

**An Example of the Emulationist History for Early Period of Islam: The Ahmadi Understanding of History\***

Erken Dönem İslam Tarihine Öykünmeci Bir Tarih Örneği: Ahmedi Tarih Telakkisi

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## Abstract

With the death of the Prophet Mohammad, the debates within the Ummah and the divisions that occurred in the process have been interpreted in different ways by different Muslim communities. These different interpretations have led almost every sect to write its own "early history of Islam". In fact, this situation has continued throughout the history of Islam from present. Like almost all Muslim communities, Ahmadis have also developed a unique interpretation of the history of the adventure of Islam from the early period to the present within the framework of their basic belief. In this way, the period beginning with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has been tried to be presented in a historical pattern related with the Prophet Mohammad. In this new vision of the prophetic history of the Ahmadis, everyone from Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's close circle to his distant circle finds a place for himself. It has been determined that all identities belonging to the early period of Islamic history, such as companions, Umm al-mu'minin, khalifat al-mu'minin, and "Kharijite", have been reconstructed. In this article, the Ahmadi view of history, which is an interesting example of an imitative understanding of history, will be examined.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** History of Islamic Sects, Ahmadiyya, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Emulationist History.

## Öz

Hız. Peygamber'in vefatıyla birlikte ümmet içerisinde yaşanan tartışmalar ve süreç içerisinde ortaya çıkan ayrışmalar farklı Müslüman topluluklar tarafından farklı şekillerde anlamlandırılmıştır. Bu farklı şekilde anlamlandırmalar süreç içerisinde neredeyse her mezhebin kendi erken dönem tarihini yazmasına / tarihsel algılar oluşturmaya neden olmuştur. Nitekim bu durum İslam'ın erken döneminden günümüze kadar devam etmiştir. Hemen hemen bütün Müslüman topluluklar gibi Ahmedîler de inanç esasları çerçevesinde İslam'ın erken döneminden günümüze kadar devam eden serüvenine yönelik bir tarihsel okuma biçimi / tarih telakkisi geliştirmişlerdir. Bu minvalde Mirza Gulam Ahmed'le başlatılan dönemi Hz. Peygamber'le ilişkilendiren bir tarih örüntüsü içerisinde sunma gayretinde olmuşlardır. Ahmedîlerin, bu yeni nebevi tarih tasavvurlarında, Mirza Gulam Ahmed'in yakın çevresinden uzak çevresine kadar herkesin kendisine bir şekilde yer bulduğu; "sahabi", "ümmü'l mü'minin", "halifetü'l mü'minin", "Harici" gibi İslam tarihinin erken dönemine ait bütün kimliklerin yeniden inşa edildiği tespit edilmiştir. Bu makalede de öykünmecî bir tarih anlayışının ilginç bir örneği olan Ahmedî tarih telakkisi incelenecektir.

**Keywords:** İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi, Ahmedilik, Mirza Gulam Ahmed, Öykünmecî Tarih.

## INTRODUCTION

After the death of the Prophet Mohammad, the debates within the Ummah were interpreted in different ways, resulting in divisions among Muslim communities. First in the early period, the Kharijites and the Shiites, began to form their historical perceptions on the events of the early period of Islam within the framework of their own sectarian thinking. In particular, they always refer to these events as justification for their sectarianization and the institutionalization of their sects. This tradition, which got going with the Kharijites and Shiites, was later continued by the Murji'ah and Mu'tazilah, each attempting to make a reading of the early period of Islam in the context of their own perception.

Kharijites, Shiites and Mu'tazilites were highly critical of the realities of the early period of Islam. They seriously animadverted the people who took part in the discussions within the ummah and even made various accusations against them. This caused a tendency for the main body of the Muslim community, later named Ahl al-Sunnah, to completely own the early period with its mistakes and faults, and ignore or distort the negative historical memories of this period. In particular in response to the Kharijites' and Shiites' perceptions and oppositional attitudes towards the companions/sahaba, Ahl al-Sunnah acted with an attitude of respect for the companions and protected them from accusatory and negative comments. In this context, the pioneers of the Ahl al-Sunnah rejected the claim that Ali's right had been usurped and that he was actually the first caliph/imam by the Shiites and argued that the order of the caliphate came in accordance with the order of virtue. Based on this argument, the most virtuous of the companions is the first caliph, Abu Bakr followed by Omar, the second caliph. In this regard, Ahl al-Sunnah used a very interpretive language when interpreting the early period events, which started with the caliphate debates and then grew with the addition of other debates. It tried not to present the unfavorable events of this period in a historically negative light.<sup>1</sup>

