A VIOLENT ORIGIN:
A GIRARDIAN ANALYSIS OF THE SCAPEGOATING OF
ALI IBN ABU TALIB IN SHI'ITE TRADITION.

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

The above thesis is my own unaided work both in concept and execution, apart from the normal guidance from my supervisor. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation applies Rene Girard's theory of the scapegoat mechanism to prove that Ali ibn Abu Talib appears in Shi'ite traditions as an innocent victim. The aim is to investigate Girard's substantial body of work to determine whether Ali was a scapegoat and a victim of a conspiracy within his community. Girard's theory is founded in mimetic desire, where he incorporated external and internal mediation to form an analysis of mimetic rivalry. Using various texts to develop his theory and support his concepts, he investigated Aristotle, Plato, Stendhal, Proust, Shakespeare and Freud. He developed his theory from the interaction between friends to the incorporation of an object of desire to form the 'French triangle'. He moved from investigating this 'triangle' in personal relationships to conspiracies and subsequently to communities with regard to primitive religions. It was in the discovery of the sacred victim that Girard recognized the purpose of myth, that it concealed the role of the persecutors and that it silenced the victim. Girard then transferred his deductions to analyzing the Bible, where he identified ways in which the text gave the victim a voice. He maintains that only Jesus supported a non-violent position and embraced positive mimetic desire in the form of imitating the love of God. In reviewing Ali's life, one discovers that it reveals Girard's concepts of mimetic rivalry, conspiracy and collective violence. There is the historical Ali and the divine Imam Ali. These two positions can be reconciled by following a constitutive reductionist method for the purpose of analysis in applying the scapegoat mechanism theory. Reductionism is useful and necessary for this study. While the historical Ali reveals a victim, the divine Ali takes responsibility for his own death. The historical and the divine reveal two perspectives in relating Ali's story, one from the victim's perspective and the other from the perspective of the persecutors. However, with respect to the scapegoat mechanism, Shi'ite traditions about Ali, inclusive of historical, popular, or ghulat traditions, show that Jesus was not the only victim to reveal his innocence and embrace non-violence for positive mimesis. Rather, Ali goes further in rejecting materialism to avoid envy, encouraging his community to witness his poverty. Without the distraction of material things, Ali could demonstrate God's love. While Girard claimed that Christianity, particularly the gospels, revealed the victim's innocence in Jesus Christ, Ali brings forth a similar message of imitating

the love of God. Like Jesus, he revealed that God was a loving and forgiving God; he was not an angry God that demanded sacrifice.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

There is a general acceptance of René Girard's work in many academic fields, where his thinking gained influence in literary studies, anthropology, psychoanalysis and religious studies as well as in economics, political sciences and the hard sciences of physics and biology (Goodhart, 1988:53). However, it has been in religion that his input remains greatest in exposing the collective violence of communities. Girard's theory of the scapegoat mechanism reveals the innocent victim, the sacred myth and collective violence. This mechanism inclusive of mimetic desire, external and internal mediation and conflictual mimesis, also incorporates the scapegoat. The aim of this dissertation is to establish what it means to be a scapegoat and to determine whether Ali ibn Abu Talib qualifies as one. My goal is to determine whether Ali was victimized within his community and to ask why no one defended him against physical and verbal attacks? I will show that the entire community contributed, actively or passively, to Ali's death and that he was made divine to conceal their participation. I will use the strength of Girard's theory of the scapegoat mechanism to assert that Ali was an innocent victim that was transformed into a divine Imam. As a beloved ruler who possessed divine powers and unlimited knowledge, why did he not escape his attackers, why did he not flee from Kufa where he was murdered? My goal is to reconcile the two contrasting views of Ali, the historical and the divine, and argue that the concept of taqiyya – deliberately concealing one's true beliefs - is a metaphor for collective violence and undifferentiation. I will use the strength of Girard's theory of the scapegoat mechanism to examine how Ali was an innocent victim who was transformed into a divinely ordained Imam. In analyzing the production of the victim, I have placed emphasis on Ali's character as an individual to show parallels to that of Jesus in Girard's analysis.

I have used a reductionist method in applying Girard's theory to develop a logical sequence in unveiling the scapegoat mechanism. I have chosen the constitutive reductionist method over the explanatory or the theoretical reductionist methods because it attends to the relationships among diverse elements that constitute a whole (Gieryn, 1982:281). Although I use Girard's theory and seek explanation in terms of the scapegoat mechanism, I am also interested in pursuing a method of reductionism that

respects the interrelationships of constitutive parts in a social field. What is central to the study is that this method will inform the reader of the nature of Shi'ite knowledge and discourse but that the issue of Ali's scapegoating will be best understood by a theory that operates outside of the internal hermeneutics of Islamic texts and traditions. However, I have avoided a radical reductionist approach that disregards the sacred as offering a substantive point of reference. Attention to the sacred prevents religion from being reduced to nothing, as opponents of reductionism worry, because the sacred is acknowledged for providing support mechanisms and certain effects such as salvation, surrender and forgiveness (Pargament, 2002:240). Although Girard's theory is reductive in explaining the sacred in terms of 'non-religious causes' (Pals, 1986:18), it places the sacred at the centre of a network of relations constituting society.

As a constitutive reductionist method, the theory of the scapegoat mechanism facilitates an understanding of the mechanics of how the socio-political environment when under enormous stress reacts by finding a victim. I have utilized this method so that the historical and mystical complexity of Ali in the Shi'ite texts can be reduced to the sum of its parts. In this way, I intend the theory of the scapegoat mechanism to interact with the fundamental aspects of Ali. This is not to suggest that the constitutive reductionism applied in this thesis neglects the complexity of Shi'ite sources but rather that it clarifies the rationale of victimage. While many scholars in religious studies are critical of a reductionist approach, in this thesis it will be necessary in testing Girardian theory (Godlove, 1989:188; see Segal 1983). Girard's theory of the scapegoat mechanism greatly influences our understanding of human interaction, engaging the role of religion and violence in establishing social order and human culture.

Ali is the first Imam in Shi'ism who possessed the right of authority to rule over the Muslim community (umma). The Prophet ratified this when he nominated Ali as his successor at Ghadir Khumm. The companions unanimously agreed to this but when the Prophet died, a companion named Abu Bakr was instead nominated as his successor. Ali was advised to accept the outcome. In contrast Sanders (1992) contends that Ali chose to remove himself from the political environment while Rizvi (1999) argued that Imam Ali possessed divine knowledge and knew that eventually he would be elected to his 'rightful' position. As an Imam, Ali was elected by God to be his representative on Earth to guide all mankind according to his will. Because Shi'ism is confronted with

this duality of Ali, the historical and the divine, there is a need to reconcile these two positions. How did the caliph Ali become the divinely ordained Ali? It seems appropriate that a relationship between the established religion of Shi'ism and the mythologised ghulat and popular discourse about the murdered Ali should warrant some attention. Girard's theory explains the duality of religious development, particularly that there is a link between historical and popular interpretations, and can assist in linking them together. His theory of the scapegoat mechanism links the rationalist historical approach and that of the mystical and the miraculous found in Shi'ism. It is for this reason that the various interpretations of Ali's life should be weighted equally in facilitating an understanding of the scapegoat mechanism. While it can be argued that orthodox historical sources have greater relevance and validity over ghulat and popular sources, in analyzing the case of Ali as victim, it would be a mistake to apply such a narrow reading of tradition (see Rorty 1963). Girard's theory can unite the various approaches that focus on the victimized caliph as well as those that focus on the divinely ordained Imam.

An important aspect of Girard's scapegoat mechanism is mimetic desire. Much of Girard's earlier work emphasized mimetic desire, which he elaborated on through literary and anthropological texts on the nature of desire. Society functions because of mimetic desire but when only a single individual possesses a coveted position, the desire leads to rivalry. In so doing, one can investigate the role of the community with regard to Ali's death and how as a victim he came to characterize divinity and leadership over the population. In the process, Ali revealed that he was more than an innocent victim and like Jesus he also had a message. Mimetic desire is linked to the scapegoat and offers an explanation as to how prominent individuals, such as Ali, in a community are chosen as scapegoats. Girard argued that a scapegoat is simply an ordinary person that possesses certain 'signs' that make them susceptible as victims. Girard developed mimetic desire from the emotional sense of belonging, to the point that it leads to rivalry. It is this rivalry over a desired object that is our point of departure regarding Ali. We need to investigate the consequences of rivalry. Girard compared internal mediation and external mediation as being part of mimetic desire and I wish to add that collectively these mediations involve the entire community. However, the rivalry begins with the internal mediation and amongst the same social

class. In Ali's case it was being the popularly elected as the caliph and the cousin of the Prophet.

This nomination sparked the rivalry that only one man could be 'king' (Girard, 1987b:45). His 'friends' could only look on wondering how it was that he was nominated to prominence and not any of them. Girard argues that as easily as an individual can be nominated to a position of authority, so he can be charged as a scapegoat. Yet Ali's rivals could easily exchange places – they too have the potential to be scapegoats. The issue of social classes is central to Girard's theory of the scapegoat. It is a necessary component in establishing the rivalry that can only exist within a particular social class. This rivalry first begins amongst the political elite because power moves from the top down and so does socio-political influence. For the elites, such as Ali's rivals, their anger resulted from envy over a desired object - the caliphate. Once the rivalry is exposed to the population, once it has gained momentum through envy, then the rest of the community adopts the opinions of the elite. While the community imitates the elites, they do so for different reasons. The elites provide the victim and the community supports this development. The victim becomes the reservoir of societal ills, the corruption, the nepotism and heresy.

Authors such as Nasr (1985) and Nadwi (1991) assert that Ali became a victim due to his political inexperience. In contrast others authors such as Mutahari (1980), Mourad (2006) and Momen (1985) support the idea that because Ali was of divine origin he knew that he would be popularly elected and most importantly, that he would be murdered. They do not consider that Ali's regime was tumultuous but interpret this period to have been one of enlightenment and knowledge. It was a Golden Age and Ali ruled over the population guided by his vast knowledge of Islam. He introduced new legislation, he wanted equal taxation and sought to alleviate the suffering of the poor and marginalized. That there are two different positions to understanding the life of Ali warrants research. On the one hand, there is the historical Ali but on the other there is the divine Ali, yet how do we reconcile these two areas? Why do these two areas exist as polar opposites? It has been argued by Nakash (1995) Nasr (2006) and McEoin (1984) that Shi'ism based their origins in the Prophet's nomination at Ghadir Khumm while Nasr (1988) and Sachedina (1978) speak of pre-existence that has been thoroughly researched by Henri Corbin (1977). This concept of pre-existence was used

to show that Ali and particularly his wife Fatima were central to creation. It forms part of an elaborate and romantic relationship with God and the light of creation.

While terms such as 'victim', 'martyr', 'divine' and particularly 'taqiyya' are used in Shi'ite literature with regard to Ali, there is a gap in understanding how these terms fit together. It is for this reason that all the literature from various approaches and interpretations needs to be analysed on a level of parity. To a large degree it helps to answer several questions. Why is Ali a victim yet he is also divine? Why is he considered a martyr but none of the other three caliphs are? Should they also be considered since the second caliph, Umar, and the third, Uthman, were also murdered? Why is Ali a divinely ordained Imam and a caliph but no one else is? How did Ali's support base grow from a few individuals at the time of the Prophet's death to a community at Ali's death? If Ali was nominated by the community as opposed to the usual system of nomination by the previous caliph, then why was his caliphate fraught with social upheaval, political alienation and deserting troops? Most importantly is the issue of taqiyya, which is to be seen supporting one view but in private to be holding another. It is alleged by scholars such as Kohlberg (1975) that Ali's supporters practiced it, they were seen publicly to be rejecting him but in private they claimed to be his ardent supporters. It is further alleged that Ali wholeheartedly supported these practices. While this aspect of taqiyya remains plausible, there must be another reason that it was implemented. Authors such as Watt (1962) fail to explain these developments other than to say that there were extreme divisions between those who considered the community to be perfect and those who considered the leader Ali to be perfect.

How does an individual such as Ali become a victim, then a martyr and finally a divine being? The scapegoat mechanism provides the reason as to how an individual can at once be a victim as well as a divine being. The scapegoat mechanism relates how a community murders an innocent individual and that the persecutors attempt to hide their involvement in the murder by reinventing the victim. The victim, possesses certain 'signs' such as a physical handicap or foreign origin, is an ordinary individual. He is held responsible for all the catastrophic events in the community and the community has no option but to murder him. With his death, the violence subsides and the persecutors reveal that because his death restored peace he must also have been

responsible for the violence. This victim, with special attention to his character, is reinterpreted and now possesses immense power and must therefore be divine. In recounting the story of the victim, the persecutors silence him in order to portray the victim responsible for the chaos in the community. The community, whose members were earlier complicit in his death, is now considered innocent; the persecutors now determine that their behavior was somehow influenced by the victim because of his immense power. Because of their desire to avoid responsibility, they blame their reactions on the victim. Therefore, the community was under the influence of the divine individual.

