of Islam. The talk was so effective that the people, who did not respond even after six months of Khalid’s efforts, all embraced Islam.” [13](#)

Al-Bara' b. ʿAzib continues, “I was one of those who followed him. When we came to the first people among the Yemenis and the news reached the people (generally), they gathered before him. ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) prayed the dawn prayer with us, then he advanced in front of us. He praised and glorified Allah. Then he read the letter of the Apostle of Allah. The whole of Hamdan became Muslim in one day. The Commander of the Faithful (ʿa) wrote about that to the Apostle of Allah (S). When he read his letter, he was pleased and delighted. He prostrated in thanks to Allah, the Exalted. He raised his head and sat. He said: “Greetings to Hamdan. After the submission to Islam of Hamdan, (the rest of) the people of Yemen will follow (them) into Islam.”

Al-Mufid continues, “This is an achievement of the Commander of the Faithful (ʿa) which none of the other companions had done anything like or similar to. He (ʿAli) was (an important element) in the building of the religion, and the strength of the faith in (explaining) the message of the Prophet (S).” [14](#)

## **The Judgements Of ʿAli Ibn Abi Talib (ʿA) In Yemen**

Mufti Jaʿfar Husayn writes, “Although the people of Yemen had embraced Islam with one sermon of Imam ʿAli (ʿa), they were still not fully conversant with the tenets of the faith. Therefore it was necessary to give them instructions on the legitimate and the prohibited from the Islamic viewpoint. They were also to be told about the mandatory, the optional and the other pillars of Islam. They needed to get their disputes settled according to the laws of the faith. For taking care of all of these things, the Prophet (S) deputed ʿAli (ʿa) again to go to Yemen.” [15](#)

Al-Mufid continues, “Among those reports which have been handed down about his [Imam ʿAli’s (ʿa)]

legal decisions while the Prophet (S) was still alive and present, is the following:

When the Apostle of Allah (S) wanted to invest him with the office of judge in Yemen and to send him to them so that he might teach them the laws, explain to them what was permitted and forbidden, and judge for them according to the laws of the Qur'an, the Commander of the Faithful ('a) asked him: 'O Apostle of Allah, you are inviting me to (undertake) the office of judge while I am still a young man without knowledge of all (the matters of) judgement?'

'Come near to me,' the Prophet (S) told him. He went nearer and he struck him in the chest with his hand and said: 'O Allah, guide his heart and strengthen his tongue.'

The Commander of the Faithful ('a) reported: 'I never doubted in my ability to judge between two men after that occurrence.'

In another narration it is mentioned that Imam ؑAli ('a) said: "When the Prophet ؑ dispatched me to Yemen, he said, 'Whenever you are faced with a case to judge, do not make a ruling before you hear what the other side has to say in one's own defence.' From then on, I never had any doubts about my judgements."<sup>16</sup>

When the administrative house (*dar*) in Yemen was occupied by him and he began to take care of the office of judging and giving decisions among the Muslims, which the Apostle of Allah (S) had entrusted to him, two men were brought before him. Between them was a maidservant who both of them had equal rights of possession over as a slave. They had both been ignorant about the prohibition of having intercourse with her, and had intercourse with her in the same month of her menstrual cycle. (They had done this) in the belief that this was permissible, because of their recent acceptance of Islam and their lack of knowledge about the laws which were in the law of Islam (*shari'a*). The maidservant had become pregnant and given birth to a boy; and they both were in dispute as to (who was the father).

He drew lots with their names on it for the boy. The lot fell upon one of them. He assigned the boy to him, but required him to pay half of his value as if he had been a slave of his partner. He said, "If I knew that you had both embarked on what you have done after the proof had been given to you of it being prohibited, I would have exerted (every effort) to punish you both."