Reading the early period in different ways based on sectarian affiliation was not only a feature of the early sects, but continued with the many examples throughout the long historical adventure of Islam. In fact, each religious group preferred to interpret the early period within the framework of its own religious views. One of these examples is Ahmadiyya. Ahmadiyya emerged in the nineteenth century in the Indian subcontinent with the belief that the prophethood associated with Prophet Mohammad continued and it built a new prophetic history that emulated to the period of Prophet Mohammad in order to create legitimacy for its own beliefs. In this study, we will try to present comprehension of the early period of Islam by Ahmadis using the example of the imitative historical understanding of Ahmadiyya.

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<sup>1</sup> Metin Bozan, *Yaşayan İslam Mezhepleri* (Diyarbakır: y.y., 2022), 52-54; Türcan Galip, "Mu'tezile'nin Ortaya Çıkışı Bağlamında Dini ve Sosyo-Kültürel Çevre", *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, Review of the Faculty of Divinity, University of Süleyman Demirel* 42 (Ocak 2019), 68-70; Metin Bozan, "Tarihi Hadiselerin Konjonktürel İnşası (Şia'da Kerbela Örneği)", *Şarkiyat İlmi Araştırmalar Dergisi (Journal of Oriental Scientific Reserach (JOSR))* 9/2 (Kasım 2017), 803-819; Ebü'l-Hasen Ahmed b. Yahyâ b. Câbir b. Dâvûd el-Belâzürî, *Ensâbü'l-eshrâf*, ed. Riyâz ez-Ziriklî - Süheyl Zekkâr (Beyrut: Dâru'l-fikr, 1417), 5/569.

## 1. INTERPRETATION OF THE EARLY PERIOD OF ISLAM FROM THE AHMADI PERSPECTIVE

Like almost all Muslim communities, Ahmadis have developed a style of historical reading on the adventure of Islam. The basis of Ahmadi belief is that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was chosen as a holy person and sent as a prophet associated with Prophet Mohammad. In fact, the Ahmadi historical view brings the historical adventure of Islam from the early period to the present within the framework of this belief. In fact, the Ahmadi historical view interprets Islam by dividing it into different periods; The life of the Prophet Mohammad (571-632) and the caliphate of the four caliphs (632-661) is considered the beginning and “holy” period of Islam. The following periods are defined as those in which the caliphate became a “succession” through dynasty and lost its divinity by continuing as the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, and Ottomans.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the nineteenth century is presented as a period in which Islam suffered a great political and religious decline. In this chaotic period, it is claimed that a new historical adventure of Islam began, as in the time of the Prophet Mohammad. This period, which Ahmadis call the “Awakening of Islam,” began with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and continues to the present day.<sup>3</sup>

Ahmadis interpret the period that began with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a “new historical adventure” like a new religious historical period initiated by the Prophet Mohammad. They see its difference from the earlier period not as a “prophet bringing a new Shari’ah”, but as “renewing the existing Shari’ah” by continuing the work of the previous prophet. In this way, they try to present the period beginning with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in a historical pattern associated with the Prophet Mohammad. The reason for such a historical pattern is that although they call Mirza Ghulam Ahmad by different names, they accept him as a “prophet” not bringing a new Shari’ah.

While constructing a new prophetic history centered on Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Ahmadis took the period of Prophet Mohammad and following period of the four caliphs as a reference. They associated Mirza Ghulam Ahmad with Prophet Mohammad and the caliphs who came after Mirza Ghulam Ahmad with the period of the four caliphs. As a necessary consequence of such an association, they had to present the early period in a “holy” and “glorious” historical pattern. They tried to interpret the discussions that took place in the early period in a positive light like Ahl al-Sunnah.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s Comparison with Prophet Mohammad

As mentioned above, the Ahmadi view of history has been shaped by the construction of a new prophetic history centered on Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that emulates the time of the Prophet Mohammad. In this historical narrative, almost every identity and institution that existed during the time of the Prophet Mohammad also found a place for itself. In fact, this tradition was started by

<sup>2</sup> Karimullah Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam* (Surrey: Islam International Publications, 2010), 202-277, 286; Sheikh Abdulhadi, *Basics of Religious Education* (Canada: s.n., 1997), 189-213.