Girard argues that Christianity alone reveals the innocence of the victim by giving them a voice. However, in the story of Ali, as a victim, he is also given a voice. Ali proclaimed his innocence, he identified his rivals and he acknowledged his alienation. 'I looked' said Ali, 'and found that there is no supporter for me except my family (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:124). Girard asserts that it is the persecutors who relate the story of the scapegoat and silence the victim. However, Ali not only proclaims his innocence, he implicates the entire community even those who maintained they were his followers until the moment he was murdered. The persecutors deny their participation in the murder, suggesting that a victim never existed. It was this divine individual who sacrificed himself in order to save his community. While this divine individual had full knowledge of his actions, the community was ignorant of what they were doing. The scapegoat mechanism reveals that the victim will be made sacred, and this is what happens to Ali, his birth is linked to divine creation in an attempt to make it as unique as possible.

A shared belief amongst Shi'ite groups is that Ali was the inheritor of the Prophet's spiritual legacy. Ali possessed guardianship over all Muslims. While he occupies a central position in Shi'ite doctrine, all groups do not interpret him in exactly the same manner. This is where the historical and the popular interpretations must coexist to reflect the transformation of the victim. While he represents perfection for some, others do not consider him sinless or infallible, thus emphasizing his humanity. Ali's existence as the Imam is an integral part of the doctrine of prophethood and while it is not possible for the Imam to exist without the Prophet Mohammed, he plays 'a more vital role than the prophets in the creation, life and eschatology of the world' (Ayoub,

1978:65). There are varying beliefs regarding Ali such as his pre-existence and him being the 'incarnation of God' (van Rensselaer Trowbridge, 1909:349). Amongst certain groups, Ali is identified with the sun and the moon and the claim is made that he is 'god of all the earth' where 'God is the sun and the moon…God is called Ali, the Highest'. Others consider that Ali was never 'flesh and blood but rather a luminous appearance' (Curtiss, 1902:353-355). These beliefs are often attributed to a single announcement made by the Prophet that 'Ali is the one among you with the keenest judgement' (Hoffman-Ladd, 1992:624).

As with Christian and Jewish interpretations, Shi'ite interpreters regard the purpose of the scapegoat as necessary in 'dying for the community to purify them of sins'. The Shi'ites, though not exclusively, used Biblical quotations, 'spurious or real', to promote the validity of certain beliefs regarding Imam Ali (Kohlberg, 1976:526). Shi'ite Islam advocates the necessity for collective obedience to a man who possesses divine knowledge and is immune from sin.

Following the review of Girard's theory, the core of this dissertation is divided into two parts, each revealing a different aspect of the life of Ali. The first part, developed in Chapter Three, analyses the events that culminate in the death of Caliph Ali, while the second part, developed in Chapter Four, investigates the personality and the life of Imam Ali. In both chapters a reductionist approach is used in order to apply the theory of the scapegoat mechanism and to demonstrate the factors leading up to the Crisis of Degree. The unfolding events have been interpreted alongside the scapegoat mechanism. Girard's theory has been deconstructed in its application so that parallels can be recognized and established between Girard's claim of Jesus' innocence and my claim of Ali's innocence. There is an attempt to deconstruct every aspect of Ali's social reality to reflect the application of Girard's concepts of mimetic desire, envy, conspiracy and his theory of the scapegoat mechanism and the innocence of the victim. In the first section, I will focus on the crisis of Degree in the Islamic Empire, elaborating on the socio-political instability and economic upheaval that threatened to destroy the developing religious state. I will introduce Ali as the cousin, son-in-law and confidant of the Prophet Mohammed, as well as the individual considered by the political aristocracy to be the most articulate in religious matters. Within the community he was revered as possessing a very honest, dignified and sympathetic

character. This section opens with the scene in which unknown assailants murder Uthman, the third caliph. The scene is ominous, dark and frightening and people are confused because Uthman failed to name a successor. This failure to nominate a future caliph left the caliphate leaderless. In that confusion, the community elected Ali as Uthman's successor.

This scenario meets the Girardian theory of mutual and democratic consensus and support for the future victim. For a brief period, the majority of people love Ali. Competitors unveil Ali's lack of political experience, seizing the opportunity to undermine his euphoric 'reign'. This is further complicated by continuous wars and confrontations, which Ali is expected to quell quickly. In using Girard's *Job: The Victim of His People*, I make reference to the 'three friends' who played a central role in celebrating the victim's political and social decline. The 'three friends' remind us of mimetic desire, mimetic rivalry and most importantly the ease with which the positions of the scapegoat and that of the 'three friends' could be exchanged. Ali is undermined politically through his reforms that were meant to strengthen the community in maintaining the 'inviolability of Muslim blood'. Through his economic, religious and political reforms, Ali created tensions in all social classes, assisting in 'undifferentiating' the society.

At the zenith of the social chaos, we encounter the 'Kharijites', who present an opportunity to view the working psychology of the community. This 'group' encompassed all the 'operating' areas of the community, such as the military aids, supporters and detractors. The Kharijites demonstrate how the community, first a homogenous mass overwrought with emotion, is reduced by 'myth makers' to a single individual who plotted to murder Ali. I will argue that ibn Muljam, the individual accused of being the sole murderer, is indeed a representative of the 'collective community'. After Ali is killed, the community tears ibn Muljam's body to pieces because they want to eliminate their role in Ali's murder. By removing ibn Muljam, the community effectively erased their participation from their collective memory and silenced the 'lone' murderer in the process.

In Chapter Four, I elaborate on the divine character of Imam Ali unique to Shi'ite Islam. This section expands on his life from his birth to his 'death' and his position as a divine individual representative of God on earth. The tragedy of his life is critical in the

transmission of revelation. This section reveals communal guilt by explaining how the venerated Ali became a divine individual. What I wish to illustrate is that this communal guilt is a direct response to the veneration given to an individual. The term *'taqiyya'*, which is the process of denying your religion, is a direct expression of the community's participation in Ali's demise. What taqiyya implies is that what the community publicly expresses need not be what they privately support. In other words, they might appear to be ridiculing an individual but in private they support his initiatives. I will argue that the act of -'taqiyya'- demonstrates the refusal of the community to acknowledge their participation in Ali's death. To further explain their position, the victim is portrayed as a 'superior' individual in possession of 'infinite knowledge' in all aspects of life in the earthly and divine realm. This reduces the community's responsibility because such an individual has prior knowledge and cannot be manipulated by inferior beings. Ali then became accountable for his death. Aware of his destiny, he knew that he was to be murdered and the community was merely an audience to the unfolding socio-political events.

The rationale in both sections of this thesis is to demonstrate how Ali is as innocent a victim as Jesus in the context of the scapegoat mechanism. Girard's claim that only Christianity reveals the truth of the victim will be refuted through Ali's dialogues to reveal that in using this theoretical framework similar conclusions can be inferred about Ali. Where he is also given a voice to express his feelings there are similar affirmations as that of Jesus. Ali goes further to explain to his followers why they need to imitate his lifestyle. Where Jesus wanted his community to see another reality, Ali wanted his community to listen to his advice on how to achieve the other reality – the reality that is oneness with God and the love that God has for mankind. It is possible to recognise the message and the personality that acknowledges mimesis and its role in society. While Ali realized the duality of mimesis, he encouraged Muslims to experience the non-judgemental love of God and to mimic this action. This would eliminate the process of selecting victims as well as the desire to amass material objects. Ali's life is revealed through Girard's theory of mimetic desire, conspiracy, mimetic rivalry; this is coupled with the choice of victim and the derivation of religion from Ali's personality.

Controversies that surround many of the *extremist* groups particularly the ghulats is not a factor in this dissertation, and their inclusion serves the purpose of showing the

immense impact that Ali has on their beliefs. Some of them are regarded as deviant and relegated to the realm of heresiography. Many authors such as Corbin, Massignon and Filippano-Ronconi have steered clear of including them or focusing on their contribution to the development of Ali's character. Instead they reduce these contributions as merely peripheral or fantastic. In terms of popular Shi'ism, however, these beliefs contributed to the complex formation of images of Ali. My focus will reveal how lay thinkers and intellectuals alike perceive the martyred/scapegoated Ali as a symbol of communal cleansing and regeneration.

This dissertation does not serve to criticize any of the Shi'ite beliefs or the groups that fall under the banner of Shi'ism. Rather, respect has been shown to all in order to explain how Ali's character changed over time as a result of socio-economic conditions, political ideologies and cultural traditions of the day. The incorporation of sects that are marginal or not 'Islamic' are equally awarded relevance here because their contribution assists in supporting and refuting theoretical claims put forward by Girard. The literature used in this research ranges the gamut of opinions; either it has been supportive of all Shi'ites, some supportive of a few groups and others completely dismissive, reducing Shi'ites to unflattering epithets. However, the veneration of Ali is central and how his followers revere him makes their incorporation all the more important in understanding beliefs about his character. There are contrasting views of Ali in literature such as the Arabian Jews who considered him a tyrant, some regarded him simply as the fourth caliph and still others maintained that he was a heretic who deserved death. While all these opinions are taken into account, it is in agreement with Girard's theory, it is only the individual of distinguished birth that becomes the exalted person.

In order to 'divinise' Ali as the possessor of special knowledge, there is a need to 'demonise' his opposition such as the earlier caliphs and other political aspirants (Wasserstrom, 1985:18). Extraordinary feats are attributed to Ali, who is 'fluent in all tongues, performs miracles; speaks to plants and animals' (Kohlberg, 1991:5). On a popular level, Ali's life is a series of miracles that began with the bright light that shone at his birth and ended with his blood covering rocks. There can be little doubt that the poignant sense of the injustice done to Ali on the part of the 'undifferentiated' community has contributed largely to his sanctification. Many believe he ascended to

heaven alive and that he never really died (Curtiss, 1902:357). This also adds to the refusal of the community to acknowledge their role in his death.

This is however all part of the victimage mechanism. A central aspect of the 'undifferentiation' is that part of the community will not react to the accusation and not offer overt support for the victim. Rather, they opt for silence assuming that the victim does bear some guilt. Long after the event, the 'believers' will claim that these 'supporters' were in fact 'hypocrites' because of their 'neutrality in the face of injustice' (Kohlberg, 1980:51). Mimetic desire, mimetic rivalry and conspiracy are central to understanding the events that led to Ali's death as well as to the divine status he is awarded in death. Contrary to the perception that plays out in Girard's work that the Bible and particularly the Gospels are the only texts to acknowledge the existence of the scapegoat and the collective guilt of the community, I want to establish that such an understanding also exists in the Shi'ite Islamic tradition. The Shi'ite revelation of Ali is as embellished as that of Christianity's Jesus, offering an insight into the role of scapegoating, and its unmasking, in the cultural and social development of Shi'ite communities across the Islamic world.

Girard further asserts that not only is Christianity the only religion that provides the victim with a voice but that the gospels are the only text that exposes the scapegoat mechanism. Jesus, according to Girard, is the only victim throughout history, to reveal and destroy the scapegoat mechanism by exposing the cross. Girard argues that while mimetic desire is central in understanding the scapegoat, Jesus is the only victim to reveal that mimesis is good when imitating the love of God. I assert that Girard is incorrect in his assessment of Jesus as the only victim to reveal the scapegoat mechanism and reveal the mimesis of love. When engaging the scapegoat mechanism, Ali is seen to be revealing the scapegoat mechanism also along with the mimesis of love. Contrary to Girard's revelation that only Jesus presented a non-violent message of mimesis, I will contend that Ali's was more poignant. Ali revealed the need to imitate the love of God but he went further to state that it was his wish to see all people for all time engage in this love.

While Girard contends that Jesus exposed the scapegoat mechanism, it should be noted that Jesus is not alone in revealing his innocence and the importance of mimetic desire. However, there should be an investigation into other faith structures whether

there are other divine heroes that have been overlooked. Divine heroes have in some form brought messages for their communities and while many remain concealed, an opportunity exists to analyze these stories. While Girard maintains that Jesus embraced non-violence, I consider that Ali has embraced a similar position. He shared the non-violent aspects of negotiation, rejecting the pattern of violent confrontation. Both shared in their idea of positive mimetic desire in the love of God.   There should be further investigation into Ali's speeches because they reveal clues to the scapegoat mechanism. The Shi'ite interpretation of Ali must be looked at in its entirety, the historical Ali and the divine Ali, and not as two distinct areas. Particularly interest should be paid to the extremist groups such as the ghulats who place emphasis on the divinity of Ali. When a religion acknowledges a divine hero, an investigation is warranted into this unique individual.

All of these opinions must be taken into account in order to comprehend the complexity of Girard's scapegoat mechanism. Another reason is to show that there is rationale to the existence of historical and mythological accounts of an individual. Both must coexist for the theoretical framework to do justice to his character and his reality. The mechanism allows us to realize that the victim was innocent of the crimes for which he was accused. While historical accounts might follow other rationales, this thesis is focused on amplifying the parallels to the scapegoat mechanism.

CHAPTER TWO: RENÉ GIRARD, VIOLENCE AND THE SACRED

In order to understand the scapegoat mechanism there is a need to elaborate on Girard's investigation into the concept of mimesis. Mimesis, which is the desire to imitate, is central to human existence. Without it, we would be unable to form society and adhere to rules. Girard's development of mimetic desire is vast and has vetted many supporters such as Robert Hamerton-Kelly (1994), James Alison (1996) and Leo Lefebure (1996). Mimetic desire has an ambivalent role; while it has been established that desire to imitate is central to human social development, it also raises the issue of envy. It is this 'envy' and eventual violence that has made Girard's theory so important in many areas of academic study. Authors such as Benedict Ushedo (1997) and Declan Quigley (2000) have used mimetic desire with regard to children and royalty to further support and expand on Girard's scapegoat mechanism.