The Apostle of Allah (S) learned about this case. He accepted it and acknowledged the judgement on them within Islam. He said: "Praise be to Allah Who has created among us, the family (Ahlul Bayt), one who can judge according to the practice and method of Dawud in judging." In that he was referring to judgement according to inspiration (*ilham*) which would have been taken in the sense of revelation (*wahy*) and the sending down of a text for it if there had been any explanation of such (an occurrence ever having taken place).

Among the cases brought before Imam ؑAli ('a) while he was in Yemen, is the report of (the case in which) a pit was dug for a lion. It fell into it and the people gathered around to look at it. One man was

standing on the edge of the pit. His foot slipped and he hung on to another man. That man hung on to a third, and the third to a fourth. They all fell into the pit and were all killed. Imam ʿAli (ʿa) gave the judgement that the first was the prey of the lion and he (and his family) were responsible for the payment of a third of the blood-price for the second. Similarly the second (and his family) were responsible for the payment of a third of the blood-price for the third, and the third (and his family) were responsible for the payment of a third of the blood-price for the fourth.

The report of that reached the Apostle of Allah (S), who said, “Abu al-Hasan has given judgement in their regard with the judgement of Allah, the Mighty and High above (on) His throne.”

Then there was brought before him (the case in which) it is reported that a girl was carrying (another) girl on her shoulder in a game. Another girl came along and pinched the girl who was carrying (the other one). She jumped because of being pinched. The girl who was being carried fell and broke her neck and died. Imam ʿAli (ʿa) judged that the girl who did the pinching was responsible for a third of the blood-price, the girl who jumped was responsible for (another) third of it, and the remaining third was inoperative because the riding of the girl who broke her neck, on the girl who jumped was in fun.

The report of that reached the Apostle of Allah (S) and he accepted it and testified to the correctness of it.

Imam ʿAli (ʿa) gave judgement on (a case where) a wall had fallen on some people and killed them. Among them was a slave-woman and a free woman. The free woman had a small child, born of a free man; and the slave-woman had a small child, born of a slave. The free child could not be distinguished from the slave child.

Imam ʿAli (ʿa) drew lots between them and he adjudged freedom as belonging to the one of them for whom the lot for freedom was drawn, and he adjudged slavery for the one for whom the lot for slavery was drawn. Then he freed (the slave child) and made him a retainer (of the free child). In this way he also decided about their inheritance with the decision going in accordance with (the norm for) the free one and his retainer.

The Apostle of Allah (S) accepted his judgement in this decision and declared its correctness through his acceptance of it, as we have mentioned and described. [17](#)

## **The Conversion Of Yemen As Praised In The Qur'an**

In the Qur'an in Surah an-Nasr (110), verses 1-3, we read the following:

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

***In The Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا

***When there comes the help of Allah and the victory; And you see people entering Allah's religion in multitudes; Then celebrate the praise of your Lord, and seek His forgiveness, (for) surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy). (110:1-3).***

In this chapter, the words are first about the help of Allah, then the victory, then the influence and spread of Islam, and finally the entering of people in groups, into the religion of Allah (SwT). All of them are causes and effects of one another.

Victory is absent unless there is the help from Allah (SwT), and people do not enter Islam in multitudes unless there is triumph and victory in order to remove the barriers and hindrances from the way. Of course, along with these stages, each of which is a great Divine blessing, the stage of being thankful and praising Allah (SwT) comes forth.

On the other hand, the help of Allah (SwT), and the victory are all for the final goal, i.e., people entering Allah's (SwT) religion in multitudes, and guidance for everyone. [18](#)

Regarding the second verse and those entering into Islam in great numbers it is said in the books on the commentary of the Qur'an, "What is meant by 'people' here is specifically the people of Yemen. When the verse was revealed, the Prophet (S) said, 'Glory be to Allah! The help of Allah has come and the victory, and the people of Yemen have come. (They are) a people of gentle hearts. Faith is Yemeni (meaning faith belongs to the people of Yemen). Understanding is Yemeni (meaning knowledge belongs to the people of Yemen); and wisdom is Yemeni (meaning wisdom is Yemeni in its nature)." He (S) then said, "I see the relief of your Lord coming from the direction of Yemen." [19](#)