<sup>3</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 202-277, 286; Abdulhadi, *Basics of Religious Education*, 189-213.

<sup>4</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 202-270, 286; Abdulhadi, *Basics of Religious Education*, 189-213.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. After him, it has been continued by other Ahmadis until today. This approach has created a sacred ground for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and all those around him.<sup>5</sup>

The presentation of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in association with of Prophet Mohammad is a tradition that used widely with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad himself. He tried to draw similarities in various ways between the periods of the Prophet Mohammad and himself. By associating time of Prophet Mohammad with his own, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wanted to appeal to the feelings of his followers and emphasize the authenticity of his sect. Because he aimed to protect his sect from disintegration due to the opposition that had been raised against him, especially with his claim to be the Messiah.<sup>6</sup>

This tradition was started by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was followed by the Ahmadis after him. In fact, while the life of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is presented by them, it is almost presented as if it were the time of Prophet Mohammad. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is presented with definitions that bring Prophet Mohammad to mind. Ahmadis have established many relationships between Prophet Mohammad and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, but those that are particularly emphasized and clearly identified are included here. The first form of relationship they have established between Prophet Mohammad and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is their time to announce their appointment by Allah. They claim that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad did not publicly announce his appointment by Allah for three years and they relate this to the Prophet Mohammad's public announcement of his message after three years of his first revelation.<sup>7</sup>

Another form of relationship established between the early revelation period of the Prophet Mohammad and the first period of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is those who pledge allegiance and their number. In the Islamic tradition, the number of the first Muslims is generally expressed with the number forty and the Ahmadis especially emphasize that the number of the first people who pledge allegiance is forty.<sup>8</sup>

The connection between the time of the Prophet Mohammad and the time of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has not been established by the Ahmadis on the basis of a numerical relationship alone. Moreover, a new prophetic history has been created to imitate the time of Prophet Mohammad, using real people and places. As a matter of fact, even when the physical characteristics of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad are given, the definitions applied for the schema of Prophet Mohammad are generally used.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 202-270286; Abdulhadi, *Basics of Religious Education*, 189-213.

<sup>6</sup> H. A. Rose (ed.), "Punjab and Northwest Frontier", *The Census of India 1901* (1902, ts.), CVIII/143; Spencer Lavan, *The Ahmadiyya Movement: A History and Perspective* (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1974), 94.

<sup>7</sup> A. R. Dard, *Life of Ahmad(As): Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement* (Tilford, Surrey: Islam International Publications, 2008), 226 dipnot.

<sup>8</sup> Mirza Gulam Ahmad, *Vasiyet*, çev. Jalal Şems (Türkiye: y.y., 2008); Lavan, *The Ahmadiyya Movement*, 42.

<sup>9</sup> It is stated that he was not thin or fat, but of medium height, bright-faced, modest and wise. His clothes were simple and he ate little and slowly are also particularly depicted in the books. See. Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 350.

Another feature that is suitable for establishing a relationship between the Prophet Mohammad and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is that it is stated in many Ahmadi sources that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad received very little education. This situation, it makes someone think that there is an attempt to establish a relationship with the Prophet Mohammad's being "ummi" - "illiterate".<sup>10</sup>

Another example of the relationship established between the Prophet Mohammad and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is the issue of "holy relics" by the Ahmadis. The special importance that Muslims attach to some of the personal belongings of the Prophet Mohammad, which have been handed down from him to the present day, is also the case for the personal belongings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the Ahmadi understanding. In fact, the personal belongings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad are meticulously preserved and some of these items are given as the gifts to people who are Ahmadi and in high positions.<sup>11</sup> In particular, these items are used in ceremonies such as the election of new Ahmadi caliph. In these ceremonies, the older jacket of the newly elected caliph is replaced with the jacket of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad which is carefully removed from its hiding place.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2. Portrait of a "Prophet"