Girard's movement toward the scapegoat mechanism began with the Greek philosophers nature of desire. He developed his understanding of imitation as mimetic desire and coupled it with the concept of the double bind. Mimetic desire, when faced with limited resources in the form of a single object of desire, is transformed into mimetic rivalry. This rivalry is confined to people of the same social class. Girard utilised several mediums of literature, from the Greek philosophers to the European classic authors such as Stendhal and Proust to Shakespeare. Girard believed that Shakespeare understood the mechanics of mimetic desire and the scapegoat. Shakespeare even detailed the conspiracy, detailing the emotions of envy and rage, which is initially hidden in its attempt to attract supporters. For Girard the conspiracy was the ultimate rivalry and he developed an understanding of the scapegoated victims in primitive religions. He moved his theory from analyzing relationship between friends, to understanding conspiracies to the more complicated scenario of the community. This meant that the understanding of mediation and social parity could not apply to the entire community but Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* assisted Girard in this regard, particularly with regard to Caesar's divine status in death. He acknowledged that the concept of divine heroes and monsters were all related to the scapegoat mechanism that victimized innocent people, accusing them of crimes they could not possibly have committed. Eventually Girard turned his attention to Christianity but after analyzing the stories of Job and John the Baptist, he became convinced that the

Gospels revealed a completely different approach to revealing the victim – he was given a voice to protest his innocence.

However, Girard's theory has also attracted criticism particularly the manner in which he has criticised Freudian theory. While Girard maintained that Freudian theory only hinted at sexuality and the 'once-off' confrontation, authors such as Françoise Meltzer (1984) and Toril Moi (1982) argue that Girard had prematurely disregarded Freud. Girard cannot deny that the ideas held in *Totem and Taboo* had not influenced his theory of the scapegoat mechanism. While Girard never concedes that women are not part of his scapegoat mechanism, he does suggest that there are certain victims who do not produce similar results that warrant new rituals. Another issue is his complete dismissal of other religions acknowledgement of scapegoats and innocent victims, which is very problematic. He asserts that only Christianity reveals the innocent victim and that no such evidence exists in any other religion.

While Girard's theory has attracted much criticism, even from supporters such as Leo Lefebure, it has provided a platform and the mechanics by which to analyse other faiths and social events. His knowledge of mimetic desire, mimetic rivalry, the 'french triangle' and envy assist in the investigation of desired objects. He portrays envy is an emotion that prefers to be concealed, while it contaminates other minds, before it explodes in rage that often leads to the expulsion or death of an innocent victim. Girard argues that where there are divine heroes, the violence is removed because the persecutors, who reveal the myth, are attempting to conceal their role in his death. His *magnus opus* remains that while all faiths possess divine individuals it is only the gospels that reveal the truth of the scapegoat in Jesus Christ.

It is therefore necessary that Girard's theory be shown to be relevant to every aspect of Ali's reality and character. Where Girard has shown with regard to Jesus that there is a correlation between every aspect of his theoretical framework to the life of Jesus, so it is imperative that I display a similar method when examining Ali's life. Every monologue, dialogue and action needs to be expanded upon in the theoretical framework of scapegoating to prove that a possibility exists that Ali suffered as Jesus had. Every text that refers to aspects of Ali's character and his community can be related to Girard's analysis to support this possibility.

2.1. DEVELOPMENT OF GIRARD'S THEORY

Mimesis was the starting point of Girard's theory that he elaborated on through literary and anthropological texts on the nature of desire. His development of mimetic desire later moved toward acquisitive and conflictual mimesis. 'At various points in his career he focused on the function of scapegoating in social groups, the relationship between God and the individual subject, the role of art in society, the nature of sacrifice in biblical narrative, and the agency of violence in cultural transformation' (Rushdy, 1993:84). The development of his theory shifted from 'triangular desire' where he examined the relationship between three characters to the more complex scapegoating and victimage mechanism. It was in Girard's investigation of religion where he concluded that this scapegoat mechanism shaped communal understanding of the sacred, ritual behaviour and founding myths.

Girard initially began investigating the nature of desire in conversation with the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. While they were interested in mimesis they only applied it in terms of art. They did not consider desire and appropriation as direct participants in any scenario. Plato was the first thinker to use the idea of mimesis in a philosophical sense. He was suspicious of all forms of imitation because it seemed to depict a certain 'falsehood' as a result of 'visual and conceptual images'. He believed that imitation could somehow deceive us. Aristotle countered Plato's understanding of mimesis by using drama and concluded that we do learn from imitation. However, this presented a problem because drama requires emotional expression yet both considered emotion irrelevant to mimesis, therefore desire could not be a factor in imitation. Girard did not pursue his interest in the imitative 'nature of desire' but sided with the 'dramatic mimesis' of the poets linking his mimetic theory to literature instead (Schweiker, 1996:27-31).

Girard wanted to demonstrate that the 'nature of desire' extended beyond art. He wished to investigate the concept of imitation in terms of human relations. Girard showed through the readings of five major European novelists, Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevsky and Proust, that mimetic desire was not an original emotion reserved for certain characters in romantic scenarios but a natural phenomenon that occurred with regularity. This meant that imitation was a reality and did not exist

separately in scripted entertainment. In *Desire, Deceit and the Novel,* published in 1961 as *Mensonge Romantique et Vérité Romanesque*, Girard wrote that 'the great novelists revealed the imitative nature of desire' by elaborating on the triangular aspect of desire, where 'desires are based on abstractions' by using the characters in romantic genre. Girard established that while imitation was central in terms of the triangle, what the characters shared was a socio-economic class. All the characters that Girard analysed in the classic novels were 'respectable' and elite gentlemen who one sought to actively imitate the perceived desires of his 'friend'. Imitation is central to their friendship but it is benign because there is not a lack of resources. While there is competition, it is healthy and strengthens their relationship.

This triangular construction of subject, object and mediator engenders two kinds of relationship with the mediator: external mediation and internal mediation. However, we need to comprehend that the 'object' need not be inanimate but rather as the classic authors have asserted, that this 'object' of affection can be a woman. This single object, of which there cannot be another like it, changes the nature of the mimetic desire. External mediation is benign; it appears to be the harmless admiration of a 'superior' individual who will never be interested in the intentions or interests of the subject. Often the affections are reflected at an individual who is of a wealthier social class who does not consider the subject to be a social equal. Because the subject and the model are unlikely to meet or associate, this form of imitation is characterized as external mediation. The subject proclaims his desire publicly wanting to be a disciple of the mediator such as portrayed by Sancho, the squire, in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. The two parties never meet on a level of parity so the chance of a hostile confrontation is unlikely.

In contrast, internal mediation reflects mimetic rivalry. There is hostility between the mediator and the subject because the subject interprets his position as inferior although both share a socio-economic platform. The subject feels rejected and views the model as a competitor. The subject's submissive behaviour contains a hidden envy. However, Girard maintains that the envy degenerates into hatred and hostility toward the mediator. He assumes that the mediator will never allow him, as the subject, to satisfy the desire that he has inspired in him (Girard, 1988:10). The subject perceives that his desire results from a genuine interest in the object and that the mediator is

simply an annoying intruder. When the subject cannot acquire the object from the subject, his failure creates rage toward the mediator. Before the mediator possessed the affections of the woman, he and the subject enjoyed a healthy friendship but in the development of this conflictual desire, 'a third person is always present' (Girard, 1988:21).

Girard posited an active relationship between the subject and the model that intensifies as differentiation and distance are reduced. There will only be a confrontation between people of the same social class because they encounter the object in a similar manner. This relationship makes this scenario much more dynamic than the mirror/self formulation utilised by Lacan and Derrida (Desmond & Kavanaugh, 2003:241). A double bind is then created where the mediator says ' imitate me' when it strengthens the relationship but as the rival says 'don't imitate me' when the relationship appears to be threatened. This double contradictory notion forms the basis of Girard's theory. This double bind is borrowed from the theory of schizophrenia developed by Gregory Bateson. It is based on a framework of communication theory that suggests that within groups the trend toward dysfunctional behaviour is often a response to reestablish parity. 'This works to the disadvantage of an individual member in the group' writes Girard 'and the rest form a common front against him' (Girard, 1987:293).

Girard found that mimetic rivalry was more likely to occur when the model-subject relationship were of the same social class because the perception of social equality and nearness increases the opportunity for competition. This offers a turn from the beneficial mimetic desire where the 'birth of passion always coincides with the birth of hate'. This desire has transformed into rivalry so the resentment between the rivals increases (Girard, 1988:40). It is possible for there to be desire without the mediator, no anger or jealousy, but this is only because the objects 'do not evoke a desire of possession but a desire of expression' (Girard, 1988:34). So the concept of desire is ever present and therefore constant. Another central aspect in *Desire, Deceit and the Novel* is that of vanity and the hero. It is only the strong man who is perceived to be without vanity. All others are victims of their emotions specifically envy and jealousy. This suggests that a single individual is pivotal to the scenario. The shortfall in *Desire and Deceit and the Novel* is that the investigated authors use the language of mimesis

and chaos and therefore cannot reveal the truth of rivalry (Girard, 1988:139). The romanticism of spontaneous desire is only illusory rather the truth is that we seek out mediators to learn what is worth desiring.

Because Girard noted triangular desire in Dostoevsky, Stendhal and Proust, he believed that this arrangement of competition and hostility must be found in texts throughout history. In assuming that there is often an element of competition between peers, Girard deduced that these were initially unconscious actions between the subject and the mediator. As actors they were not aware of the mimesis themselves and thus could not acknowledge the schizophrenic 'double bind'.

After analyzing and comparing the 'romantic writings' of the European writers, Girard moved to Shakespeare's plays. He used Shakespeare to address mimesis and complimented him on recognizing this phenomenon. However, other than *Julius Caesar,* where the object is power and Rome is the desired object, the other plays of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* place a woman as the object of desire. In *Othello* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* we see the competition between 'two friends' where one goads the other into testing the integrity and chastity of their betrothed female. The audience internalizes the emotion generated by the scene showing that in theatre we personalise the lives of the fictional characters and experience their desire more acutely than we would in reality. Yet are we consciously aware of the 'mimesis' or are we simply reacting to emotion?

Several feminist authors noticed that much of Girard's analysis focused on women as the object of desire and considered this tactical. They accused Girard of objectifying the female by casting her simply as a commodity of exchange. Girard's focus in the Shakespearean texts is on the abundance of rival doubles that resemble each other, from Valentine and Proteus to Coriolanus and Aufidius, from Hal and Hotspur to Hamlet and Laertes. In *A Midsummer Nights Dream* rivalry exists between the female characters, Hermia and Helena, as equally as it exists between Demetrius and Lysander. Girard points out that in *A Midsummer Nights Dream* 'at bottom, there is no difference: each lover is a mirror image of the other three, regardless of gender' (Girard, 1991:35). Girard blanketed the scene with mimetic desire so that it appeared collective and impersonal.

Although Shakespeare and Girard highlighted the relations between men and women as both subjects and mediators, there is a far greater emphasis on women being the object. Conclusions drawn are that women characterize chaos and are problematic to the relations between men. It taints the manner in which mimesis, women and men are portrayed in the triangle of desire. Women are portrayed as objects and Girard included only Helena and Hermia to depict the female mimetic rivalry as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, Shakespeare defended his position in his plays implying that the heroes do not choose their own desire because they are uncomfortable with an element within themselves. Their subjectivity is charged with self-hatred and heroes feel cursed even if this has little or nothing to do with the desired object (Girard, 1988:56).

In *Violence and the Sacred*, published in 1972 as *La Violence et le Sacre*, Girard applied mimetic theory from various sources to show how violence functioned within primitive religions. He moved away from the genre of external and internal mediation and triangular desire between individuals to society and communities. He wrote less of desire and more of conflictual mimesis. Utilising the Greek tragedies of Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Euripides *The Bacchae,* Girard determined that Greek tragedy recognised the cycle of mimetic desire and rivalry and how victims were selected. Coupled with selecting a victim was the development of 'highly individualized' characters that lent greater understanding of the surrogate victim. The Greek heroes, Dionysus and Oedipus, embodied the often-fatal characteristics of the surrogate victim but their uniqueness led to the development of myth and ritual. Girard included Freud's contribution in *Totem and Taboo* of the victim, but Freud turned violent origins into a once-and-for-all myth. Girard contended that Freud did not understand that the scapegoat mechanism was a constant cyclical part of human culture and human relations. Girard then articulated the state of nature that Hobbes referred to as the 'Hobbesian jungle' where people continually were subjected to random violence. Girard did not interpret collective violence as 'fleeting and having limited influence' but rather that authors generally underestimated its effects by not recognizing its cyclical nature (Girard, 1977:81).

Having already established that desire is triangular and dependent on the object, Girard confronted the Freudian notion of the other and the Ego. Suddenly mimicry was applied to 'you and me' and touted as the basis for communities everywhere.

