

Between Faith and Power: Mu'āwiya's Correspondence with the Companions Who Declined Allegiance to 'alī¹

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ABSTRACT: Under extraordinary circumstances, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib became caliph, though some Companions in Medina withheld allegiance. He respected their choice, but tensions escalated, leading to the Battle of the Camel. Afterward, Mu'āwiya, governor of Damascus, openly rebelled, citing the unpunished killers of 'Uthmān. Seeking legitimacy, he wrote letters to Companions who had not pledged to 'Alī, promoting his own competence and testing their positions. To 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, he even expressed readiness to support him as caliph. Most responses rejected his initiative, recognizing his political motives. Yet 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ showed willingness to cooperate, which significantly strengthened Mu'āwiya's campaign. With supportive replies from 'Amr and his sons, Mu'āwiya pursued power more resolutely. By contrast, figures such as Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ and Muḥammad b. Maslama dismissed his calls. Ultimately, 'Amr's alignment—considered one of the key strategic minds of the Arabs—emerged as a decisive factor advancing Mu'āwiya's ambitions. This study evaluates these correspondences through classical sources.

KEYWORDS: Caliphate of 'Alī, Rebellion of Mu'āwiya, Correspondence, Legitimacy.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the final period of the caliphate of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, the third caliph of the Muslims, a number of undesirable events occurred, leading to certain uprisings within the Muslim community. As a result of this turmoil, which is thought to have arisen from multiple causes, the caliph of the Muslims was, unfortunately, martyred by those who professed to be Muslims. Leaving aside the identities of the actors involved in the process and the political beneficiaries of the event, history records it as a fact that incurable wounds were inflicted upon the Muslim community. Indeed, prominent Companions—including 'Ā'isha, the Mother of the Believers—were affected by this strife and engaged in fierce battle against one another (the Battle of the Camel). Ultimately, painful consequences emerged for the Muslim community.

These events also gave rise to certain debates regarding the legitimacy of 'Alī's caliphate. In these debates, the refusal of some prominent Companions to pledge allegiance and the armed opposition of others against Caliph 'Alī were cited as evidence. This study aims to examine the reasons behind the refusal of allegiance by certain leading Companions who were claimed not to have pledged to Caliph 'Alī, through an analysis of the letters sent to them by Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān—who rebelled against Caliph 'Alī with claims to the caliphate—and their replies to these letters. Within the framework of Islamic historical sources authored by scholars such as Abū Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Kathīr, al-Dhahabī, and Aḥmed Cevdet Pasha, the study will examine the legitimacy of 'Alī, Mu'āwiya's political objectives, and the reflections of these objectives in the correspondences.

II. THE ALLEGIANCE TO 'ALĪ AS CALIPH

The assassination of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān created a power vacuum that necessitated the appointment of a new leader among the Muslims, and in this context, attention was directed toward 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. He was regarded as the strongest candidate among the members of the shūrā following 'Uthmān. However, he initially declined the offer made to him. According to historical reports, the insurgent group, in an attempt to fill this vacuum, successively offered the caliphate to the members of the shūrā. When the issue remained unresolved, a large assembly composed of both Muhājirūn and Anṣār, together with leading Companions such as Ṭalḥa b. 'Ubayd Allāh and al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwām, went to 'Alī's house and proposed that he assume the caliphate. This group asserted that 'Alī was the most deserving of this office on account of his closeness to the Prophet and his scholarly competence.

¹ This study, titled "Muaviye B. Ebi Süfyan'ın Hz. Ali'ye Biat Etmeyen Bazı Sahabe İle Mektuplaşması Hususunda Bir Değerlendirme" was presented at the 2st International Sarajevo Scientific Research And Innovation Congress (30-31 May, 2025, Bosnia-Herzegovina). The content was shaped through revision and refinement of the text published in the main proceedings book of the congress (p.493-504).

Between Faith and Power: Mu'āwiya's Correspondence with the Companions Who Declined Allegiance to 'alī

At first, 'Alī approached this offer with caution and, citing the weight of administrative responsibility, declined the caliphate, preferring to serve as a vizier rather than as a ruler. However, as a result of their insistent demands, he accepted the position on the condition that the pledge of allegiance (bay'a) be made publicly, in the mosque. Consequently, 'Alī was given the pledge of allegiance collectively in the mosque. It is reported that the first to pledge allegiance were Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr, who would later command the army at the Battle of the Camel. When the matter of allegiance was questioned in connection with the Camel incident, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr alleged that their pledge had been made out of fear of being killed.