For Ahmadis, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is the main, the founder, and the most significant figure in the sect. The fact that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is such an important person has led him to be portrayed as a "heroic" character in addition to his "prophetic" personality. This epic personality created for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was based on a superhuman concept of identity. In this conception, in connection with the acceptance of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet, Mirza Ghulam Ahmed has been presented in the form of "the best of men" and has been tried to be presented in the perception of a "holy prophet". There is no doubt that the "charismatic personality" of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is at the first stage of this legendary personality created for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. It is understood that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has a charismatic personality, a smooth speaking ability and a persuasive structure, from the people gathered around him.<sup>13</sup> With the claim of prophethood, the charismatic personality of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad took on a completely different meaning for the members of the sect and turned into a holy personality.<sup>14</sup>

In the first and most important step of the imagination of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, which can be considered almost superhuman, there is the effort to present Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a holy being even before his birth. In fact, it is said that before Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born, various miracles had taken place in the world like before Prophet Mohammad came. According to Ahmadis, "the world was prepared by Allah for his coming".<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Mirza Gulam Ahmad, "The Messenger of the Latter Days", *Review of Religions* 1/6 (1907), 20; Adil Khussain Khan, *From Sufism to Ahmadiyya: a Muslim minority movement in South Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 25. On the illiteracy of the Prophet Mohammad see. Ziya Şen, "Kur'an'da Ümmi Kavramı ve Hz. Peygamber'in Ümmiliği", *İslami İlimler Dergisi* 2 (Güz 2006), 203-218.

<sup>11</sup> Tariq Ahmad, "The Life of Hadhrat Tahir Ahmad", *Tariq Magazine*, (2004), 23.

<sup>12</sup> Tariq Ahmad, "The Life of Hadhrat Tahir Ahmad", 23.

<sup>13</sup> Lavan, *The Ahmadiyya Movement*, 98-99; Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmedi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 349-391.

<sup>15</sup> Dard, *Life of Ahmad(As)*, 25-26.

Another step of the Ahmadis' superhuman imagination of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is their effort to create a shrine for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad since his birth. In fact, there is a widespread belief that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was being prepared by Allah for his "prophecy" since his birth. At this point, it is especially emphasized that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was always different from other children since his childhood, he preferred solitude and did not play with the children, he gave importance to worship.<sup>16</sup>

Another step in the imagination of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad by Ahmadis is understood from the way Ahmadi sources present the daily life of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Mirza Ghulam is presented as a moral, virtuous, and decent person in his daily life. With this kind of presentation, it is tried to express that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has a very special personality since the times when he was "ordinary", "anybody". It tries to present him in the form of a "perfect human being" with the characteristics thought for the Prophet Mohammad.<sup>17</sup> The portrayal of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's childhood and youth with superhuman characteristics naturally led to the fact that his aspect associated with messianism and especially with the claim of prophethood contained elements attributing much more sanctity. In this form of presentation, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is portrayed as a being who was oriented towards divine signs and performed miracles from the moment Allah assigned him.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.3. Using the Concepts of the Early Period of Islam

The new perception of the prophetic history centered on Mirza Ghulam Ahmad created by the Ahmadis not only included Mirza Ghulam Ahmad "with a full prophetic identity," but also revealed identities such as "companions" and "ummu'l mu'minin" that existed in the time of the Prophet Mohammad. In particular, Mirza Ghulam Ahmed was at the center; all Ahmadis who were in contact with him, from his closeness to his surroundings, somehow found a place in this new prophetic understanding of the history. The terminology of the time of Prophet Mohammad was also preserved in these new identities.<sup>19</sup>

One of the most striking examples of the understanding of prophetic history is the way Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's followers addressed him during his lifetime. According to Ahmadi usage, the people who saw Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, were loyal to him, and participated in his conversation are called "sahaba" / "companions".<sup>20</sup> In addition, the expression "Radi Allahu Anhu", which was used

<sup>16</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 352-353; Maulvi Dost Mohammad Shahid, "The Life of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad", çev. M. A. K. Gahuri, *The Muslim Herald* 29/7/8 (Ağustos 1989), 12-13.

<sup>17</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 349; Shahid, "The Life of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad", 28.

<sup>18</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 311-320; Shahid, "The Life of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad", 11-32.

