

Original Research

Received 27 May 2026

Revised 28 June 2026

Accepted 12 July 2026

Natural Resources for Human Health 2026, Vol.6(12s):1204–1211

KEYWORDS:

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, The Virtues of the Companions, Caliphate, Islamic Political History, Muslim State, Political and Social Transformations, Partisan Affiliations.

The Caliphate of Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib (Peace Be upon Him) according to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Book "The Virtues of the Companions"

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ABSTRACT: The research dealt with the period of the caliphate of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) through the texts contained in the book of the virtues of the Companions by Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The research dealt with that period because of its importance in the great transformations in the political and social history of the Muslim state and the tribulations and trials that occurred during that era in which the emergence of partisan affiliations began. Therefore, the work in the research was divided into dealing with several aspects. The first aspect dealt with the mechanism by which Imam Ali came to power through what was mentioned in the book of the virtues of the Companions. The second aspect dealt with the intellectual concept of the position of caliphate, and highlighting the basic intellectual matters that contributed to moving the events.

INTRODUCTION:

The Islamic caliphate began to appear as an administrative function after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). It took different forms, including the form of a private pledge of allegiance, represented by the caliphate of Abu Bakr, then the form of a will, such as the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab. After that, it took a different course through the election of the Shura Council. However, the caliphate that obtained a general pledge of allegiance was the caliphate of Imam Ali (peace be upon him). Ahmad ibn Hanbal confirmed that his caliphate (peace be upon him) was unanimously agreed upon by the Muslims, and it was a pledge of allegiance attended by the people, and no Muslim was forced to pledge allegiance. Therefore, it obtained absolute legitimacy from the nation.

Although Imam Ali (peace be upon him) did not desire it or dispute it, and he confirmed his rejection of it when he said (...for I am a better minister for you than a prince for you...).

Perhaps the historical circumstances that prevailed in the city and what the Islamic nation was going through after the killing of the third Caliph, Uthman ibn Affan, prompted the Imam (peace be upon him) to accept the caliphate, hoping that he could restore the situation to its correct course. However, events unfolded rapidly among those who broke their oath of allegiance and those who tried to tear apart the unity of the nation. Because of those who claimed to demand revenge for Uthman, from the very first moment that the Imam assumed leadership of the Islamic nation, he had to turn to suppressing the rebellion of those who broke their oath and those who claimed to demand revenge. This formed a violent conflict between the legitimate caliphate, represented by the caliphate of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), and the breakers, the unjust, and the renegades. Perhaps all these circumstances contributed to paralyzing the process of reforming the state's administrative system, which later led to major schisms, such as the emergence of the Kharijites, and ultimately led to the killing of Imam Ali (peace be upon him).

IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH:

The importance of this topic lies in Ahmad ibn Hanbal's perspective, as presented in the hadiths and narrations in his book "The Virtues of the Companions," concerning Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him). He mentions a considerable number of these hadiths, which revolve around the Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family

appointment of Imam Ali as his successor and the consensus of the Muslim community on pledging allegiance to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) after the assassination of the third Caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (35 AH). These hadiths constitute a point of strength for the Imam of the Sunnis and the founder of the Hanbali school of thought in affirming the caliphate of Imam Ali (peace be upon him). Despite the pressures of political regimes and the prevalence of sectarian strife, Ibn Hanbal remained bold in his opposition to those who denied the consensus of the Companions on the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him). He differed from his contemporaries among the proponents of Uthmanism, and his statements on the issue of the caliphate caused embarrassment for his followers who came after him. Ibn Hanbal lived during a period of political upheaval, which led to some of his opinions being overlooked and some of his hadiths affirming the appointment being weakened. The divine appointment of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) to lead the nation after him. Two statements were reported by Ahmad ibn Hanbal regarding Imam Ali (peace be upon him). One of them is: "Ali (peace be upon him) was given virtues that were not given to any of the companions." The other is his statement when his son Abdullah ibn Ahmad asked him about the companions of the Prophet (may God bless him and his family and grant them peace), including Imam Ali (peace be upon him): "My son, this is from a household that cannot be compared to others."