Nevertheless, there were other Companions who refrained from pledging allegiance, yet they did not experience any fear for their lives on this account. In other words, it is evident that no threat emanated from 'Alī. Among those who did not pledge allegiance—including some of the Companions central to this study—were Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, Ibn 'Āmir, Zayd b. Thābit, Ḥassān b. Thābit, Ka'b b. Mālik, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Suhayb, Salama b. Salama b. Waqqsh, Muḥammad b. Maslama, and Usāma b. Zayd (Abū Ḥātim, 2017, pp. 420–423; al-Ṭabarī, n.d., vol. 3, pp. 567–571; Ibn al-Athīr, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 195–203; Ibn Kathīr, n.d., vol. 7, pp. 365–369). Referring to al-Wāqidi, Ibn Kathīr records that nearly all the people of Medina pledged allegiance to 'Alī, with the exception of seven individuals: 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, Suhayb b. Sinān, Zayd b. Thābit, Muḥammad b. Maslama, Salama b. Salama b. Waqqsh, and Usāma b. Zayd. He further notes that, according to some reports, there was not a single member of the Anṣār who refrained from pledging allegiance to 'Alī (Ibn al-Athīr, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 195–203; Ibn Kathīr, n.d., vol. 7, pp. 365–369).

In conclusion, although the pledge of allegiance to 'Alī outwardly appeared to have been carried out by means of a broad communal consensus, the refusal of some Companions to participate, or the reluctant participation of others, stands as a clear indicator of the political and social fragility of the period. This pledge also laid the foundation for the first major divisions in Islamic history and foreshadowed developments that would threaten the political unity of the umma.

III. THE COMPANIONS WHO DID NOT PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO 'ALĪ AND THEIR REASONS

Within society, the perception that 'Uthmān had been wrongfully killed and that the rebels responsible for his death stood alongside the new caliph, 'Alī, created hesitations among some Companions regarding the pledge of allegiance to him. For this reason, certain Companions remained hesitant during the process, some openly rejected the pledge, while others made their allegiance conditional upon communal consensus. Yet, before accepting the caliphate, 'Alī himself had stipulated the establishment of general consensus in society (Abū Ḥātim, 2017, pp. 420–423), prioritizing the approval of the veterans of Badr. Nevertheless, due to the insistence of the people and political pressure, he accepted the caliphate (Ibn al-Athīr, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 203–204; Fiḡlālī, 1989, vol. 2, pp. 371–374).

The reasons offered by Companions for not pledging allegiance to 'Alī are cited in various works. Some linked their refusal to their former official positions during 'Uthmān's caliphate, their loyalty to him, and the privileges they enjoyed under his rule (Ibn al-Athīr, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 195–203). Others categorically rejected the pledge. Figures such as Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, and Muḥammad b. Maslama stated that they would not pledge allegiance until general consensus was achieved within the community, while some others claimed that the Prophet had instructed them to remain neutral in times of discord.

According to Abū Ḥātim, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ said to 'Alī: "I will not pledge allegiance to you. Unless you give me a sword with which I can distinguish between the believer and the unbeliever, I will not accompany you wherever you go." Similarly, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar declared: "For the sake of God and our kinship, do not compel me to something of which I have no knowledge! By God, I will not pledge allegiance until all Muslims unite around a man upon whom God grants consensus." (Abū Ḥātim, 2017, pp. 420–423; Ibn Sa'd, n.d., vol. 3, p. 160). Another report cited by Ibn Sa'd records that the Prophet handed a sword to Muḥammad b. Maslama, saying: "As long as the polytheists are fought, fight them with this sword. But if you see Muslims facing one another, then take it to Uḥud and strike it against the rocks until it breaks. Then return to your home, and remain there until an unjust sinner extends his hand against you, or until the death decreed for you by God overtakes you." (Ibn Sa'd, n.d., vol. 3, pp. 512–515).