<sup>19</sup> Lavan, *The Ahmadiyya Movement*, 37; "Pakistan Hükümetince Hazırlanan 26 Nisan 1984 Tarihli Ahmediye Cemiyeti Aleyhtarı Hakkındaki Kanun" (Erişim 22 Ocak 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 501. These usage patterns are quite common today. See for a detailed information "Khilafat Moves to London", *Tariq Magazine*, (2004), 25; Iain Adamson, *A Man of God: The Life of His Holiness Khalifatul Masih IV of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam* (Great Britain: Islam International Publications, 1991), 228-229; Muhammed Celal Şems, *Hilafet* (Londra: Islam International Publications, 2008), 128.

to show respect to the companions of Prophet Mohammad, was also used for these people.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, these people are given a very special importance and sanctity.<sup>22</sup>

Within the framework of Miza Ghulam Ahmad's prophethood, Ahmadis also create a new "ahl al-bayt" concept for his family members. Along with this concept, they attached a special importance to all the relatives who believe in him, starting with the first-degree relatives. In this context, the term "umm al-mu'minin"/"mother of the believers" is used for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's mother and wife and Ahmadis.<sup>23</sup> A figure is drawn for Newwab Mubarak Begum, the wife of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, similar to Prophet Mohammad's wife Aisha.<sup>24</sup> In this concept of "ahl al-bayt", the sons of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad are also given special importance and privileges as chalips in the administration of the sect after him.<sup>25</sup> This relationship that is attempted to be established between the households of the Prophet Mohammad and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is a clear representation of the construction of a history that emulates the time of the Prophet Mohammad by the Ahmadis.

#### 1.4. The Ahmadi Caliphate: The Emulation of the al-Khulafa al-Rashidun Period

Another dimension of the construction of a new prophetic history is the constitution of the caliphate as in the period of al-Khulafa al-Rashidun after the Prophet Mohammad. After reconstructing the period of the Prophet Mohammad with its people and institutions, they also reconstructed the period after their "prophet" within the framework of their own thoughts and formed a new period of four caliphs. With this understanding, which includes the four caliphs after Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the four Ahmadi caliphs are presented in relation to the Rashid caliphs. The socio-political situation during the Rashid Caliphs was also brought up. Although the Ahmadis did not want to express it, this new period was conceived as the "al-Khulafa al-Rashidun period" and the Ahmadi caliphs were associated with the Rashid caliphs.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the concepts of "amir al-mu'minin," "khalifat al-Mu'minin," "khalifat al-Islam" was begun to be used for Ahmadi caliphs as in the period of Rashid caliphs.<sup>27</sup>

The acceptance of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the "prophet" was the main determining factor in the initiation of a new al-Khulafa al-Rashidun tradition by the Ahmadis after the death of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The period after the Prophet Mohammad was tried to be reconstructed for the chosen person after the death of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. In fact, the election of Maulana Hakim Nuruddin as the caliph facilitated the revelation of this relationship. Because Hakim Nuruddin was

<sup>21</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 501; "Khilafat Moves to London", 25; Adamson, *A Man of God*, 228-229; Şems, *Hilafet*, 128.

<sup>22</sup> Adamson, *A Man of God*, 228.

<sup>23</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 349; Muhamed Zafrullah Khan, *Hazrat Maulvi Nooruddeen Khalifatu'l Masih I* (UK: Islam International Publications, 2006), 157, 170, 200-201.

<sup>24</sup> See for a study on this subject. Halide Rumeysa Küçüköner, "Ahmedîlik'te Hilafet Eksenli Ayrışmalar", *e-Makalat Mezhep Araştırmaları Dergisi* 14/2 (Güz 2021), 862-903.

<sup>25</sup> See for a study on this subject. Küçüköner, "Ahmedîlik'te Hilafet Eksenli Ayrışmalar".

<sup>26</sup> Mirza Beşiruddin Mahmud Ahmed, *Khilafat-e Rashidah* (UK: Islam International Publications, 2009), 123; Khan, *Hazrat Maulvi Nooruddeen Khalifatu'l Masih I*, 176.

<sup>27</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 266-276; Şems, *Hilafet*, 87.