## **The Effect Of Imam ؑAli's ('A) Converting The People Of Yemen Upon Some Muslims, And Its Relation To The Event Of Ghadir Khumm**

The 9th and 10th years after the migration were particularly eventful for ؑAli ibn Abi Talib ('a) in relation to how Prophet Muhammad (S) treated him and afforded him particular responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities were delegated to him by virtue of his position within the Ahlul Bayt ('a), and some of them were due to his particular characteristics; but in either case, his being given certain tasks and his ability to accomplish them when others could not had its effects upon some of the companions.

For example, when Surah al-Tawbah, the ninth chapter of the Qur'an, also known as Surah al-Bara'a was revealed, the Prophet (S) dispatched Abu Bakr to read out the chapter to the people of Mecca and oversee the declarations of the Prophet (S) regarding the upcoming *Haji*. After Abu Bakr's departure, the Arch Angel Jibra'il ('a) descended and told the Prophet (S) that Allah (SwT) has commanded that: "Only

a man from your own family can transmit the Qur'an.”

These effects were to carry on for a number of years – firstly manifesting itself during the farewell *Hajj* where some companions either made false claims against Imam ʿAli (‘a) or complained to the Prophet (S) against him. Their goal was to create a discord between the Prophet (S) and Imam ʿAli (‘a), and between the companions and Imam ʿAli (‘a). It appears that so many rumours against Imam ʿAli’s (‘a) conduct were being circulated in the farewell *Hajj* that the Prophet (S) was forced to address them and even reprimand certain companions.

It appears that this series of events played a large role in the Sunni understanding of the events of Ghadir, and particularly the statement of the Prophet (S): “Whosoever master I am, this ʿAli is his master too.” That is because the word “master” or “*mawla*” in the Arabic is the source of dispute between the Sunni and Shiʿa. While no historian or scholar denies that the Prophet (S) said this statement in front of 100,000 companions in his last meeting before his demise, scholars differ on the interpretation of the word “*mawla*”. While the Shiʿa community believe it to mean “master” as in superior authority or leadership, the Sunni community believe it to mean “friendship” making the translation, “Whosoever I am a friend to, this ʿAli is his friend too.”

The reason why the Sunni scholarship traditionally argued as such may have been owing to these events of the 9th and 10th years in which the merits and accomplishments of ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (‘a) were so great, and it caused a rift and jealousy of certain other companions. Thus the response is, the event of Ghadir was the Prophet’s (S) response to the collective people, and his need to advocate on behalf of ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (‘a) to adjure the companions’ friendship of him.

In this section we will look at some of the narrations that describe this series of events. We will see how the jealousy of certain companions for Imam ʿAli (‘a) started with the delegation to bring Yemen to Islam, the subsequent collections of taxes and the arrival to *Hajj*. The purpose of this is not to debate the theological differences or advocate for either the Sunni or Shiʿa causes, but rather to demonstrate the importance of the history of Yemen and its events in Islamic history.

1) Bukhari narrates from his chain reaching to ʿAbdullah ibn Burayda from his father who said, “The Messenger of Allah (S) sent ʿAli to Khalid ibn al-Walid to collect the *khums* (the one-fifth tax payment). I hated ʿAli. The next morning ʿAli took a bath (implying the ghusl or ceremonial bath on account of having intercourse with a slave-girl included in the *khums* taxes). I asked Khalid, ‘Won’t you just look at this?!’”

“When we returned to the Prophet (S), I related the situation to him and he asked, ‘Burayda, do you really hate ʿAli?’ ‘Yes I do’ I replied. The Prophet (S) responded, ‘Do not hate him, he deserves more than that from the *khums*.’”

2) Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal states that Yahya ibn Saʿid related to him quoting ʿAbd al-Jalil who said, “I was in a circle of people that included Abu Mijlaz and Burayda’s two sons. ʿAbdullah ibn Burayda said,

“My father Burayda related to me the following, ‘I used to hate ﷺ more strongly than I ever hated anyone else; and there was one man from the Quraysh whom I liked only because of his hatred for ﷺ. That man was sent out with the cavalry and I went with him, solely because of his hatred for ﷺ. We took some prisoners.’ He then wrote to the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, ‘Send someone to us who will divide the booty (*khums*), and he dispatched ﷺ to us.’ Among the best of the captives was a black slave–girl. ﷺ took the booty (*khums*), divided it up and then came out. When he did so his head was wet (meaning that he had taken a ghusl). I asked, ‘O ﷺ, what is this?’ He replied, ‘Did you not see that slave–girl included in the captives? I made the division and she became part of the *khums*. Then she became part of the household of the Prophet (S), and so one of ﷺ’s family. So I had intercourse with her.’

That man (the unnamed man from Burayda’s party that hated ﷺ) then sent a message to the Messenger of Allah (S) so I said, ‘Dispatch me with it’ and so he did. When in the presence of the Prophet (S) I began to read out the message testifying that it was true. The Prophet (S) then took hold of my hand and the message and asked, ‘Do you hate ﷺ?’ ‘Yes’ I replied. ‘Do not hate him. Whatever love you have for him, make it stronger. I swear by Him Who holds the soul of Muhammad in His hand, the share of the *khums* due to the family of ﷺ is more than one slave–girl.’

Following what the Messenger of Allah (S) said to me, there was no one that I loved more than ﷺ ibn Abi Talib.”

3) Muhammad ibn Ishaq states through a chain of narrators to ﷺ Amr ibn Sha’s al–Aslami who said, “I was with ﷺ ibn Abi Talib in the caravan party that the Messenger of Allah sent out to Yemen. ﷺ was somewhat rude to me and I resented his behaviour.

When I returned to Medina, I complained about him in various meetings and to people that I met. One day when I went to the masjid, I found the Messenger of Allah sitting there. When he saw me look into his eyes, he stared straight back at me until I sat down near him. He then stated, ‘I swear ﷺ Amr ibn Sha’s, you have done me harm!’

‘But surely we belong to Allah and to Him we do return! I take refuge in Allah and in Islam against ever harming the Messenger of Allah!’ I replied. He responded, ‘Whoever harms ﷺ harms me!’

4) Al–Bayhaqi narrates through a chain to Abu Sa’id al–Khudhri who is narrated to have said, “The Messenger of Allah (S) dispatched ﷺ ibn Abi Talib to Yemen. I was one of those who accompanied him. When he had taken some camels as *sadaqah* (charitable payments), we asked him if we would ride them and rest our own, which we could see were getting tired. He refused us and said: ‘You only have a share in them, just like all of the Muslims have their share in them.’

When ﷺ had finished his mission and left Yemen to return home, he appointed a certain person in command of us. He himself then hurried off and joined in the pilgrimage. When he had completed his pilgrimage, the Prophet (S) told him, ‘Go back and rejoin your men.’

In the meantime we made the same request to the commander that ʿAlī had appointed over us the same request about using the camels that he had denied, and this deputy agreed. When ʿAlī learned that the camels taken as *sadaqah* payment had been used and saw how this had tired them, he summoned his deputy and rebuked him. I told myself, ‘I swear by God when I reach Medina, I will make a report to the Prophet (S) and tell him how rudely and harshly we have been treated!’

After our arrival in Medina, I went to him early one morning intending to fulfil my oath. I met Abu Bakr coming out from having been with the Messenger of Allah (S) and when he saw me he stopped and welcomed me asking me various questions, like I did him. He asked, ‘When did you arrive?’ to which I replied, ‘Yesterday.’ He then went back with me to the Messenger (S) and announced, ‘Saʿād ibn Malik ibn al-Shahid is here’ to which the Prophet (S) told him to invite me in.