FIRST: THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO IMAM ALI (PEACE BE UPON HIM) FOR THE CALIPHATE ACCORDING TO IBN HANBAL IN THE BOOK "THE VIRTUES OF THE COMPANIONS"

The political situation and the strife that followed the assassination of the third Caliph, Uthman ibn Affan, made the situation very critical. No one was able to assume the position of Caliphate, even if they aspired to it. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) did not have a desire for the position of Caliphate at this particular time, not to escape responsibility, but because of the complexity of the political and social conditions within the Islamic community. Therefore, he was not very enthusiastic about this matter after the Caliphate had lost much of its self-evidence and after the factors that helped establish a just and equitable Islamic system had disappeared.¹².

Ibn Hanbal referred to the pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in many narrations. On the authority of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, he said: "I was with Ali, and Uthman was besieged. A man came to him and said: The Commander of the Faithful has been killed. Then another came and said: The Commander of the Faithful has been killed now. Ali stood up. Muhammad said: I grabbed him by the waist, fearing for him. He said: Let go, may you be bereft of your mother. He said: He came to the house and the man had been killed. He went to his house, entered it, and locked his door. The people came to him and knocked on the door. They entered and said to him: This man has been killed, and the people must have a caliph, and we do not know anyone more deserving of it than you. Ali said to them: You do not want me, for I am a better minister to you than a commander to you. They said: No, by God, we do not know anyone more deserving of it than you. He said: If you refuse me, then my pledge of allegiance will not be in secret, but I will go out to the mosque, and whoever wishes to pledge allegiance to me may do so. He said: So he went out to the mosque, and the people pledged allegiance to him."³.

But the question is, why did Imam Ali not agree to the people's pledge of allegiance?

One researcher answers that the Imam (peace be upon him), through his refusal to pledge allegiance for the sake of the general public, wanted them to be fully aware of the most important upcoming events so that matters would not be confused for them. Also, the Imam (peace be upon him) was not like his predecessors, given the new developments that had occurred, the many conquests, and the entry of many into Islam. This huge number of new Muslims after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) needed education and correct Islamic guidance that would address their life problems. It was not a superficial Islam that was limited only to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and almsgiving, meaning it was not enough to preserve religious rituals. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was a figure who lived through the event as it was, without flattery or procrastination. He was the well-known figure who did not fear the blame of any critic in the cause of God.⁴.

And as well as the changes and differences that occurred during the caliphate of Uthman, who violated the conditions of the pledge of allegiance that were stipulated when Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf pledged allegiance to him, which are the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Messenger of God (may God bless him and his family and grant them peace) and the example of the two Sheikhs, although the example of the two Sheikhs is not a proof, but it was as a condition in the pledge of allegiance to Uthman. Thus there are many matters that need radical reform in all political, financial, social and religious aspects... And

Umar ibn al-Khattab described Uthman ibn Affan by saying: “As for you, O Uthman, woe to you, it is as if I see you, the tribes have entrusted this matter to you because of their love for you, so you have burdened the Banu Umayya and Banu Mu’ayt with the necks of the people and favored them with the spoils, so its punishment came to you from the wolves of the Arabs and they slaughtered you in your bed, and by God, if they did that, you will do the same, and if you do that, they will do the same.”⁵.

Thus, the Imam (peace be upon him) refused the caliphate in order to inform them through it of his awareness of the seriousness of the situation and his ability to restore matters to their natural order, but in an implicit manner based on the knowledge that the Messenger of God (may God bless him and his family and grant them peace) had taught him. The revolutionaries did not have complete knowledge of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), so he gave them the choice between acceptance or rejection after he had explained to them the way he wanted to lead them and presented the argument to them by addressing them, saying: “Leave me and seek someone else, for we are facing a matter that has many faces and colors, which hearts cannot bear nor minds be able to comprehend. The horizons have darkened and the path has become obscured. Know that if I accept you, I will lead you according to what I know and will not listen to the words of the critic or the reproach of the reproacher. And if you leave me, I am like one of you, and I am more likely to listen to you and obey whomever you appoint to lead you. And I am a minister to you, which is better for you than me being a prince.”⁶.

Since Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was a man of the hour in the course of Islam, most of the politicians in Medina began to disappear from view for fear of developments that had slipped from their grasp, and the power vacuum was threatening the worst consequences. The political crisis was getting worse, and the need for a savior to whom the majority could turn was becoming more urgent. So, all eyes turned to Ali (peace be upon him), as he was one of the few first-tier politicians who was beyond suspicion and accusation regarding his conduct.⁷ Thus, there was much insistence on Imam Ali (peace be upon him) to accept the pledge of allegiance due to the Islamic nation’s need for his capabilities and abilities.