<sup>28</sup> It is possible to reach these usage patterns on an official website opened by the Ahmadis on behalf of the Ahmadi caliphs. See for the website. <https://www.khalifaofislam.com/> Erişim tarihi 30.10.2018.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's closest friend and the first person to pay allegiance to him, he led the congregation in prayer during his illness. These aspects of him facilitated his association with Abu Bakr. In addition, Hakim Nuruddin's many personal characteristics associated with Abu Bakr began to be mentioned even the pseudonym "Abu Bakr-al-Siddiq" began to be used for him.<sup>28</sup>

Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, who was chosen as caliph after Maulana Hakim Nuruddin, also found a place in this newly constructed historical imagination. As caliph, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad kept the sect together through various religious and political difficulties, especially during the Pakistani period and he made serious contributions to the institutionalization of the sect. This allowed him to be associated with Caliph Omar, and the pseudonym "Fazl al-Omar" began to be used for him.<sup>29</sup>

The period of the third caliph, Mirza Nasir Ahmad, on the other hand, coincided with the troubled times in Pakistan and covered the process of declaring a "non-Islamic minority" and is associated with the period of Chaliph Uthman. They tried to explain the correctness of their own caliphate by the problems of the period of Caliph Uthman.

The period of the fourth Caliph, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, is associated with the period of Caliph Ali because of the Mirza Tahir Ahmad's emigration to England due to political turmoil in Pakistan. Although the characteristics of the last two Ahmadi caliphs associated with the period of the Rashid caliphs are not included in Ahmadi sources because of the reactions of other Muslims, it is understood that almost exactly the same as the previous period was built in this new Khulafa-al-Rashidun era created by the Ahmadis.

While the period of the Rashid Caliphs was reconstructed by the Ahmadis, the history of Islam was in a sense reconstructed. In fact, even "the Kharijites," the first separatist movement in the history of Islam, found a place in this new history. Because they named the group called Lahori Ahmadis, who left them, as "the Kharijites."<sup>30</sup> With these attitudes, the foundations of the activities of building a new prophetic history were tried to be strengthened with almost all the institutions and concepts of the early period of Islam.

### 1.5. Alternative Symbolic Centers to Mecca-Medina

The impact of the places that Ahmadis consider "holy" in the rise of the new prophetic history that they started with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad on solid foundations is undoubtedly quite great. In fact, the most special and significant of the "holy" places for them is the town of Qadian,<sup>31</sup> where Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born. During his lifetime, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad gave special

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad Syed Hasanat, *Hakeem Noor-ud-Deen (Khalifatu'l Masih) The Way of Righteous* (UK: Islam International Publications, 2003), 203; Abdulhadi, *Basics of Religious Education*, 233; Shahid, "The Life of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad", 17.

<sup>29</sup> Mujeebur Rahman, *Fazl-e-Umar Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad* (UK, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> Mirza Beşiruddin Mahmud Ahmed, *Â'ina-i Sadakat Lahore 1921* (Lahore: Islamia Steam Press, 1921), 2; Ali Muhammed Usman, *Kadiyani Geleneğinin İki Temel Akimi Olarak Rebva Cemaati Ve Lahori Cemaati: Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2016), 2.

<sup>31</sup> The town is located on the borders of India at the present.

importance to Qadian.<sup>32</sup> He declared that the center of the sect should be Qadian. He stated that the place of the “Calsa Salana” -the annual gatherings of the Ahmadis- should also be Qadian. In fact, these statements led to the interpretation of the annual congregations of the Ahmadis as “the pilgrimage of the Ahmadis” and the annual congregations as “places of pilgrimage”.<sup>33</sup> With this approach of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, it would not be wrong to say that the symbols of “Mecca” and “Medina” were created with an imitative approach to Islamic history.<sup>34</sup> After Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Qadiyan continued to maintain its importance by the followers of the sect as pointed out by him. In fact, Valentine regarded Qadian as the “Bayt al-Lahim” of the Ahmadis, the birthplace of their prophets.<sup>35</sup>

The growing interest of the members of the sect in Qadian continued in this way until the separation of Pakistan and India in 1947. With this separation, the followers of the sect had to leave Qadiyan as a result of forced migration.<sup>36</sup> However, they tried to preserve the symbolic value of Qadiyan. In this context, they built a new Qadian with the name of “Rabwah” in Pakistan. In this newly built city, sectarian institutions, residences and places of worship such as mosques as in Qadian were created for Ahmadis. Although they did not express it clearly, they also attributed the “holiness” to this city, which is a continuation of Qadian.<sup>37</sup> In fact, based on this attitude of the Ahmadis, westerners have evaluated Rabbah as the “holy ground” of the Ahmadis.<sup>38</sup>