According to Girard, we mimic others' expressions, by simply watching someone else crying or laughing hysterically our moods are lowered or heightened in response to what we perceive as anguish or happiness. Our faces respond accordingly and we take on the sad or happy expressions even if we are not consciously aware of our behaviour. This is the basic nature of mimesis.

As the mimetic desire transforms into mimetic rivalry the 'mimic' moves from an innocuous interaction of imitation to violence and resentment. As violence escalates people in the community become 'undifferentiated' since there are no longer any real distinctions relating to social, economic or political differences between people. An individual is selected, as portrayed in Bateson's 'double bind', representing the chaos and disorder and whose self-sacrifice ultimately saves the community. The 'good violence' drove out the 'bad violence' and the scapegoat took on the sins of the community allowing for this transition. Since this individual was held responsible for the violence he is hailed as the bearer of peace. The community reeling from their behaviour does not want to repeat this course of action and ritualize the sequence of events. Every culture achieves stability by discharging the tensions of mimetic rivalry and violence onto vulnerable individuals. *Violence and the Sacred* therefore provides an in depth analysis and investigation of mimesis, collective violence, doubles and rituals.

For Girard, religion was the basis of all socio-political institutions and ritual and myth were founded on the victimage mechanism. 'The extraordinary number of commemorative rites that have to do with killing' wrote Girard, 'leads us to imagine that the original event must be a murder' (Girard, 1977:92). This mechanism that created human culture resulted in myths that preserve the origin of the society. Religious rites and rituals are born out of the sacrificial crisis and the surrogate-victim mechanism. Cultural order such as festivals, rites of passage and social taboos protect the community from the cycle of violence and allow cultures to flourish.

After analyzing the mimesis in romance literature and Greek tragedy Girard recognised mimetic desire in primitive religions and deduced that mimesis was not only triangular involving two rivals but that it could mobilize a community to turn against a single victim. Being convinced that the Gospels alone revealed the full truth of the human condition, Girard entered the Catholic Church expressing his Christian

perspective in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* first released in 1978 as *Des Choses Cachees depuis la Fondation du Monde*, and insisted that his interpretation of the nature of desire was superior to Freud's (Moi, 1982:21). *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the Earth* took the form of a dialogue with two psychiatrists, Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort, in which Girard advocated a nonsacrificial reading of the Gospels and the divinity of Christ. His position was that western culture owed its secular and socio-political institutions to biblical revelation. The cross exposed the scapegoat mechanism.

Christianity was, according to Girard, the only religion that revealed the violent foundations of every human society and the only religion that reconciled the community with a God of love. Girard argued that the Gospels revealed why God did not demand victims rather he supported them because he was not a God of hatred but a God of love. Girard continued that the Church chose to ignore this misinterpretation believing that Jesus' death was a sacrifice to God who demanded that the community kill his only son. All other faiths reconciled their communities over the 'tombs' of surrogate victims (Scubla, 1988:160). With this deduction, Girard insisted that his theory laid claim to total and universal validity but some argued that Girard was simply a Christian apologist. Amongst his supporters, such as Burton Mack, there was dismay that Girard believed that his theory claimed blanket universality.

Girard then further explored the biblical theme of the victimage mechanism in *The Scapegoat*, published in 1982 as *Le Bouc Emissaire.* He argued that authors of the various myths in the Bible relate that the people of Israel practiced collective violence by selecting arbitrary victims as scapegoats. He drew on Guillaume de Machaut's account of the Jews and the manner in which the 'guilty' are isolated and made distinct in the community but not distinct from the crime they are accused of committing. Girard argued that the guilty possessed the 'evil eye' that killed and brought disease at a glance. Anything bad that happened to the community justified their reaction to the Jews (1977b:930). When a community is deprived of recourse in dealing with agitation then there is a tendency to blame the nearest individual for whatever is wrong (Girard, 1977b:931).

In the *Scapegoat* Girard enumerated on the four characteristics or 'stereotypes' that define myth. The victims are identified through 'signs' and 'stereotypes' not through

evidence. Physical disabilities, origin and even race mark the 'difference' in victims making them distinct and separating them from the community. This rationalises the community's actions and reactions toward the victims (Girard, 1987c:105). These signs of incest or murder and handicaps relate the social and cultural and even royalty is a distinctive sign. Used metaphorically to indicate an 'ideal' royalty represents those who are hated in society, those at the highest and simultaneously the lowest of the social order. Royalty could not be shared and should be understood as an 'obstacle model' of mimetic theory (Girard, 1986:24-30). Popular individuals and monarchs are common targets for collective violence because the community that adored them turns on them, persecuting and murdering them (Marr, 1998:591). Royalty not only serves as the difference between the community and the victim but is also a link to future victims but to Girard this is already a misunderstanding of the purpose of 'signage' as contained in myth.

By interpreting violence as sacred and liberating crowds and entire societies 'can imprison themselves in their own illusions' making the scapegoat mechanism a difficult scenario to comprehend (Girard, 1986:21). Communities refuse to acknowledge their role and complicity in the violence. They are encapsulated in a mentality that 'there is only room for a single cause in their field of vision' and that all initiative came from this single source to defend their society. After a scapegoat was selected, punished and eliminated the social chaos subsided returning the community to normality until the cycle begins anew and another scapegoat is selected.

In *Job: The Victim of His People*, published in 1987, Girard examined both sides of the crisis, that of perpetrators as well as that of the victim. Both parties consider themselves innocent and blameless of the crisis in their community. *Job: The Victim of His People* centered on the emotions of envy and jealousy that 'without men's tendency to imitate' desire, Girard argued 'envy would not be so extraordinarily powerful in human society'. The concept of equality is central to the text reinforcing the schizophrenic 'double bind' where envy ensures the development of mimetic rivalries. We encounter Job's 'three friends' who also desire to assert themselves in the hierarchy, and prove to be anything but friends. Girard argued that the tension in the text relates to envy that is waiting for direct expression. The mimesis of envy and hatred 'spread as rapidly as the mimesis of admiration' (Girard, 1987b:51) undermining the victim. As

soon as he makes a mistake the innocent individual is transformed from an idol into a scapegoat.

Girard argued that when the victim too was given a voice rather than only the mob, then it is possible to witness the victim's pleas and recognise their innocence. Without a voice interpreters suggest that victims were not ordinary. Ordinary people existed because they are not murdered but in order for gods to exist as gods they have to be murdered. The death of a god is also his birth so the community plays a minor role in this transformation (Girard, 1984:830). Gods do not die a natural death, they are collectively murdered, and the consequences are always religious.

When interpreting the myth the mob justify their actions contending that they always made the 'correct' decision in recognising the guilt of the victim. However, their interpretations are distorted and definitely inaccurate. No one in the community now appears to have an enemy except for the individual who has taken to represent the social ills, namely the scapegoat (Girard, 2004:9). The persecutors offer a deceptive interpretation of myth while the innocent victim offers the truth. The myth reduces the impact of the real violence and what it is reinterpreted, such as the violence of the physical interaction, is now sacred. Communities are established on this relationship between violence and the sacred. Mankind does not have the capacity to understand its violent origins and it needs to be revealed to them as in the Christian revelation. Girard seeks to reconstruct the mimesis prior to cultural symbols, a mimesis of human consciousness and of culture and religious symbolism. He maintains that the impact of the Gospel on culture has largely destroyed the power of the surrogate victim mechanism.

In *History and the Paraclete* Girard examined the collective persecution of the Christian martyrs and exposed the 'truth' that these victims were all innocent. The Paraclete was the voice of the innocent that throughout history had been muted (Girard, 1980:3). The Paraclete, 'spirit of truth', serves as the 'universal advocate, the counsel for the defence of all innocent victims' and exists to destroy all accounts of the persecutors interpretation (Girard, 1983:12-13). The Paraclete is summoned to the side of the accused victim and to speak on their behalf. The point is that the victim be glorified with the same impetus as the violence used against them. The Paraclete reveals the truth of the violence, the role of the persecutors and the innocence of the

victim. Girard argued that existing analysis of the Paraclete was too narrow and done only along theological lines. He had expanded on the concept to show that Jesus was the Paraclete personified and represented all victims. Once Christ departed another Paraclete appeared as the 'spirit of truth' and will avail itself to everyone. This second Paraclete is sent through history so that people cannot deny its existence by feigning ignorance (Girard, 1983:13). 'When the Paraclete comes, says Jesus, he will bear witness to me, he will reveal the significance of my death as an innocent person from the foundation of the world to the world's ending (Girard, 1983:16).

Girard argued that Christianity was only interested in defending its own victims as seen in the 'Christian martyrs' in Rome but once Christianity became an establishment it became a persecuting oppressor (Girard, 1983:6). He maintained that that these alleged crimes by the persecutors must be regarded as real crimes. The Gospels 'contain everything we need to be able to criticise acts of persecution from the persecutor's standpoint and to resist the mechanisms of mimesis and violence'.

Girard's theory developed from understanding the nature of desire through Greek philosophers to triangular desire between individuals to the mimetic rivalry found in communities. What he revealed was that mimetic desire developed into a rivalry between peers that eventually spread to other socio-economic groups who blindly accepted the reasons given to them by the social elites. A victim was chosen who bore some or all the stereotypes, was punished and expelled from the community. Girard then invoked the Bible and particularly the Gospels to further emphasise the role of the victim who became a scapegoat. It is in these texts that Girard argued that the victim was given a voice and portrayed as innocent. Girard regarded the Gospels as the revealer of truth and particularly Jesus as the victim *par excellence*. Jesus mission was to rescue humankind from the cycle of violence, not by sacrifice to an angry and vengeful God but by showing us our propensity for mimetic desire and scapegoating. Jesus showed that mimesis could be good if we realized that God loved all and was not an angry God expecting blood sacrifices. Jesus pointed out that people refused 'to acknowledge their own violence' by denying their participation claiming they 'were only witnesses' to the murders. Girard reiterated Jesus' position that society hid behind tombs, hiding not only the body of the victim but also their roles in the murder and the subsequent lies formulated as myth. Concealing the act and the corpse in tombs was

essential in disguising the murders. For Girard, Jesus' crucifixion exposed the scapegoat mechanism. The Cross prevented the construction of a tomb that would silence victims forever and concealing the violence of the community; instead it broke the cycle that selects new victims.

2.2. CRITICISM OF GIRARD'S THEORY

Girard's theories of mimetic desire, collective violence and the scapegoat have both staunch supporters and critics. His critics are particularly vocal in four areas of his claims; the first of these claims was that Christianity is the only religion that offers the truth of the arbitrary nature of the scapegoat. This mechanism included the collective guilt of the community and that this knowledge of scapegoat must be given to people as they are ignorant of its workings. The second claim was Girard's dismissive nature of Freudian theory construed by critics as sheer arrogance while others argued that he misunderstood and misinterpreted the Freudian 'Oedipus complex'. However Girard is equally criticised for using texts that only support his position. The third claim was Girard's dismissal of feminist interpretation and female characters. His assessment of women in literature was that of simplistic deceptive 'mute objects'. Girard considered women to be the most likely catalysts to bring discord in a society so accelerating mimetic violence. The fourth and final claim criticised Girard made is that his theories could be applied to all socio-political situations and myths throughout history without exception. (Girard, 2004:11).

Girard claimed that the knowledge of the victim mechanism is exclusively revealed in the Christian gospels. In *Violence and Truth,* Paul Dumouchel asked that if human culture and all the socio-political institutions arose out of the scapegoat mechanism then the community's misunderstanding of this victimage process must be essential to its functioning. Why then is it necessary for communities to be given an explanation of this 'hidden' knowledge (Dumouchel, 1988:18)? He conceded that while this knowledge remained beyond mankind's understanding such that it required divine explanation, why was this explanation only available in Christianity? How would

society benefit from the scapegoat mechanism if Girard insisted that it would eventually dismiss religion as the basis of social reality? Girard argued that Christianity corroborated evidence of the victim's death so religion would eventually separate from the socio-political reality. This separation occurs because society will be 'sensitized' to those who are disadvantaged and essentially potential victims.

Theologians Raymund Schwager and James Alison used Girard's theory of Christianity to reveal the mimetic process. The scene of Jesus in the desert and the temptation by the Devil revealed Jesus' awareness. The Devil, as *skandolon,* represented the obstacle 'that trips men up' and characterized the mimetic process that creates envy. The Devil gave men something to desire and assisted in development of rivalry. Alison further developed on Schwager's notion of temptation applying it to social reality. He argued that for us to live in a harmonious society we need to acknowledge and receive the 'intelligence of the victim' (Alison, 1998:9-12). This victim intelligence is the process of showing empathy for potential victims identifying with their situations. Alison suggested our need to imitate victims is to recognise the truth because our understanding culminates in knowing that 'this intelligence is the way to the heart of God, who sides with the victim' (Wharff, 2007:192). Jesus explained that it was only possible for mankind to release themselves from the cycle of violence and founding murders if they understood victim intelligence. Once the truth was revealed persecutor polarization would be restricted revealing their participation in the violence.