In conclusion, the stance of those Companions who did not pledge allegiance to 'Alī, or who pledged conditionally, was based on both individual justifications and the political pressures of the time. These attitudes formed significant dynamics underlying the first civil wars in Islamic history (the Battles of the Camel and Ṣiffin). The Companions who stipulated communal consensus and thus remained hesitant included Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, and Muḥammad b. Maslama, as well as 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, who pursued a politically expedient course. This study examines the correspondences with these Companions and their replies. If the reports concerning these letters are authentic, they reveal both the legitimacy of 'Alī and the political motives underlying the opposition of Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān.

IV. MU'ĀWIYA'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH CERTAIN COMPANIONS: POLITICAL INTENTIONS AND THE QUEST FOR RELIGIOUS LEGITIMACY

The accession of 'Alī to the caliphate after the martyrdom of 'Uthmān brought profound ruptures within the Muslim community. The hesitation, conditional allegiance, or outright refusal of some Companions to pledge allegiance—alongside

Between Faith and Power: Mu'āwiya's Correspondence with the Companions Who Declined Allegiance to 'alī

claims that they were coerced—together with the stance of the Companions who demanded retribution for 'Uthmān's blood (the partisans of the Battle of the Camel), and the efforts of Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, governor of Syria, to secure political legitimacy under the pretext of seeking justice for 'Uthmān, were all clear manifestations of these ruptures. As a close observer of the process, Mu'āwiya, in his search for legitimacy, sought to draw strength from those Companions who had not pledged allegiance to Caliph 'Alī. To this end, he wrote letters to the people of Medina and to notable Companions, seeking their support; however, these efforts did not yield the outcome he had anticipated. According to the reports, the first letter was sent to his close advisor, 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, from whom he expected the greatest support.

A. The Correspondence Between Mu'āwiya B. Abī Sufyān And 'Amr B. Al-'Āṣ And Its Outcome

When 'Alī assumed leadership, he dismissed Mu'āwiya from his post as governor of Syria and appointed another in his place. Mu'āwiya, however, refused to relinquish his position and, moreover, began to openly contest the legitimacy of 'Alī's caliphate, actively working against him. Particularly significant in this process were his political maneuvers in Syria, his efforts to organize opposition against 'Alī, and his search for legitimacy through correspondence with prominent figures in order to secure their backing. Among these was 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ.

The sources narrate the exchange between Mu'āwiya and 'Amr as follows: When 'Alī sent Jarīr b. 'Abd Allāh to demand Mu'āwiya's allegiance, Mu'āwiya stalled, saying to Jarīr: "Give me some time to breathe." That night, he wrote to 'Amr: "Marwān has come with a group hostile to 'Alī and pledged allegiance to me. 'Alī has sent Jarīr to obtain allegiance. I am entrusting myself to you—come quickly!" Upon receiving this letter, 'Amr consulted his sons. His son 'Abd Allāh advised: "O old man, the Messenger of God died while pleased with you. Abū Bakr and 'Umar likewise. Do not corrupt your religion for a little worldly gain from Mu'āwiya, lest you tumble into Hell." But his other son Muḥammad urged: "Engage in this matter immediately! Strive to be a leader before you are reduced to a follower." Afterward, 'Amr recited verses expressing inclination toward Mu'āwiya, to which 'Abd Allāh retorted: "The old man has defiled himself and sold his religion." Torn between indecision, 'Amr repeatedly ordered his servant to pack and unpack, until finally the servant remarked: "Let me tell you of your situation: your heart is torn between the hereafter and the world—you cannot decide which to choose." 'Amr then asked: "What is the truth, in your opinion?" The servant replied: "Remain at home. If the people of religion prevail, you can live under their order. If the people of the world prevail, they cannot do without you." To this, 'Amr answered: "Then drive on to Mu'āwiya." (Ibn Sa'd, n.d., vol. 5, pp. 86–91; Ibn al-Athīr, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 281–284; al-Dhahabī, 1996, vol. 6, pp. 258–261).