The continuation of the sanctity of Qadian by the Ahmadis was not limited to Rabwah. They continued this understanding after Caliph Tahir Ahmad fled the regime in Pakistan and immigrated to England. To keep the spirit of Qadian alive in England, they created a new center called “Islamabad” where Ahmadis could gather. This place, where the tomb of Caliph Tahir Ahmad is located, has become so important by and by that it has become a holy ground that Ahmadis would like to see it. In fact, Ahmadi sources define this place as the “blessed ground”.<sup>39</sup>

In general, it has been observed that Ahmadis, from Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to the present day, have made efforts to create alternative holy places like Mecca-Medina<sup>40</sup> for themselves by sanctifying the places where the sectarian centers are located, with the effect of being excluded from

<sup>32</sup> Dard, *Life of Ahmad(As)*, 771-782; Simon Ross Valentine, *Islam and the Ahmadiyya Jama'at, History, Belief, Practice* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2008), 40.

<sup>33</sup> Lavan, *The Ahmadiyya Movement*, 57.

<sup>34</sup> Spate, O. H. K. - Learmonth A. T. A., *India and Pakistan A General and Regional Geography* (London: s.n., 1954), 189-192.

<sup>35</sup> Valentine, *Islam and the Ahmadiyya Jama'at, History, Belief, Practice*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Zirvi, *Welcome to Ahmadiyyat The True Islam*, 329-333.

<sup>37</sup> Halide Rumeysa Küçüköner, *Mirza Beşiruddin Mahmud Ahmed ve Ahmediye Cemaati'ndeki Yeri*, (Diyarbakır: Dicle Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi), 2011), 79; Sadia Saeed, “Pakistani Nationalism and the State Marginalisation of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan”, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 7/3 (Aralık 2007), 144; *Nawa-e-Waqt Gazetesi* (16 Haziran 1974); Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, 41.

<sup>38</sup> İftikhar H. Malik, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan* (UK: Minortiy Rights Group International Report, 2002), 26.

<sup>39</sup> Fazal Shahid, “Islamabad-A Blessed Ground”, *Tariq Magazine*, (Temmuz 2004), 102.

It is not correct to make an interpretation from this information that the Ahmadis reject hajj and umrah. The main reason for this is that they are excluded by Muslims because of their ideas.

the main body of Islam. These places are very important to Ahmadis because they allow for Ahmadis to form a common identity and history.<sup>41</sup>

The efforts of the Ahmadis to establish new holy places are directly related to the activities of constructing a new prophetic history. They are trying to reconstruct a prophetic portrait for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, as in the period from the birth to the death of the Prophet Mohammad, and to reconstruct the history of the early period of Islam after Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. In all these approaches, it would not be wrong to say that they constructed a new prophetic history for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

## CONCLUSION

With the death of the Prophet Mohammad, the debates within the Ummah and the divisions that occurred in the process have been interpreted in different ways by different Muslim communities. These different interpretations have led almost every sect to write its own "early history of Islam" or to create historical perceptions. In fact, this situation has continued throughout the history of Islam. Like almost all Muslim communities, Ahmadis have also developed a unique interpretation of the history of the adventure of Islam from the early period to the present within the framework of their beliefs. In fact, at a time when Islam was experiencing its most chaotic period in the 19th century, they believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was sent as a prophet associate to Prophet Mohammad. In this way, the period beginning with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has been tried to be presented in a historical pattern related with the Prophet Mohammad. In this new vision of the prophetic history of the Ahmadis, everyone from Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's close circle to his distant circle finds a place for himself. It has been determined that all identities belonging to the early period of Islamic history, such as Companions, Umm al-Mu'minin, Khalifat al-Mu'minin, and Kharijites, have been reconstructed. As a result, religious groups have always referred to the early period of Islam as their field of legitimacy. In fact, if they can legitimize themselves through the early history of Islam, they think that they have fulfilled this standard as one of the basic criteria of their authenticity. Ahmadiyya, which emerged quite recently, in the nineteenth century, is also trying to create a legitimate base for its authenticity by taking the early period of Islamic history as the reference for its new prophetic history imitating the time of the Prophet Mohammad. For more than a century, Ahmadiyya continues to impress millions with its presentation of a new prophetic history.

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<sup>41</sup> Shahid, "Islamabad-A Blessed Ground", 98-102.

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