Authors have argued that it is not only Jesus that revealed this victim intelligence but also contained within other stories in the Bible. Sandor Goodhart in *I am Joseph* put forward such a position. The story of Joseph revealed mimetic rivalry and the victim mechanism, and Goodhart offered a deconstruction of sacrificial thinking drawing on Girard's victim 'signs'. There is a similar loving relationship between Jacob and Joseph as existed between Jesus and God. The 'sacrifice' of Joseph pains Jacob revealing the mimetic rivalry of Joseph's older brothers. The more loving Jacob was toward Joseph the more his brothers hated him (Goodhart, 1988:62-63).

The scapegoat mechanism is revealed in this story of Joseph and his reaction to his brothers is one of forgiveness. The collective violence in the story is metaphorical; goat blood is substituted for Joseph's blood, self-mutilation for the victim's mutilation and

the eating of the meal representing dismemberment and violence reserved for the victim. The purpose of this victim intelligence informs us of our wrong actions yet Joseph's brothers knew their actions were wrong. If we are affected by guilt then why do Joseph's brothers not show remorse when they return Joseph's bloodied garment to Jacob? If we are subject to mimicking others in terms of their facial expressions and emotion, with reference to Jacob's horror, then *I am Joseph* begs the question as to whether we are able to recognize our own violence and that of others.

Girard's 'non-sacrificial' reading of the New Testament was problematic as it was not the first source to condemn sacrifice. The Orphic tradition had 'reproached men with having founded their polis on murder' (Scubla, 1988:161). Scubla maintained that the Christianity of Girard is not that of the Gospels. Jesus subordinated sacrificial rites to love 'in the direct tradition of the prophets whose precepts He repeated word for word'. Furthermore Jesus' message lent greater weight to devaluing marriage and kinship than emphasizing the scapegoat mechanism and sacrifice. Instead Jesus demanded that his disciples defy traditional structures of marriage and family so Girard's argument that the impetus of the victim was a central factor in Jesus' message is flawed. The victimage mechanism is never condemned in the Gospels and Jesus even supported it; 'and if thy right eye [scandalize] thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish' (Scubla, 1988:164). It is not the knowledge of the scapegoat mechanism that destroys it but time that distances the ritual itself from its origins (Scubla, 1988:178).

Girard's 'theory of the primal murders' and the 'primordial origin of religion and all human culture in the surrogate victim mechanism is highly speculative'. Girard had dismissed Freud who argued that his interpretation of the primal murder was a single event rather than cyclical. A lack of adequate data and historically recorded information from the period that Girard assumed as 'foundational for all human culture' made his position on violent origins tenuous. This created a problem for his claim that his theory had universal application (Lefebure, 1996:1227). Ritual never existed for its own sake argued Richard Hardin in *Ritual in Recent Criticism.* Rites always excluded the community as they are only performed by a select group of people. Animals and humans are not the only sacrifice since fruit and vegetables were also used, but no conclusive data exists to corroborate which form of sacrifice predates the other. There

was no ethnographic evidence of any society anywhere in the world practicing the periodic sacrifice of a king (Hardin, 1983:849). In Africa this occurred infrequently and had nothing to do with ritual but rather the king's inability to continue governing. It undermines Girard's theory that sacrificing and scapegoating were the cornerstones of all societies.

Girard only used texts that best appropriated his ideas rather than those that contradicted him. By using the Books of Matthew and Mark to prove his point he dismissed the former by simply stating that 'Mark's text is richer' (Meltzer, 1984:327). R. Drew Griffith similarly remonstrated that Girard quite happily omitted texts that were contrary to his interpretation. He would use texts also used in psychoanalysis and structuralism to unveil their flaws then use his theoretical approach to 'prove that both of these central disciplines have failed…the real point of the shared proof-text' (Griffith, 1993:98). There is consensus that Girard ignored texts even in the Bible that masked violence and contrary to his theory. He insisted that his narrative alone is fact based by 'writing himself into his own scenario', as victim and hero of scapegoating and sanctification (Davis, 2000:205). 'Girard's work is irreconcilable with subjective temporality' because he insists on identifying individuals as being caught up in mimesis. Therefore there is a lack of personal identity and mimesis to 'pattern human behaviour'. Instead the sacred exists to encapsulate and embrace more than just the violence (Flood, 2000:208).

Similarly with twins Girard argued that they are the symbol 'par excellence of nondifferentiation' but in *The Sacrificial Difference*, Elizabeth Ezra argued that Girard sees the ghosts of 'twins' everywhere even when they are not really there. The most interesting part of his theory, plurality, is simply glossed over in his obsession with singularity (Ezra, 1996:70). Stronger criticism came from Toril Moi who suggested that *Things Hidden* was merely an opportunity for Oughourlian and Lefort to 'voice the most unembarrassed flattery of Girard himself' rather than challenge and offer suggestions to his methodology (1982:26).

Girard wanted to account 'for the entire sweep of human history' with a 'single assumption about language and a single method for its critical reading' (Mack, 1987:10-11). Girard was not content 'to participate in the competition of stories' like Freud and Levinas where each identified victims in the father and the Other respectively. Girard

argued that although his theory was a synthesis of two Freudian theories of incest and the original murder he wanted his version of sacrifice to be 'more firmly grounded, as a revealed and revelatory truth of unimpeachable validity' (Mack, 1987:15).

To Girard, women existed in triangular desire simply to seduce men and occupy a narcissistic bliss of 'coquetry' (Gorfkle & Williamsen, 1994:11). It doesn't occur to him that perhaps the female might actually not be interested in the male advances and is simply, due to enforced and expected social etiquette, being polite. Girard never entertained the idea that women could be homosexual and therefore exhibit no interest in the men whatsoever. To project women as manipulative does not explore the feminist position that defends such behaviour. To simply sexualise women is to place men in a superior position. This position also defends men by suggesting that they have never intentionally played with women's feelings by deceiving them. Such an analogy is by Bram Dijkstra in *Idols of Perversity*. He examined the 'dead woman as object of desire' commenting on the lack of voice given to women in relationships.

One should investigate the development of symbols in cultural identity in relation to the scapegoat. MasaoYamaguchi did so by reflecting on women when as scapegoats they provoked the community with their semiotic excess. In utilizing Jesus' opinion of marriage and what can be inferred of women, the language dichotomy is emphasized in understanding scapegoats that create and exacerbate discrimination (Yamaguchi, 1988:188). Women are equally as men an essential part of the collective violence in their communities and are as likely to be scapegoats. Girard never confronted these issues and never elaborated upon the dual role, active and passive, that women play in mimesis. He argued that women created the situation in triangular desire by making men rivals. He only presented women as the desired object in *Desire, Deceit and the Novel* and *A Theatre of Envy* but in his defense he simply interpreted the sources.

When encountering the feminist position there is a need to analyse this excluded feminine regarding all forms of creation, in religion and humanity. While Girard refrained from tackling a feminist approach he did place creation in the word rather than the womb. He wrote of the miraculous birth but did not emphasise women as mothers or lovers. Girard's language reduced nature to a 'feminine' construct subjected to the authority of a 'masculine' spiritual celestial divine. Mary Condren argued that women continue to be excluded from myth particularly when engaging with the sacred. They

are prevented from participating in rites and rituals as their bodies are considered polluting. This does not exclude them from participating in the social violence or from becoming scapegoats.

While several feminists highlighted the shortfalls of Girard's claims there were others such as Pamela Sue Anderson who took a defensive position of Girard's interpretations. She argued that he did not want to sexualise sacrifice because he interpreted mimetic desire as 'sameness' and 'undifference' while sexuality suggested a gendered difference. Furthermore she argued that Girard never engaged the body in his victim mechanism and only analysed cultural violence. He did not analyse 'homicidal violence' which Julia Kristeva maintained as important in ascertaining the original sacrifice (Anderson, 2000:219-220). The female appeared only as a passive object in Girard's triangular schema but if he had portrayed women as Phyllis Dee suggested as 'an active object' then the role of desired object would be rejected (Dee, 1999:391). She maintained that Girard's triangle was simply a hierarchical arrangement with the 'soft submission' of women. Rather this 'soft submission' should not be regarded as submission at all, because none of the women submitted to any of the interested men mentioned in the texts (Dee, 1999:393).

Women are often presented as muted scapegoats different from their male counterpart. Although masochism is a 'centrally structuring element of both male and female subjectivity, it is only in the [female's] case that the phenomenon can be safely acknowledged'. Even if the scapegoat mechanism and victim intelligence provided the victim with a voice it continued to silence the female. The mechanism tolerated female subjectivity and simply helped to eroticise subordination (McClure Smith, 1996:392). Of course this 'normal' is only an opinion or a prejudice of the writer and an investigation has not been done into the personal subjection of female victims.

As a response to this 'normal female subjectivity' Toril Moi confirmed in *The Missing Mother* that Girard only regarded men as subjects and women as objects (Moi, 1982:23) most notably in *Desire, Deceit and the Novel*. Yet in *A Theatre of Envy* Girard appeared to recognise and acknowledged the reverse of this gendered scenario in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The texts that Girard utilised to prove his theory of 'triangular desire' suggested that women, due to the social milieu, would never avail themselves sexually to men fearing social ruin (Moi, 1982:24). This is not to suggest

that the women were not aware of male intentions or their rivalry but also revealed that as women they were not interested in either male party. Rather than suggesting women's inability to perceive and be active participants, it is Girard's failure to realise that it is the woman-object who clearly witnessed the 'doubles'. It is she who saw the childish behaviour of men to compete with each other.

It is impossible to avoid mimetic desire and the relationship of doubles because it is in our nature to copy the behaviour and desires of others. In developing our sense of Self we consider what to desire and look to others for guidance. While Jesus advocated the use of mimetic desire he told his disciples that they should approach as children would. Jesus said 'Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matt 18:3 in Williams, 1996). Jesus considered mimesis good and innocent but that mimetic rivalry was problematic and often resulted in death.

Responding to the second claim of the scapegoat mechanism as applicable for all situations it can be argued that children do not imitate others in order to become rivals. Children play a part Girard's theory because their roles assist in his understanding of mimesis. Children are great imitators because this is their introduction to society, understanding social norms and what is understood as acceptable behaviour. However, children are scapegoated in the relationships between adults. In *Unloading Guilt,* Benedict Ushedo told the story of how a child became the victim in a tense relationship between two men. The two were childhood friends who grew up on a farm but one succeeded in his life achieving wealth, status, security and a family while the other saw life as a constant struggle. He lacked everything and fuming with envy at his friend's success he approached him for assistance. His friend was always happy to assist and this fuelled his resentment. Unable to confront and humiliate his friend who he felt was a powerful mediator, the impoverished and dejected subject decided to murder his mediator's child. He strangled the child and in the act empowered himself, as he never could during his life (Ushedo, 1997:131-149). Often people feel helpless and unable to vent their rage against a particular individual – fearing the strength and influence of the other – so instead they direct their anger toward a third party whom they perceive as weaker than themselves. Frustrated that he was unable to vent against the 'guilty' party he found another victim. This is a 'reaction to frustration' that 'is not remarkably

different at the level of the collective' and a child victim becomes fair game. In times of emotional turmoil the community selects the weakest as a target for emotional and psychological release. Those 'who are closely related to the perceived source of the problem' as in such a situation when people are hostile toward the parents then their children become the targets. (Ushedo, 1997:133).

With regard to the idea of children's mimicry we need to look to others to gauge emotional responses from them when we are confused and uncertain about events. Our gaze scans neighbouring faces to the 'cause' or objects of the reaction. In 'social referencing' the process is reversed and we attach an emotion to the object or event that is threatening or unfamiliar. In an attempt to make sense of the situation we survey those in proximity. By contagion we pick up the other person's emotions predicting others' emotions and adjust our behaviour accordingly (Gordon, 1995:730-731). We use our emotions, background, information and reactions to determine how we assume someone might react to an event or an object (Gordon, 1995:735). We also assume that the information that is available to us is available to everyone in the community or vicinity.   Ann W. Astell hit upon the notion that 'contagion' is central to mimesis and argued that Girard never categorized it as 'empathy' and 'sympathy'. He never acknowledged that there were positive and negative connotations to the contagion of mimesis.

Girard argued that if imitation ceased to exist then so would culture and all other institutions. Citing Edith Stein and Simone Weil, analysts of 'empathy', Astell distinguished it 'from a contagious transference of feeling' (Astell, 2004:120). Stein explained that when reading sadness in another's face 'I inquire the content' but 'having pulled me into it I am no longer turned to the content but to the object of it, I am at the subject of the content in the original subject's place' (Astell, 2004:121). She found that emotions of empathy are as individualistic and temporary therefore argued that it was not possible for them to a contributing factor to mimicry. However Weil wanted to express 'empathy' with the victim because to do is 'supernatural'. 'The ability to distinguish what is primordial and non-primordial and to empathise with the objects of an inherited prejudice must be exercised' wrote Weil, 'if the contagion is to be resisted and overcome' (Astell, 2004:129). Girard recognised that empathy formed the first

component of the intelligence of the victim but this is not to say that potential persecutors would share these feelings (Wharff, 2007:205).