As the sources indicate, 'Alī had dispatched Jarīr b. 'Abd Allāh to summon Mu'āwiya to obedience. Mu'āwiya, however, delayed the envoy and in the meantime appealed to 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ for assistance (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, vol. 1, pp. 431–436). After receiving the letter, 'Amr consulted his two sons. 'Abd Allāh advised him not to compromise his faith for worldly ambitions, while Muḥammad counseled him to seize the political opportunity. The moral deliberation that 'Amr underwent during this decision-making process is particularly noteworthy. Despite his son 'Abd Allāh's warnings not to "sell his religion for the world," 'Amr ultimately chose to align himself with Mu'āwiya, reportedly in return for the governorship of Egypt (Ibn al-Athīr, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 281–284; al-Ṭabarī, n.d., vol. 4, pp. 35–36; al-Dhahabī, 1996, vol. 6, pp. 258–261). This episode demonstrates the extent to which the first major political conflict among the Companions was laden with personal, moral, and strategic contradictions. It has been narrated that 'Amr joined Mu'āwiya's ranks because he believed that 'Alī had sidelined him in administrative matters and thus offered him no political role (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, vol. 1, pp. 431–436).

Ultimately, though torn between worldly gain and concern for the afterlife, 'Amr decided to join Mu'āwiya. After arriving in Syria and meeting with him face to face, 'Amr reproached Mu'āwiya for failing to protect 'Uthmān, even as Mu'āwiya posed as his legal guardian. Nonetheless, it was reported that 'Amr pledged his allegiance to Mu'āwiya in exchange for the governorship of Egypt (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, vol. 1, pp. 431–436). During these developments, the Syrian populace also rallied to Mu'āwiya under the slogan of avenging 'Uthmān's death. The public display of 'Uthmān's bloodied garment and the severed fingers of his wife Nā'ila incited public anger and turned sentiment against Caliph 'Alī. Consequently, Mu'āwiya consolidated the support of the Syrian community, gathered strategic figures like 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ under his banner, and effectively laid the groundwork for the forthcoming Battle of Ṣiffīn (Ibn al-Athīr, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 281–284; al-Dhahabī, 1996, vol. 6, pp. 258–261).

If the aforementioned reports are authentic, then the deliberation of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ with his sons and the arguments presented therein reveal the following: 'Alī, as the successor of a sacred mission, pursued the path of his forefathers, the Hāshimites, and the Messenger of God. Mu'āwiya, by contrast, as the follower of a worldly mission, continued the path of the Umayyads and his father, Abū Sufyān, the former leader of Mecca. The admonition of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr to his father, warning him of the choice between this world and the hereafter, clearly reflects the distinction between the paths of Caliph 'Alī and Mu'āwiya. Thus, it is evident that 'Alī's caliphate was wholly legitimate in the eyes of those who sought a religious mission, whereas Mu'āwiya's actions—contrary to claims of being based on ijtihād—were transparently motivated by worldly ambition. As will be discussed below, this point also emerges from the replies of other Companions to Mu'āwiya's letters.

Mu'āwiya's Letter to the People of Medina: Despite the warnings of his advisor 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ that such efforts would be of no avail, Mu'āwiya first addressed a letter to the people of Medina. In this letter, he stated that he had not been present in Medina

Between Faith and Power: Mu'āwiya's Correspondence with the Companions Who Declined Allegiance to 'alī

during the days of civil strife and thus had not witnessed the events directly. He accused 'Alī of collaborating with the killers of 'Uthmān, claimed to be the rightful guardian (waṣī) of 'Uthmān, and demanded retribution. Declaring his intention to fight for this cause, he sought the support of the Medinese. The people of Medina, however, responded angrily to his appeal, reproaching Mu'āwiya and his advisor 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ in strong terms (al-Dhahabī, 1996, vol. 6, p. 263; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, vol. 1, pp. 431–436).

Mu'āwiya's Correspondence with Prominent Companions: Their Reactions and Justifications: Following the rejection by the people of Medina, Mu'āwiya—again against the counsel of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, who insisted that such attempts would be fruitless—persisted in writing letters to prominent Companions such as 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, and Muḥammad b. Maslama, seeking to win them over to his side (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, vol. 1, p. 431–436). Nevertheless, these efforts failed to elicit the support he desired, as many Companions opposed his invitation on various grounds.