So I entered and greeted the Messenger to Allah (S) as he did me. He came over to me and asked me various questions about myself and my family and did so very kindly. I told him, ‘O Messenger of Allah, we suffered greatly from the ill-conduct and harsh treatment of Ali.’

The Prophet hesitated and I began enumerating the problems that we had with him and right in the middle of my comments he slapped me on the thigh as I was right next to him. He said, ‘Saʿād ibn Malik ibn al-Shahid, tone down what you are saying about your brother ʿAlī! I swear by God, I know well how tough he is in God’s cause!’ I told myself, ‘Saʿād, your mother is as good as bereaved of you! I am sure to be out of favour with the Prophet now! And I will surely never make a negative reference to him again, confidentially or openly!’”

5) Muhammad ibn Ishaq quotes from his chain of narrators from Yazid ibn Talha ibn Yazid ibn Rukana who said, “The army who were with ʿAlī in Yemen became upset that having made their advance, he then put a deputy in command of them and hurried to join the Messenger of Allah (in *Hajj*).”

The deputy went ahead and dressed every person (from the army) in a ceremonial robe (that belonged to the taxes). When the army was sent to meet him, ʿAlī came out to receive them and found them wearing their robes. He asked, ‘What is this?!’ to which they replied, ‘So and so dressed us in them.’ He asked, ‘What made you do this before coming to the Messenger of Allah and letting him decide about the robes as he wished?’ ʿAlī then took the robes away.

When they reached the Messenger of Allah (S), they complained to him about the incident.”

There are several other narrations of this kind suggesting that ʿAlī ibn Abi Talib (‘a) either acted inappropriately or those around him complained for one reason or another to the Prophet (S) about his decisions and the strictness of them.

As this is not a study of this subject in particular, it is not possible to delve into this topic in detail. However, considering that these narrations exist regarding the conversion and interactions with Yemen, it is necessary to evaluate them briefly.

Here we will mention some points which suggest that these narrations are either false or were fabricated in order to achieve the goal of pursuing an agenda against ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa). This is because as mentioned in the body of texts above, there appeared to be a number of people who “hated” Imam ʿAli (ʿa) firstly without clear reason, and secondly because they partnered together in Yemen because this hatred of them united them. It is not surprising therefore that when these particular individuals were unable to bring the region of Yemen to Islam after six whole months, and ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) was able to do so on his first day, this caused them to feel embarrassed, jealous and angry. This gave further cause to their enmity. No matter what Imam ʿAli’s (ʿa) actions were thereafter, they would have found faults and fabricated events even in order to reduce the accomplishments of ʿAli (ʿa) before the Prophet (S) and the Muslim community. This is why narrations of these kinds regarding ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) and Yemen have reached us.

We will mention some further points below:

The Holy Qur’an is clear as to the purity of Imam ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) when it says,

***“Indeed Allah only wishes to remove from you all impurities, O people of the Household (of the Prophet), and purify you with a thorough purification.” (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:33).***

If Allah (SwT) advocated for the perfection of Imam ʿAli (ʿa), then no amount of narrations can undermine that.

The genre of narrations are from people who themselves claimed to have hatred for ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa); or the books of biographies (*ʿilm al-rijal*) mention that the narrators were known to have hatred for him. A narration that accuses Imam ʿAli (ʿa) stated by a person who testifies to hating him, such as above, are obviously inadmissible and cannot be relied upon owing to the problem of bias.

The narrations themselves are inconsistent. One set of narrations speak about ʿAli’s (ʿa) intercourse with a slave-girl; the second that he did not allow the camels that were taxes to be used before the Prophet (S) divided them; the third that he did not permit the robes to be worn before the Prophet (S) decided how to distribute them. Which is it? One, two or all three? If it was the camels then why do reports speak about robes and vice versa? If it was both of them then why did the commanders or the army only complain about one and not the other? One narration accuses ʿAli (ʿa) of usurping the taxes (by intercourse), while the rest state that he reprimanded others for doing the same. Such inconsistencies make the narrations completely unreliable.