Shakespeare demonstrated uniqueness in his writings and prose. He recognised and identified mimesis and didn't disguise it as others have done as 'envy' (Scheider, 1996). Shakespeare acknowledged 'envy' as the passion behind the rivalry as seen in *Julius Caesar* but he does not elaborate on the social issues of scapegoating. The need to scapegoat existed so that communities can strengthen their collective identity. Therefore the victim was always likely to be 'the alien'. It supports an infantile understanding that it is 'us' against 'them' and to maintain the 'us' there is a need and desire to alienate and demonise an individual outsider (Kearney, 2002: 20). In order to preserve their own reality defensive action is taken against an outsider, a perceived enemy. However, the concept of mimesis is insufficient in explaining why aliens are targeted for violence and refused access into communities.

In cases that include royalty there is often an initial symbolical killing argued Declan Quigley in *Scapegoats: The Killing of Kings and Ordinary People.* Before the murder the victim is made to appear monstrous and 'non-human' and does the community truly believe these accusations (Quigley, 2000:238). Whether all myths (foundational or contemporary) are sacrificial in interpretation undermines Girard's claim that the theory of the victim mechanism can be applied to all situations. Girard argued that all myths 'are rooted in real acts of violence' which are not fantasies he insisted, rather they are based on historical facts. Kearney argued that myth 'comes to function as a new scapegoat, inherently alienating because it is an act of imagination contriving to negate reality' (Kearney, 1999:256). Like many others, Kearney suggested that it is best to view aspects of the 'alien' outsider, using more than Girardian thought. Kearney added that Girard was unable to critique himself successfully or recognise that he saw 'scapegoats' everywhere perceiving every- and anyone as a victim.

The entire notion of mimetic desire and its centrality to human relations needed to be questioned. How could they ever be constructive if they eventually erode into rivalry and violence (Townsley, 2003)? Girard argued that Jesus' advice to his disciples was that they should become as children. Yet children compete as they age and the desire to be dominant is inherently present. Revealing the truth of the scapegoat mechanism or

concealing it does not construct culture and religion within communities. It is the laws, rituals and myths that generate a rage directing the population to adhere to certain socio-political realities (Desmond & Kavanaugh, 2003:240).

Private property can be ascertained as being part of these laws. However 'if the transcendence of the judicial system is no longer there, if the institution loses its efficacy or becomes incapable of commanding respect, the imitative and repetitious character of violence manifests once more (Girard, 1987a:12). Without the necessary structures to maintain hierarchal and social difference, tense relationships can disintegrate from jealousy to envy and agents begin to operate within the community to stimulate the collective violence as witnessed in *Job: The Victim of His People*.

In *Against Scapegoating: A Sociological Critique of René Girard*, Keith Doubt argued that victims of violence are separate from scapegoats as the latter take on 'symbolic significance'. He maintained that 'in the social sciences, scapegoating is a mechanism for expressing prejudice; in literary criticism it is, more deeply a symbolic mechanism for purging a community of guilt'. The 'theological significance of Christ's crucifixion is lost because the form of a scapegoat ritual is exaggerated to such a degree'. There is no difference between the social contract of Hobbes and the unanimity 'of illogic' of Girard, but for Girard 'rationality has nothing to do with the birth of society' (Doubt, 2004:15). To Girard, the 'moral foundation of society is its inherent lawlessness' and that violent outbursts are inevitable while according to the social contract of Hobbes it is not. If the 'moral foundation' is lawless then how will the society achieve stability and recognise its symbols?

According to Hobbes, envy, rather than leading to violence, is transformed into empathy. Girard does not consider all mimetic desire to be envy but that all envy is mimetic. He maintained that envy only related to the superior position of an individual and not to jealousy that is concerned only with the object. No one wants to admit a sense of lack or to acknowledge fear and self-pity so the emotions are concealed temporarily. What is required is that individuals become more receptive rather than acquisitive; a way of life that includes receiving 'grace'. St. Bernard cited that 'humility overcomes the mimetic process' against Girard's opinion that it is love and awareness that renders the mimesis, rivalry and the scapegoat mechanism pointless (Wharff, 2007:190-196). To suggest humility overcomes the mimetic process is

problematic because all human relations are based on mimesis in one form or another. Humility also suggests accepting the situation as it is while Girard position of love suggests respecting another. While humility and love as the solution to mimetic desire, socio-political environments are not often conducive to these responses. The ever-present notion of power and desire undermines these emotions as weak and frivolous.

'Deferral' is part of our nature suggested Girard and that it makes submission to the established order meaningful. For St. Bernard dominance would not bring people an awareness of the mimetic process as it 'is an obstacle to receptivity' and 'Girard tells us that the principle source of domination between human beings is mimetic rivalry'. St. Bernard offered that those who are not aware of arrogance would imitate in a similar manner as 'the snob' did in Proust. The peace resulting from the violence against the scapegoat is a 'false' peace whereas 'true' peace can only be achieved by the 'passive' mimesis of Jesus (Wharff, 2007:200-206). If we are to maintain social harmony there has to be separation and difference and for Girard hierarchy is one such arrangement that maintains difference and social dominance. Girard argued that it was not economic disparity that brought about mimetic rivalry but rather a desired object. Perhaps one should concede that not all mimesis is based on 'lack' but often on 'fullness' (Skerrett, 2003:796).

John Milbank disagreed with Girard on three grounds, the first that he assumed the arbitrary nature of desire, the second that violence is part of human interaction and thirdly that Jesus revealed the scapegoat mechanism. He further argued that Girard did not provide reason as to why Jesus should be imitated (Skerrett, 2003:800). A problematic aspect of Girard's theory was his deduction that the Bible is the only source that revealed the truth of the scapegoat and that God revealed his displeasure with sacred violence (Bolin, 2004:253). An alternative to Girard's theory is offered by Jacque Ellul's theory, in *The Festival in Light of the Theory of the Three Milieus* by Richard Stivers. The 'milieus' – nature, society and technology – 'mediated the preceding one, rendering it an indirect force' (Stivers, 1993:510). A preceding milieu is a model for the subsequent but it is the subsequent milieu that will interpret the milieu before. In 'nature' there is little or no real conflict as people do not live in close proximity but the society 'milieu' is characterized by the control of nature, a system of laws, the emergence of towns and social hierarchy that ideologically is more interested

in status than power. Technology is closer to us than nature and is characterized by the erosion of the 'symbol' and should therefore produce a less volatile community (Stivers, 1993:514-515). This suggests that the technology milieu is best for humanity as there will not be 'semiotic excess' and thus no 'signs' by which to isolate and marginalize individuals.

In the milieu of society, and particularly the historical period, symbols served two purposes. Firstly those historical events become symbolic and give definition and character to a population group that eventually accept it as being their culture. Secondly these symbols serve as the 'primary ingredients' of social institutions. The 'technology milieu' is not the final stage because it will revert to the 'society milieu' with the ritual killing of animals. The killing of humans 'begins in the transition to the milieu of society' because while nature is organized around 'life and death' the society milieu is organized around 'good and evil' and sacrifice expels the evil (Stivers, 1993:520-526). Neither Ellul nor Stivers reflected why the technology milieu reverted to the society/historical milieu and inevitable violence (Mathijs & Mosselmans, 2000:62). However social cohesion requires mimetic desire regardless of the social milieu and it is only through imitation that shared values are recognised (Lochhead, 2001:8).

Girard's theory has temporal boundaries in the 'society' rather than the 'nature and technology' milieus. To enact the memories contained in rituals individuals will often flay and punish themselves to empathise with the victim evident in Shi'ite Islam. These emotive gestures define the nature of this community and its solidarity lay in the concepts of rituals, duties and obligations to create and maintain a difference from other communities (Weiner & Weiner, 1996:53). The periods of 'communal social' environment is punctuated with the exclusion of certain groups and through periodic violence directed at unfortunate individuals (Lefebure, 1996:1227).

The power of mimeticism 'is such that a simple statement of the truth is almost invariably rejected as absurd' as observed of the response Jesus received, in the story of the Demons of Gerasa (Goldman, 1999:62). Offended by Jesus the community ask Jesus to leave once he drove the demons from the individual wandering in the graveyard. Jesus had interfered with their scapegoat.

The scapegoat mechanism led to a cultural order based upon the myth, rites and prohibitions – *interdits*. Ernest Mathijs and Bert Mosselmans argued that Girard's

theory of culture in a historical world-view was an essential stage in the evolution of culture and mankind. They utilise an 'anthropometric' system defining culture, institutions of rite, prohibition and myth showing how individuals define their space and interpret their experiences. 'A static and hierarchical differentiated society' and 'natural inequality' exist to suppress mimetic desire identifies the anthropometric stage (Mathijs & Mosselmans, 2000:68-70). We must not confuse innovation with imitation because it is easier to imitate (Girard, 1990:14-15). However the rewards are greater with innovation and this is evident with the economic and social changes as seen in the socio-political and economic changes brought with the advent of Islam.

Economics reflect 'an internal mediation that produces an enormous, even a frightening amount of innovation, since it ritualises and institutionalises mimetic rivalry' (Girard, 1990: 17). Perhaps Girard needed to change his direction of analysis and forgo 'his concern with tracing mimesis as the organizing structure for the literary representation of individual human desires and turn instead to tracing the ways that mimetic phenomena organize all human religious and cultural institutions' (Rushdy, 1993:83). Introducing a position of how the community comes to participate, Eugene Weber related that it is more important how the community comes to congregate initially and 'assimilate the rules and values' of a socio-political system when they move to a particular area integrate and accept 'symbols'. Peasants simply imitate those who they perceive as 'better than' themselves (Weber, 1980:521). For Girard this will not bring about mimetic rivalry because it is a form of external mediation but agents can use the 'mimesis' of the community to mobilise hostility against the victim regardless of his social status. This is the case of Job in *Job: The Victim of His People* where even the lower ranks of society blindly accept the scapegoat suggested to them. Without the agents the ranks of the socio-economic defined community will not collide because the society is differentiated and the social institutions enforce this.

In the *Discussion* of *Violent Origins* there is a sweeping generalisation made by Terrell Butler that myths omit the scapegoat mechanism and the Bible presents it to the reader with Girard reiterating that the Gospels is 'all revelation' and that this is 'seeping in through history' and in some way identifiable to us all where we all acknowledge the victim as a victim (Girard, 1987:145). However in truth the scapegoat mechanism is alive and well in contemporary society, regardless that communities have taken to

sympathizing with the potential victim, the fact that our opinions of certain groups are still subject to stereotypes should remain a warning that our propensity toward creating differences in others particularly when they are politically weaker and socially marginalized often leads to the death of innocent victims.

Authors have taken to applying Girard's theories to contemporary socio-political environments and many have simply left it to Girard to determine that Christianity alone offers up the knowledge of the arbitrary victim, his innocence and the guilt of the community. Girard argued that a new social order formed after the death of the victim but he does not mention that there is two different scenarios at play here. One scenario is that myths and rituals form around the victim in a particular community and this is acknowledged but in the second scenario a schism forms and a breakaway group undertakes to create a myth around the victim. Tod Swanson wrote that Girard 'is one of those rare scholars who, like Freud or Ernst Becker, is remarkably good at explaining the whole of human culture in terms of a single principle' but this does not account for all victims in a community (Swanson, 1994:121).

The theme of sacrifice in Christianity also existed in other religions and while Girard's contribution was 'immensely valuable' and that as 'a rather narrowly focused, anti-sacrificial critique' it had not been seriously challenged. 'One example of what has to be set aside as such an anachronistic reading is the now conventional notion of what it means to speak of Jesus as "son of God" or "Christ": that he was some kind of divine figure'. A sacrifice is 'giving of this earth', as in the victim, back to God, whereas sin is the opposite, it is the taking and 'claiming of something' for oneself. Everything we receive is from above and so it must be returned there. 'I am not my own possession; I am a gift - my being is a gift from God. I have got to return that gift. Sacrifice is this return' (Webb,1996).

Jesus willingness to experience crucifixion rather than abandon his prophetic calling was an expression and sign of his complete consecration of his life to God's service. 'His sacrifice in its full meaning was not his crucifixion alone but his self-emptying throughout his life: both his sacrifice of all false selfhood, of the desire-self, and his self-giving to God'. The victims revealed their innocence, refusing to be silenced by their communities speaking openly of their treatment. Once revered they are now reviled and the language that was once complimentary of them became

opprobrious in the next moment. Yet the character of the victim never changed only the community did. Although Girard cannot speak for all victims he presented us with the notion to recognise the victim's 'voice' as crucial to unpacking the scapegoat mechanism.

2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.3.1.GIRARD'S THEORY OF MIMESIS

Girard's first elaboration of mimetic desire was 'triangular desire' or as Hamerton-Kelly calls it the 'french triangle' that defines the relationship between two men and a woman as the object of desire. There isn't any mention that the method can be used to describe two women and a man as seen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but Girard maintains that 'there is no difference: each lover is a mirror image of the other three, regardless of gender' (Girard, 1991:35). This is probably due to Girard's opinion of the self-sufficiency he claims women exhibit, which leads to their deceitful behaviour. For there to be any form of triangular desire or any desire there is a need to acknowledge how 'something' or 'someone' becomes desired. For something to have value or interest for another someone has to give it that value or interest. 'I desire' as Alison writes of mimetic desire, 'in imitation of somebody…the very possibility of our being conscious creatures at all are owed to the mechanism of imitation' (Alison, 1997:18).