B. Mu'āwiya's Letter to 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar and His Response

Al-Dhahabī (1996) records the correspondence between Mu'āwiya and Ibn 'Umar as follows: In his letter, Mu'āwiya wrote: “After the killing of 'Uthmān, there was no one among Quraysh more suitable than you for leadership, under whom the people could unite. Yet my affection for you changed when you abandoned him and confronted those who supported him. When I saw you in opposition to 'Alī, I was greatly pleased. Assist us, therefore, in seeking retribution for the oppressed caliph. I am not seeking authority against you; rather, I desire that authority be in your hands. If you do not accept, then let the matter be decided by a council (shūrā) among the Muslims. Peace.” Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) replied: “What has brought you to this position is your greed in relation to me. O Mu'āwiya! Your soul says to you: 'Let me abandon 'Alī, the noble Muhājirūn, and the Anṣār, and instead follow you!' As for your claim that I opposed 'Alī and criticized him: perhaps I am not equal to him in faith, migration, harming the polytheists, or his rank with the Messenger of Allah. But an event occurred concerning which I had no instruction from the Prophet. Out of fear, I hesitated, saying: 'If this matter is guidance and virtue, then I have missed it; but if it is misguidance and error, then I am saved from it.' Do not delude yourself. Peace.” (al-Dhahabī, 1996, vol. 6, pp. 352–354). Another report transmitted by Ibn Sa'd describes how Mu'āwiya employed 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ as an intermediary to gauge Ibn 'Umar's inclination toward conflict. 'Amr asked: “O Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān! What prevents you from stepping forward (for the caliphate) so that we might pledge allegiance to you? You are the Companion of the Messenger of Allah, the son of the Commander of the Faithful, and the most deserving of this matter among the people!”

Ibn 'Umar responded: “Have all the people agreed upon this matter you mention?” 'Amr replied: “Yes, except for a small group.” Ibn 'Umar then said: “If only three strong men remained in Hajar, I would have no need for the caliphate!” The transmitter reported that 'Amr then realized that Ibn 'Umar did not wish to fight. He further suggested material incentives, to which Ibn 'Umar retorted: “Away with you! Leave my house! Woe to you! My religion is not your dinars and dirhams.” (Ibn Sa'd, n.d., vol. 4, pp. 209–210). According to these accounts, Mu'āwiya, in his letter to Ibn 'Umar, sought his support by portraying him as the most deserving candidate for the caliphate and by expressing satisfaction with his opposition to 'Alī. By asserting, “I do not desire authority; I desire it for you,” Mu'āwiya attempted to elevate him politically and suggested shūrā as an alternative if Ibn 'Umar refused.

This support, however, was merely a tactical maneuver. Through 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, Mu'āwiya attempted to probe Ibn 'Umar's willingness to fight and pressured him by feigning to offer the caliphate. Ibn 'Umar, however, rejected such political traps, famously declaring: “My religion is not your dinars and dirhams.” His response indicates that he was even offered material incentives in exchange for his support. In his reply, Ibn 'Umar emphasized the high status of 'Alī in Islam, accusing Mu'āwiya of ambition and rejecting such greed. He made clear that his hesitation was due to the absence of prophetic guidance on the issue, not out of opposition to 'Alī. His stance ultimately revealed a cautious yet inner alignment with 'Alī, while he chose to remain neutral in practice (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, n.d., vol. 1, pp. 431–436).

C. Mu'āwiya's Letters to Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ and Muḥammad b. Maslama and Their Responses

Among the other prominent Companions to whom Mu'āwiya sent letters seeking support were Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ and Muḥammad b. Maslama. Both, however, rejected his call and refused to align with him (al-Dhahabī, 1996, vol. 6, pp. 352–354). In these letters, Mu'āwiya argued that Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr had risen to avenge the blood of 'Uthmān and that it was therefore necessary to stand with them. Yet, his efforts received no favorable response. In his reply, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ wrote: “I will not fight against 'Alī, nor will I unite in opposition to him. Had Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr not confronted him, it would have been better for them.” Thus, while Sa'd did not offer active support to 'Alī, his statement implicitly indicated disapproval of those who opposed him (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, n.d., vol. 1, pp. 431–436).