The narrations are explicitly against the famous narration where the Prophet ʿ prepared Imam ʿAli (ʿa) for judgement and making decisions. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal narrates from ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (ʿa) who said, “The Messenger of Allah (S) dispatched me to Yemen. I asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, you are sending me to people who are older than myself; I am still young and I do not have the knowledge of reaching judgement.’ The Prophet (S) then placed his hand on my chest and said, ‘O Allah make his tongue firm and guide his heart.’ Since then I never had any doubts about a case.”

If Allah (SwT) Himself enabled the tongue and heart of ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (‘a) to make sound decisions, then why were those companions complaining about the decisions of ʿAli? Did they know better or did Allah (SwT) know better? In all of the other judgements in Yemen, ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (‘a) judged correctly – as testified to by the Prophet (S) – sometimes even in the most difficult of cases. How is it therefore, that ʿAli (‘a) judged correctly with those, but not with a simple case of robes belonging to the taxes being usurped by the Muslims?

The decisions of Imam ʿAli (‘a) were certainly correct. The taxes collected were not to be used by some of the Muslims before the Prophet (S) has decided on their distribution. ʿAli’s (‘a) strictness was indeed sound and most correct in that he was commander of the deputation and was ultimately responsible for the taxes reaching soundly. His anger at some of the Muslims usurping them was also correct. Therefore to complain that the commander stopped you from usurping Allah’s (SwT) taxes suggests the issue of unwarranted hatred for Imam ʿAli (‘a) – irrespective of the decision.

Each time the Prophet (S) was told about a complaint or ʿAli’s (‘a) strictness, the Prophet (S) argued for ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (‘a) or rebuked those with hatred in their hearts for him. Never once did the Prophet (S) find Imam ʿAli (‘a) to have done wrong or reprimanded him.

As mentioned earlier, these narrations are of great significance pertaining to the interpretation of the Event of Ghadir Khumm. Ibn Kathir mentions, “Even though ʿAli could be excused for his actions, talk arose among the pilgrims about him. The Messenger of Allah (S) having completed the pilgrimage and its associated ceremonies returned to Medina. Passing the stream at Khumm, he arose among the people and made an address. He acquitted ʿAli of wrongdoing, emphasised his importance and his virtues in order to remove the negative impression that many others held of him.”<sup>20</sup>

It is our opinion that some of the companions delegated to Yemen were envious of the accomplishments of Imam ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (‘a). Owing to their hatred they sought to nullify this great act of converting the entire region of Yemen – by creating rumours about his personal conduct and management skills. If these lies could be circulated during the *Hajj*, then they would return with the people to their respective cities after the *Hajj* and establish an impression about Imam ʿAli (‘a) in the minds of the people. It is most probable that the narrations regarding the slave-girl are also fabricated; and if ʿAli (‘a) had been strict with his army about their usurping the taxes, this would not be inconsistent with the Qur’an; for even when the Tribes of Israel returned to their worship of the calf in the absence of Prophet Musa (‘a), he became very angry at them.

## [ʿAli Ibn Abi Talib’s \(‘A\) Entrance To Hajj And The Prophet \(S\) Narrating A Miracle To Him](#)

Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (‘a) said, “When the Prophet made the farewell *Hajj*, he stopped in al-Abtah. He was given a cushion and sat upon it. He then raised his hands to sky and started crying profusely and

said, 'O Lord, you have promised me in regards to my father, my mother and my uncle that you will not punish them.' So God revealed upon him, 'I have made it upon Myself that no one shall enter My heaven except one who has testified that there is no god but Allah, and that you are My slave and My Messenger. Go to the cavern and call them and if they answer you, then My mercy has been granted to them.'