Mimetic desire or as Paisley Livingston writes 'emulative desire' is a fundamental human trait that allows us to 'fit in' to our communities and societies (Livingston, 1992:59). The desire is not biological or instinctual but arises through the imitation of another's desire. This interpretation is in contrast to the Platonic tradition that separates mimesis and desire. However there are also the two aspects of psychological and sociological approaches in mimetic desire where 'mimetic theory proposes a way of understanding humans which is simultaneously personal and social' (Alison, 1997:18). Girard identified two forms of mediation in terms of triangular desire namely internal and external. External mediation does not invoke jealousy and envy, as there are existing barriers – social, economic, historical – that prevent the subject and the mediator from confronting each other, becoming 'doubles' through 'undifferentiation'. The desire is mimetic but not competitive and therefore does not escalate (Livingston, 1992:50). The subject often makes his feelings and intentions known to others and shows a respect and admiration for the mediator that can never truly be challenged. Internal mediation is the exact opposite, often the subject and the mediator share an environment that allows them to compete for the same object, imitating each other and

becoming 'doubles' to the point that they are 'undifferentiated'. Rivalry emerges through contest with one another culminating in violence.

In children it is part of their social development but in adults it leads to mimetic rivalry and eventually conflict due to finite resources. The following is an example of internal mediation,

> Imagine a scene. A small child is sitting alone in a nursery that has a couple of dozen toys scattered about it. He sits there rather dreamily expressing only a casual interest in the toy that happens to be closest to him. Another child comes into the room and surveys the room. He sees the other child and a great number of toys. There will come a moment when the second child will choose a toy. Which of the toys will he most likely find interesting? It will likely be the toy the first child seems interested in though at this time his or her interest is only casual. The second child will be more interested in the first child than in any of the toys, but this interest is translated into a concern for the toy in which the first child has shown some interest.... and the second child reaches for the toy. What happens? The first child's nonchalance vanishes in an instant. Suddenly he clings to the toy for dear life. Extremely vexed, the first child says: "I had that!". His intense reaction arouses in the second child a desire for the toy vastly more powerful than the mild desire with which he has first reached for it. The two children feed each other's desire for the toy by demonstrating to each other how desirable it is.....As long as the conflict remains unresolved, the suggestion that both children bear some responsibility for the squabble will be resolutely rejected. Each will be certain that the other is the sole cause of the conflict. (Gil Bailie quoted in Marr, 1998:560)

The dynamics at play here between the children is exactly the same as experienced by adults in their social environment. The mimesis eventually leads to rivalry that

spreads in the community without cultural restraint becoming violent and confrontational. Left unchecked this violence eventually leads to reciprocal acts of violence and a fearful chaotic environment resulting in 'mimetic chaos'. The mimetic agent possesses self-sufficiency setting him apart from the subject, and embodies a 'successful form of narcissism (Livingston, 1992:8). This development is witnessed in the following where admiration has turned to rage for the subject and where an idol has become the most hatred person,

> My feet were on the point of stumbling, a little further
> and I should have slipped,
> Envying the arrogant as I did and watching the wicked
> get rich. For them, no such thing as pain, their bodies
> are healthy and strong, they do not suffer as other men
> do, no human afflictions for them!
> So pride is their chain of honour, violence the garment
> that covers them;
> Their spite oozes like fat, their hearts drip with slyness.
> Cynical advocates of evil, lofty advocates of force,
> They think their mouth is heaven and their tongue
> can dictate on earth.
> (Girard, 1987b:55-56)

We can witness the attempts of the narrator to compete, keep up and eventually catch up to the idol but is unable to do so. His reverence turns to hatred for the idol that he now considers 'arrogant' and 'wicked'. For Girard 'at the origin of a desire there is always the spectacle of another real or illusory desire' (Livingston, 1992:31). There is a longing for completion and to 'keep up' and 'catch up' but when we cannot realize this desire is misdirected and becomes an offence transformed into envy and resentment (Wharff, 2007:184). In seeking to emulate the model the subject begins to desire what he thinks the model desires in the form of an object. Attention is focused on the object that the subject lacks and believes that he should also have access to. 'That is why my people turn to them and lap up all they say, until the day I pierced the mystery and the

end in store for them' depicts a very resentful and angry individual whose desire has eroded into rage because he cannot engage the popularity, respect and admiration that the individual has. Unable to compete with the idol, 'he claims superiority in small matters' where he claims 'until the day I pierced the mystery' (Girard, 1991:187). Girard presented this narrator as a 'righteous man' who is displaying his adoration and his rage simultaneously and who refuses to worship the idol.

The subject believes that possession of this object – the popularity, respect and wealth - is the only real differentiation between the subject and the model. When we imitate the model's thoughts, there is harmony but when we imitate the model's desire then tension and rivalry develop (Lefebure, 1996:1225). Mimesis leading to violence is the 'central energy' of the social system. The object's value rockets and is seen as the mark of prestige and imbued with symbolic power; 'they think their mouth is heaven'. The relationship becomes more complex when the mediator decides that he now wants to imitate the subject and the two begin to resemble each other in their rivalry. In irony the subject that had initially wanted to be different from his peers by choosing to imitate the model is now faced with a tense situation of sameness and 'undifference'.

Pride is central to mimetic rivalry and triggers a dissent into double mediation. The object is only a means of reaching the mediator; often an element of hostility and competition has always existed between the two, and this is essential to the formation of friendships and associations. There is desperation in terms of the competitive nature of the subject, 'stumbling' feet and nearly slipping 'envying the arrogant as I did' shows how the narrator was willing to give everything of himself to be like those he admired. He is aiming for the essence of the mediator while the object is the catalyst that brings the desire, imitation and competition into the open. The closer the mediator gets to the desired object the desire intensifies, 'passion becomes more intense and the object is emptied of its concrete value' and the resentment increases (Girard, 1988:83-85). The envy that was once hidden now exposes itself and seeks to contaminate others. Eventually imitation reaches its zenith and the object is lost, the respect, admiration and wealth is gone, and all that remains is the model (Desmond & Kavanaugh, 2003:241). All that matters now is the destruction of the mediator and the community becomes involved through the mechanism of extreme violence; 'they are on a slippery slope, you put them there, you urge them on to ruin' (Girard, 1987b:56).

Girard seeks to ground his theory in literature, in particular Dostoevsky and Shakespeare and in addition to anthropological accounts of myth such as that of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty. In this vein I will draw upon the life of Ali, the first Imam in Shi'ite Islam; it is an appropriate point of departure for Girard's theory as it recreates the primordial scene of the eventual 'scapegoat'. As the Torah notes that Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children and made him an aristocratic tunic (Goodhart, 1988:63), so the cloak of Mohammed (mantle) covered Ali and his family; for Mohammed this act was an assertion that they were the people of his 'house'. The *Ahlul Bayt* (People of the House) was the most beloved to Mohammed and this action placed them in a unique position to his other relatives including his wives who also lived in his home. It also emphasized Ali's position alongside Mohammed who possessed only a single female heir in his daughter and eventual wife to Ali, Fatima.

It lends emphasis to the comments by other authors who suggested that Jesus was more interested in denouncing marriage and kinship. Yet this was a brilliant manner in which to demonstrate that it is through marriage and kinship that the greatest mimicry and eventual mimetic rivalry occurs. We desire to be like the other through the eyes of another bringing us to the threshold of conflict in the relationships of marriage and kinship that form the cornerstone of society and culture. What Jesus and Ali similarly attempted to show was that 'I must learn to love without envy, imitating pacifically' but people are not that simple or that humble. We shouldn't covert another's wife or another's relationships nor should we seek to be as our friends yet this would be impossible to negotiate as the construction and functioning of society rests upon these ideals.

The briefer the reign of the mediator, the more tyrannical it becomes where 'the underground man's mediators succeed one another so rapidly we can no longer even speak of distinct Selves. The periods of relative stability, separated by violent crises or intervals of spiritual emptiness are supplanted by a perpetual crisis' (Girard, 1988:91). Jesus and Ali occupied prominent and influential positions in their respective communities for a very limited period. Their rise to prominence occurred during tumultuous socio-political periods and myth is often reduced to this single characteristic period of confusion as well as the notable lack of differentiation. Jesus was executed on

a cross, the most dishonorable death possible at the time (Marr, 1998:601) while Ali was attacked in the mosque, a sacred and respected sanctity. It appears that many represented *skandalon* to Ali's desire to run an equitable and fair socio-political Islamic structure. The Shi'ite texts certainly do not consider Ali to be guilty and insist that he was an innocent victim, they recognise the collective contagion of people that incites collective violence.

Where Judaism and Christianity are in opposition regarding kinship relations it is Judaism that places emphasis on the father while Christianity places it on the son. Judaism emphasized the vertical relation that united man to ancestors while the latter stressed a horizontal relation that placed emphasis on brotherhood and equality between men (Scubla, 1988:162-163). Shi'ite Islam accepted Ali as a combination of the vertical and horizontal relationships with God. Coupled with this aspect of horizontal vertical relationship is the inclusion of Mohammed in the role of father to Ali. Where Judaism and Christianity give respect to either the father or the son, Shi'ite Islam suggests a mutually respectful relationship between the 'father' Mohammed and 'son' Ali. Christianity and Shi'ism raised the position of Jesus and Ali respectively to divine status yet it was the community who had initially stated that 'a man raised above us makes our lives intolerable' suggesting that this is 'none other than the scapegoat' already identified by the 'power he is supposed to possess' (Girard, 1987b:57).

2.3.2. GIRARD'S THEORY OF THE SCAPEGOAT AND VICTIM MECHANISM

Following the mimetic desire in the modern novel, Girard turned to the relationship between violence and the sacred in early texts, primal religions and Greek texts drawing heavily on Frederich Nietzche's *On the Geneology of Morals* to support his idea of the scapegoat. The sacred first appears as violence directed at a sacrificial victim, a scapegoat and a lynch mob rudimentary to social order. He noted that societies were always threatened by violence due to mimetic rivalry and since violence only led to more ferocious violence there needs to be a mechanism in place to stop it; namely the scapegoat. By selecting an individual who is either an outsider or on the margins of society, the community can direct their violence collectively toward this person

becoming a socially constructive force. It is the Hobbesian 'war of all against all' that becomes the Girardian 'war of all against one'.

Hamerton-Kelly suggested that mimesis creates an 'us' and 'them' difference and the rivalry has gained such momentum it operated like a machine without conscious effort (Wharff, 2007: 184; Bottum, 1996:http://www.firstthings.com/article). Rivals forget their differences momentarily and unite collectively against the victim.

> Honest men are shocked and the guiltless man rails against
> the godless;
> just men grow more settled in their ways, those whose hands
> are clean add strength to strength. (Girard, 1987b:70)

These agents recognize that they share an intense dislike for the individual and spur each other on to harm the victim; they consider him central to the problems in their lives. The victim is a well-known stranger within the community, and 'is invited to a feast which ends with his lynching'. Girard noted that crowds tend to turn on those individuals that originally held exceptional power over them, 'their mouth is heaven and their tongue can dictate on earth. That is why my people turn to them and lap up all they say' (Girard, 1987b:56). The narrator already presents the community as naïve of the mannerisms of potential victims; the victim is portrayed as deceitful, vain and arrogant while these individuals duped the 'collective innocence' of the community.

The victim does something he should not have done and his behaviour is perceived as fatal and as Girard suggested that 'one of his gestures was misinterpreted'. (Girard, 1986:32). It might have been something insignificant but all the community wants is an opportunity to vent their rage and the smallest misunderstanding becomes a disaster. Girard notes that it is not necessary for myths to contain all the stereotypes of persecution even suggesting that some myths only possess one or even none of the signs. However a central component is that of 'moral monstrosity' where the persecutors project calamities and misfortunes – public or private – onto an individual. For Girard there is a connection in mythology between moral and physical monstrosity but this can be difficult to gauge in certain mythologies. Where the heroes are characterised by their beauty and strength there might not be any physical problem

unless we incorporate aspects that are not generally visible such as Ali possessing more molars than the average person. 'Signs' identify the scapegoat and reveal the fragility and the truth of the system. Girard writes of four stereotypes of persecution that culminate in the eventual selection of scapegoat.

The first stereotype is the loss of difference, there is a social and cultural crisis resulting from a phenomenon not controlled by man such as a famine, drought or plague. Because it affects the entire population there is a generalized loss of differentiation resulting in a social and cultural crisis. The second stereotype is the elimination of difference which apart from creating a perceived parity in society such that 'we are all in this together' it also includes crimes that are not supposed to occur in families and between friends. These include parricide, incest and adultery, crimes that are not supposed to occur within families. For that reason there are social and cultural boundaries in accessing family members and their relationships but in the mimetic crisis these boundaries no longer exist. The third stereotype is the mark/signs of the potential victim; how does he differ from everyone else in the community, is he a foreigner, handicapped or a member of royalty? The more signs this victim displays the greater the accusation that he attracts disaster to himself (Girard, 1986:21-30). Ali was a newcomer to the political establishment, he was like a son to the Prophet, so he was in a manner of speaking royalty, he had been persecuted after the death of the Prophet and he also was exceptionally frugal. He also married the only heiress of Mohammed and had children with her, the grandsons of the Prophet. Persecutors perceive their victim as guilty and often the accusations are mythological but characteristic of the way in which paranoiac crowds conceive of their victims.