As for Muḥammad b. Maslama, he emphasized that the Messenger of Allah had advised him to remain neutral in times of civil strife (fitna), and he accused Mu'āwiya of being motivated by worldly ambition. Reports indicate that Muḥammad b. Maslama had acted as a mediator during the disturbances in 'Uthmān's caliphate, but when he realized reconciliation was impossible, he adhered to the prophetic counsel he had received. He is reported to have said: “The Messenger of Allah commanded me: 'When your companions fall into discord, do not involve yourself in their affairs. Strike your sword against the rocks of Uḥud until it

Between Faith and Power: Mu'āwiya's Correspondence with the Companions Who Declined Allegiance to 'Alī

breaks, and remain in your home until either a sinful hand reaches you or your appointed death comes.' I have acted accordingly." (Ebū Hātim, 2017, pp. 420–423; Shahyar, 2020, vol. 30, pp. 552–553). It is also recorded that he kept a wooden sword during the period of discord, symbolizing his withdrawal from political conflict (Ibn Sa'd, n.d., vol. 3, pp. 515–516). Thus, it became well known that he strove to distance himself from political rivalries (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, n.d., vol. 1, pp. 431–436). When Mu'āwiya received such unfavorable responses, he turned to the public, delivering a sermon in which he exalted his own status and accused 'Alī of being in error. To justify his position, he stressed that he had served as the Prophet's scribe, as governor under 'Umar and 'Uthmān, and that his noble lineage further legitimized him. He also asserted that the Syrians had pledged allegiance to him, thus tipping the balance of power in his favor. Subsequently, acknowledging 'Amr's counsel, he accelerated his preparations for war. From the pulpit, he declared that 'Uthmān had been killed unjustly, that he—as 'Uthmān's walī (legal guardian)—was obligated to seek retribution, and he attempted to justify his stance by citing the Qur'ān (Q 17:33) (Aycan, 2020, vol. 30, pp. 330–332).

However, this verse was considered to stand against, rather than in support of, his claim. In Islamic law, the status of walī belongs to the heir (i.e., the son), not to a cousin such as Mu'āwiya (Ibn al-Athīr, 1987, vol. 3, pp. 195–204; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, n.d., vol. 1, pp. 431–436). Despite these rebuffs, Mu'āwiya did not relinquish his aspiration for power. He mobilized an army from among his followers and confronted Caliph 'Alī, preferring conflict over reconciliation. Consequently, these correspondences concerning the legitimacy of the caliphate provided the political and intellectual groundwork for the first major civil wars in Islamic history (Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, n.d., vol. 1, pp. 431–436).

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined the debates surrounding the legitimacy of 'Alī's caliphate and the attitudes of certain Companions during this period. The turmoil that began with the martyrdom of 'Uthmān not only produced a crisis of political authority but also led to deep divisions that threatened the social cohesion of the Muslim community. Although the pledge of allegiance (bay'a) to 'Alī was accepted by a large portion of society, the refusal or hesitation of some Companions reflected the internal tensions of the era. Their positions were shaped by individual reasoning, religious sensitivities, and political concerns.

The correspondences preserved in historical sources demonstrate that 'Alī, by virtue of his character, was a leader with inherent legitimacy. The people of Medina and leading Companions recognized this, though some chose neutrality to avoid being drawn into the flames of discord. It becomes evident that the religious vision and moral integrity were on the side of Caliph 'Alī, while Mu'āwiya's aim was neither the pursuit of justice nor the establishment of a religious polity, but rather a worldly ambition to seize power by any means.

Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān's correspondence with prominent Companions in his attempt to undermine 'Alī's legitimacy and to secure political ground highlights the depth of these disputes. Yet, these efforts generally failed to achieve the desired outcome; the Companions either remained neutral or implicitly expressed support in favor of 'Alī.

In conclusion, these letters and developments provide insight into the political, social, and religious foundations of the first major civil wars in Islamic history (the Battles of Jamal and Şiffin). They reveal that the caliphate was not merely a system of governance but also a symbol of the struggle for both religious and political legitimacy. Based on the consulted sources, the legitimacy of 'Alī's caliphate emerges as being largely affirmed on religious and moral grounds.

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Between Faith and Power: Mu‘āwiya’s Correspondence with the Companions Who Declined Allegiance to ‘alī

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