So the Prophet stood up and went to the cavern and called them: 'O father, O mother and O uncle!' They rose up from their graves and wiped off the dirt from their heads. The Prophet said to them, 'Do you not see this honour that Allah has bestowed upon me?' They replied, 'We attest that there is no god but Allah and truly you are His Messenger absolutely. Everything that you have conveyed from God is the truth.'

The Prophet (S) said, 'Go back to your resting places.' The Prophet later entered Mecca for the pilgrimage. Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) came from Yemen and the Prophet (S) asked him, 'Do you not want me to give glad tidings?' He replied, 'May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, you have been from the start a bearer of glad tidings!'

The Prophet (S) asked, 'Do you not see what Allah, blessed and high is He, has given to us in this journey of ours?' So the Prophet (S) narrated the event to Imam Ali ('a) to which he responded, 'All praise belongs to Allah!'"

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) concluded saying, "The Prophet (S) made his parents and uncle partners in the sacrificing of the animals at *Hajj* (sharing the reward with them)."<sup>21</sup>

1. Al-'Amili, Wasail al-Shia, Chapter on Hajj, p. 8. The Arabic text is as follows:

ايبها الناس اني ابراهيم خليل الله ان الله امركم ان تحجوا هذا البيت فحجوه ، فاجابه من يحج الى يوم القيامة ، و كان اول من اجابه اهل اليمن

2. The Arabic text is as follows:

قَحَطَانِي / بنو قحطان

3. Al-Yamani, Salih Ayyash, The Followers in Yemen, Ancient History, Its Present and Future, Dar al-Mahajjatu al-Baydhaa', Lebanon, 2011, p. 14.

4. Mustadrak Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 206; the Arabic text is as follows:

لولا الهجرة لكنت امرءاً من اهل اليمن مستدرك سفينة البحار ١٠ / ٦٠٢

5. Ibid., the Arabic text is as follows:

عن ابن عباس عن النبي ص انه اذا دخل عليه الناس من اليمن قال مرحباً برهط شعيب و أحبار موسى

6. Al-Nomani, Kitab Al-Ghaybah, p. 39. The Arabic text is as follows:

قوم رقيقة قلوبهم راسخ ايمانهم

7. The Arabic text, as found in Majma al-Zawa'id, vol. 1, p. 55, is as follows:

إن خير الرجال اهل اليمن و الإيمان يماني و انا يماني و اكثر قبائل دخول الجنة يوم القيامة مذبح و حضرموت \_ مجمع الزوائد ج ١٠ ص ٥٥

8. Al-Radhi, Sharif, Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 2;

<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons/sermon-2-i-praise...> [1] (Last accessed on February 15, 2018).

9. Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, pp. 104–105.

10. Tarikh ibn Kathir, vol. 4. p. 127

11. This report is the same as reported by al-Tabari in his Tarikh, vol. 2, pp. 289 and 390.

12. Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 289.

13. Biography of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, pp. 284–287.

[14.](#) Kitab al-Irshad, pp. 38–40.

[15.](#) Biography of Imam ʿAli ibn Abi Talib, pp. 284–287.

[16.](#) Saduq, Shaykh al-, Uyun al-Akhbar al-Ridha, vol. 2, p. 106.

[17.](#) Mufid, Shaykh al-, Kitab al-Irshad, pp. 135–137.

[18.](#) An Enlightening Commentary of the Qur'an at

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-20...> [2] (Last accessed on May 15, 2018).

[19.](#) Tafsir Jawamir al-Jami', vol. 3, p. 866; the Arabic text is as follows:

اراد بالناس اهل اليمن، و لما نزلت قال: الله اكبر، جاء نصر الله و الفتح و جاء اهل اليمن، قوم رقيقة قلوبهم، الايمان يمان، و الفقه يمان و الحكمة يمانيه، و قال: اجد نفس ربكم من قبل اليمن

[20.](#) Tarikh Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, pp. 142–146.

[21.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, pp. 63–64.

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<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-20/Surah-nasr-chapter-110>