Therefore, when Ibn Abbas pressed him to assume the caliphate, he said to him, “What is the value of this sandal?” I said, “It has no value.” He (peace be upon him) said, “By God, it is dearer to me than your command, unless I establish a right or repel a falsehood.”⁸.

Here, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) faced two responsibilities, one a major historical responsibility and the other a huge legal responsibility, and he accepted the order and bore its consequences.⁹.

Given these circumstances, the Imam (peace be upon him) responded to the demands of the public, justifying his acceptance of this responsibility by his fear for the fate and future of the Islamic nation.¹⁰.

Ibn Hanbal presented a narration regarding the pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali (peace be upon him), stating that it acquired the characteristic of consensus after he asked the people to hold the pledge in the mosque so that everyone could engage in democratic political activity, choosing whomever they deemed suitable and competent to represent them on the throne of the caliphate. (It was the first time in the history of the Islamic caliphate that the masses cast their voice in a courageous popular choice in this popular manner to elect the new caliph. ¹¹ What distinguished the pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was the legitimacy of the authority (and that it was not a random occurrence).¹².

Ibn Qutaybah, in describing the pledge of allegiance of the general public to Imam Ali (peace be upon him), says: “I looked at the people and their hands were holding Ali’s arm, their hands over his arm, and they brought him to the mosque where the senior companions from the Muhajireen and Ansar were, and the first to ascend the pulpit was Talha, who pledged allegiance to him, and his fingers were paralyzed, so Imam Ali took it as a bad omen and said: ‘What is wrong with them breaking their pledge?’¹³ Then Al-Zubayr and the rest of the general public pledged allegiance to him.

Ibn Hanbal narrates a story on the authority of Al-Miswar bin Makhrama about the pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali (peace be upon him), in which he says: “Uthman and Ali were killed in the mosque, so the people inclined towards Talha, and Ali left, intending to go to his house. A man from Quraysh met him at the place of the funerals and said: Look at a man who killed his cousin and seized his kingdom. So Ali turned back and ascended the pulpit, and it was said: That is Ali on the pulpit, so the people inclined towards him and pledged allegiance to him and left Talha.”¹⁴.

We note in this narration that Al-Miswar ibn Makhrama tried to make Imam Ali (peace be upon him) a rival to Talha ibn Abdullah regarding the caliphate. There is no doubt that Al-Miswar ibn Makhrama is the one who fabricated narrations about

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) . He is the narrator of the incident of Ali (peace be upon him)) proposing to his son Abu Jahl, and it is sufficient to refute him according to a group of historians.¹⁵ Those who described the pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) as a general and valid pledge by agreement of the Muhajireen and Ansar in general, and those who were in Medina, as the Imam (peace be upon him) describes when he says: “You extended my hand, so I withheld it, and you stretched it out, so I closed it. Then you crowded around me like thirsty camels crowding around their watering places on the day they come to drink, until the sandal broke, the cloak fell off, and the weak were trampled. The joy of the people in their pledge of allegiance to me reached such a point that the young rejoiced in it, the old shouted, the sick struggled towards it, and the young camels went to it.”¹⁶ .

Thus, the general pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali took place in very delicate circumstances, and the pledge of allegiance to the Imam (peace be upon him)) was written with the characteristic of consensus, except for a few who abstained from it, and he did not force them to do anything, but rather he (peace be upon him) said: “We have no need for those who do not desire us.”¹⁷ .

After the pledge of allegiance was completed, he addressed the people with the proof and the obligation of obedience as long as the choice had been made by them, so he (peace be upon him) said: “O people, pledge allegiance to me on what was pledged to those before me, and the choice is only before the pledge of allegiance takes place, so if it takes place you have no choice, and the Imam must be upright and the subjects must submit, and this is a general pledge of allegiance, whoever rejects it has turned away from the religion of Islam, and it was not a mistake.”¹⁸ .

SECONDLY: THE INTELLECTUAL CONCEPT OF THE CALIPHATE POSITION OF IMAM ALI (PEACE BE UPON HIM)

The system established after the death of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family for the position of Caliphate was not the essence and spirit of the intellectual and doctrinal concept of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) , but the position of Imamate is considered a divine duty and obligation.¹⁹ Rather, it continues in him (the fundamental mission of the infallible Imam, which is that it is a continuation of prophethood without revelation ²⁰ .

The Holy Quran pointed to this responsibility of the prophets and the righteous among their descendants by addressing the Prophet Abraham, saying:>He said, “Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people.” He said, “And from my descendants?” He said, “My covenant does not include the wrongdoers.”<²¹ This is evidence that the Imam must be infallible from evil deeds, because God Almighty has denied that his covenant will be granted to one who wrongs himself, and whoever is not infallible is a wrongdoer, either to himself or to others.²² .

There is no doubt that the concept of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was built on the foundations established by what was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah regarding his succession (peace be upon him) , such as the Almighty's saying:>O Messenger, convey that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. And Allah will protect you from the people.<²³ And His saying, may He be exalted:>Your only allies are Allah, His Messenger, and those who believe—those who establish prayer and give zakah while bowing down (in prayer .<²⁴ The books of interpretation mention that this verse was revealed concerning Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) .²⁵ .

As for the noble prophetic hadiths that Ibn Hanbal included in his book, which specifically addressed the status of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and his succession to the Messenger:

1. Whoever I am his master, then Ali is his master ²⁶ .
2. On the authority of Al-Bara' bin Azib, he said: “We were with the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) on a journey, and we stopped at Ghadir Khumm. It was announced among us: ‘Prayer is about to begin.’ A space was cleared for the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) under two trees, and he prayed the noon prayer and took Ali's hand and said: ‘Do you not know that I am closer to the believers than their own selves?’ They said: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘Do you not know that I am closer to every believer than his own self?’ They said: ‘Yes.’ He said: ‘then he took Ali's hand and said: ‘O God, whoever I am his master, then Ali is his master. O God, befriend whoever befriends him and be an enemy to whoever is an enemy to him.’

He said: "Then Umar met him after that and said: 'Congratulations to you, O son of Abu Talib, you have become and remained the master of every believing man and woman.'" ²⁷ And he mentioned several accounts.

3. The Hadith of the Status, which refers to the status of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) with the Messenger of God when he left Imam Ali in Medina for the Battle of Tabuk in the year (9 AH) . It must be noted that it was the only battle in which the Imam did not participate, so the Messenger gave him all the statuses by saying, May God bless him and his family and grant them peace, "Are you not pleased to be to me as Aaron was to Moses?" ²⁸ .

In the same vein, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) indicated that the Imamate was limited to the Quraysh, saying (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) : "This matter will not end until twelve caliphs have passed among them, all of them from the Quraysh." ²⁹ And the emphasis on Imam Ali (peace be upon him) that the Imams are exclusively from Quraysh and from Banu Hashim and cannot be from anyone else, by his saying (peace be upon him) : "The Imams are from Quraysh, planted in this branch of Hashim, and it is not suitable for anyone else, nor are rulers suitable from anyone else." ³⁰ .

Al-Kulayni indicated that the Imamate is the status of the prophets and the inheritance of the successors. The Imamate is the succession and the succession of the Messenger (PBUH) , the position of the Commander of the Faithful (AS) , and the inheritance of Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn. ³¹ .

Since these concepts (these statements testified to his (PBUH) entitlement to the Imamate and indicated that he) (PBUH) was more deserving of the position of the Messenger (PBUH) and more worthy of the Imamate and Caliphate) ³² .

Although Imam Ali (peace be upon him) possessed the legitimate basis for the Imamate, he was removed under the guise of consultation and election. Thus, Baydoun describes it as (the process itself was more like a 'white coup,' if one may use the term, than any (electoral) procedure, as claimed by those who adhere to the theory of consultation based on the pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr in Saqifa) . ³³ .

But (if people were truly just, they would postpone the pledge of allegiance until the body of the Messenger of God (PBUH) was buried. This would be closer to their commitment to planning and thinking carefully before making the choice) ³⁴

CONCLUSION:

Through research into the narrations of virtues, I found that Ahmad ibn Hanbal was the one who narrated the most virtues of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) , among those who preceded him or were his contemporaries.

It must be noted that he was unique in including many hadiths that were not mentioned by hadith scholars and historians, and that he contradicted the Uthmanites who stopped at the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan and denied the caliphate of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in his acknowledgment of the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) .

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