Persecutors believe that they choose their victims because of their crimes that they have attributed to them but in reality the victims are determined by the 'criteria of persecution'. In the process 'scapegoatism becomes a mechanism that helps to free people from the strain of psychological tensions'.

> Just as in the Oedipus myth and de Mauchat's historical
> account, fables can be helpful in illustrating how the
> mechanism of scapegoatism functions. Let us, at this
> juncture, call to mind Hamerton-Kelly's story of how an

> animal kingdom set about trying to ward off a plague
> thought to be a divine punishment for the guilt not shared
> by all the animals. To avert the plague, the guilty one
> among them is to be identified and punished. As the story
> goes, the first ones to be interrogated are the beasts of
> prey. But they are immediately excused, evidently because
> the other animals fear them and cannot act against them.
> Last comes the ass, the least bloodthirsty of them all and
> therefore the weakest and the least protected. In the end, it
> is the ass that is found guilty. (Ushedo, 1997:133)

Once the victim, assaulted and brutalised, is dead, the unruly mob looks on at the broken body of the victim and realises that the violence and tension has ceased momentarily. This is not to say that the social and political crisis has completely disappeared. From this surprised 'tranquillity' or perhaps a reluctance to take responsibility for their actions misinterpretations of the events are recorded into history. Not wanting to assume responsibility the first and fundamental misunderstanding is that the victim was the cause of the violent disorder. If by his death he brings peaceful order, in his life he must have caused the violent disorder. The myth acknowledges that the victim brings, symbolises and incarnates order; he now becomes a pillar of society (Girard, 1986:43). The victim is given superhuman powers because he brought peace where he was once held responsible for the violence and chaos in the community. 'One must look to this prestige,' says Girard, 'for the source of all political and religious sovereignty' (Girard, 1987a:53). Because he is very powerful he is a god, the creator of the world, in the sense of the order of culture and society. Here is the origin of the idols, the human sacrifice, the mythology and the taboos that are the default position in human religiosity. This suggests that all victims thereafter will also possess some of the power and prestige of the original victim; this link coming through an occupied office such as royalty and leadership roles.

Alison (1997) maintains that the 'peace' is fake, based on deceit, and that inevitably rivalry, which has only been temporarily placated by the distraction of the scapegoat, will break out again and they'll have to repeat the mechanism again

sacrificing another expendable victim. The temporary peace rests on the expulsion of someone who is held unanimously responsible, and who cannot take vengeance against his persecutors, for all the conflicts. 'Whenever the scapegoat succeeds in postponing his execution or expulsion he transforms the position of prestige into religious power' (Mathijs & Mosselmans, 2000:65). The religion now gains greater authority, impetus and a higher degree of transcendence while myth and ritual fade into the background. While myth is still central to the establishment of culture it is inadequate in explaining the transcendent character of religion. The foundation of human culture is remembered in rite and myth is immortalised in art, tragedy and comedy; this mimetic representation is the only manner in which tragedy can fulfill its function of mimesis.

Myth relays the crisis but downplays the violence while ritual replays the crisis re-enacting the events symbolically (Desmond & Kavanaugh, 2003:241). Cultural order is based on the scapegoat mechanism along with the foundation of rite, prohibitions and myth. The rite reaffirms the cultural order's birth out of the scapegoat mechanism. Through re-enactment of the scapegoat the necessity for prohibitions is confirmed to prevent mimetic violence in the form of a social hierarchy to differentiate the population. Without prohibition – *interdits* – the crimes committed 'blur the distinctions' that govern the cultural order. The origins of the culture are legitimized in a sequential order as found represented in myth (Mathijs & Mosselmans, 2000:65). The myth is represented in two stages where the first is the accusation against a victim for the social crisis while the second is the suggested sacredness of the victim made possible by the community's reconciliation. The scapegoat now lives on eternally after his murder in the sacred.

The return to peace is now ascribed to the same individual who 'created' the crisis and this is what makes the victim sacred. The victim's persecution is transformed into a benign event that becomes a point of departure for religion and culture. The myth is told from the perspective of the persecutors so that no one can see the arbitrary manner in which the scapegoat is selected and that the violence is collective. In response to their behaviour the scapegoat is accorded special powers that no other individual can possess, so that the arbitrary nature of the scapegoat mechanism remains concealed. A sudden and magical peace, often a falsehood, is attributed to the victim, who once was the cause of all the problems within the group has suddenly brought peace to them as well. The

conclusion is that 'we were visited by a god, an ambiguous god, previously terrible now beneficient' and therefore 'we' are innocent and cannot be held responsible for his death (Alison, 1997:22). The violence of the crisis is no longer the anger and resentment felt by the community but has instead become a 'mystery that dwells inside the sacred itself' a mystery of love between the new god and the community (Girard, 1991:201).

2.3.3. GIRARD'S UNMASKING THEORY

Central to Girard theory of the scapegoat is his claim that the Bible and particularly the Gospels is the only text that unmasks the myth and reveals the truth about the scapegoat mechanism. He maintains that all cultures are founded on collective violence and the scapegoat but that none acknowledge this as 'truth'. According to Girard no other religion before, or after, Christianity has ever revealed the innocence of the victim and the arbitrary manner in which he is chosen. No single text, mythic or religious, yields the 'operating procedures' of violent unanimity and the arbitrary selection of the victim. Yet all societies refuse to acknowledge or rid themselves of this 'ignorance'. The 'truth' would render the sacrificial system nonfunctional it is became known and this concealed aspect is the most crucial element in the victimage mechanism.

The surrogate victim is the 'stone' that is rejected by all the community 'builders' and in irony becomes the 'cornerstone' (Girard, 1977a:309). Rather than recalling the scenario from the community's perspective to meet 'the threat of maleficent contagion' the Bible gives a voice to the victim. It is revealed that the community is not innocent but guilty of his murder and that the victim did not commit any of the crimes that he stood accused of. For Girard this is the uniqueness of Christianity, it wants to go back to the sacrificial origin and uncover it. The victim himself is given the opportunity to express his feelings and to say, 'I am innocent'.

In *Job: The Victim of His People* Job relates his misunderstanding of the events that surround him and the accusations leveled at him by his friends and community.

> My kindred and my friends have all gone away, and the
> guests in my house have forgotten me. The Serving maids
> look on me as a foreigner, a stranger never seen before.

My servant does not arrive when I call him, I am reduced

to entreating him. To my wife my breath is unbearable, for

my own brothers I am a thing corrupt. Even the children

look down on me, ever ready with a give when I appear.

All my dearest friends recoil from me in horror: Those I

loves best have turned against me. (Girard, 1987b:4)

Girard's aspect of 'undifferentiation' is highlighted in the collective experience of hatred by all segments of the society. Job is baffled as to why everyone has turned against him; he even notes that those on the margins of society have also taken to degrading him. Yet the randomness of the scapegoat is evident in that Job's 'three friends' Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar could easily replace him as potential victims. Girard remarks that if they could also have been scapegoats they could also be 'idols' of the people if they had the ability to sway people with their charm. Job is aware that the scapegoat could be anyone, he sees the randomness of the situation and that the role is interchangeable with those who envy his power and influence most, namely his 'friends'.

Like Job, Jesus enjoys a period of great popularity and the crowds want to make them kings (Girard, 1987b:161). It is this popularity that stirs envy and resentment among others. These 'others' can only be those with whom the victim shares a socio-political and economic environment, those who can be potential rivals. Others can only accept scapegoats suggested to them. His decline in public opinion began in his own social circle and then spread downward. The victim is now deprived of all support, as Job's friends announce, 'If one should address a word to you, will you endure it? Yet who can keep silent?' All that is left for the victim to do is turn to God while he becomes 'a byword among the people, and a creature on whose face to spit' and not allow his persecutors to monopolise the 'idea of God' (Girard, 1987b:139).

The link between violence and the sacred is fully revealed in the victimage of Christ and he is the first innocent victim because, according to Girard, other victims do possess an element of guilt. It is the Gospels that reveal the victim's innocence, and that he really is a victim of the community. The Gospels reveal that the sacrifice is a fraud

that God does not expect someone to die for him because he is not a violent God but a non-violent loving entity, a God of Love.

Rather Jesus wants people 'to love thy neighbour' to eliminate mimetic rivalry and pride and to garner respect for their community. In a society ruled by mimetic desire, everyone shares in making their existence 'as barren as the desert' but no one is aware of this (Girard, 1987b:65). Yet Girard also maintains that mimetic desire 'even when bad, is intrinsically good' and that although it is violent and murderous it is 'also the basis of heroism, and devotion to others' (Adams, 1993:11). Mimetic desire can therefore also be the 'desire for God' and must not simply be construed as the negative violent mimetic desire that appears in literature.

During the resurrection it is the Paraclete – the Holy Spirit – that informs the disciples of Jesus' innocence (Lefebure, 1998:373). While Girard sees Christianity is 'antisacrificial' I interpret Islam, particularly Shi'ite Islam in the same light. Jesus, as the deity incarnate, plunges into the violence and suffering to reveal his innocence and so does Ali and even more so that Christianity has attempted to end this cycle of violence and scapegoating so Shi'ite Islam has similar intentions. By interpreting Jesus as the 'last and greatest of the prophets' Girard creates a problematic scenario in that Shi'ite Islam considers Mohammed to be the last prophet but there is also the individual who is representative of God amongst followers. The crucifixion is another central aspect in unmasking myth and the scapegoat; the cross does not allow persecutors to deny their crimes. So the sons of Ali, Hassan and Husayn, do not allow persecutors to deny their crimes by their very existence. The violence and the brutality are visible for all to see, it cannot be ignored or misinterpreted and there is also no way to reword the crucifixion.

The aspect that Girard omits along with other critics or supporters of mimesis is that once the scapegoat has been eliminated and the society is restored to its 'temporary' or 'perceived' stability, is that schisms often form within the community as each leader, such as the 'friends of Job', stake their claim to entitled leadership within the community. These 'leaders' now speak of the innocence and character of the deceased victim and wish to honour this person interpreting his death as unfortunate but certainly not unnecessary. If the victim had 'kept the esteem of the pure and virtuous, he would not be abandoned by absolutely everyone' (Girard, 1986:73).

Girard reveals that the drama is the foundation of myth that is an opportunity for the perpetrators to relate their perspective; 'a mob never lacks reasons for tearing its victims to pieces' (Girard, 1991:195). However the Passion of Christ also presents the perspective of the victim 'dedicated to the rejection of the illusions of the persecutors'. In presenting both positions the text brings 'an end to all mythology' (Girard, 1986:101). 'Violence is unable to bear the presence of a being that owes it nothing' and so 'compromises its workings' at the source. Jesus was an arbitrary victim because he was the least violent and allows us to witness the scapegoat mechanism and once it is understood it cannot successfully operate again.

2.3.4. THE GIRARDIAN NATURE OF MYTH

> Myths are stories about divine beings, generally arranged in
> a coherent system; they are revered as true and sacred; they
> are endorsed by rulers and priests; and closely linked to
> religion. Once this link is broken, and the actors in the story
> are not regarded as gods but as human heroes, giants or
> fairies, it is no longer a myth but a folktale. Where the central
> actor is divine but the story is trivial ... the result is religious
> legend, not myth. (J. Simpson & S. Roud, 2000:254)

Myth is the narrative counterpart of 'prohibition and ritual' representing the founding murder from the perspective of the murderers and who alone make the murder appear to be of value to the society. The need to 'drive out' a victim is a 'constant structure in myths' and the mimetic crisis and the 'violent destructuring' of the victimage mechanism creates a confusion between 'the divine and the human' is central to understanding mythology (Girard 1987b:109). It is difficult to determine when a story is considered 'trivial' but as the Girardian perspective of Jesus Christ formed an essential part in unravelling myth yet provided vital information to adherents, so too does Ali ibn Abu Talib, cousin of Prophet Mohammed. Ali although not a god is certain a human hero yet he also a representative of God on earth to guide and assist humanity. Where the Girardian account of myth structure has the following

characteristics, 'the theme of undifferentiation, accusations, collective violence, the founding and refounding of culture and the accusation against the mythic hero has been taken as an incontestable fact' it is possible for the human hero to transform into a divine being. This process extends beyond 'religious legend' and becomes mythology (Hamerton-Kelly, 1994:21).

Girard suggests that violence is the core of cultural life and that the concept of violence challenges the notion of individuality. After all it is homogeneity that results in community solidarity and identity rather than the autonomous individual who decides what he wants for himself (Schweiker, 1996:28). Without mimesis there couldn't be culture because mimetic desire is not only concerned with rivalry and conflict but also the foundation of devotion, love and community. Positive mimetic desire does not lead to scapegoats but creates the 'symbols' contained in mythology.

Our contemporary understanding of myth is that it is a false exaggeration of an event that might or might not have occurred. However this is a misunderstanding and therefore misleading because the assumption is that myth should be viewed as a quasi-factual story that is either true or false. The mistake is pondering the relevance of whether there is truth, historical or factual accuracy to the narrative rather than the significance and meaning of morale to a particular group. Myth has been 'demythified in the process of history and it is the Bible that 'brought it to a decisive climax' (Hamerton-Kelly, 1994:21). Girard claims that the victim is real but 'not as it is represented in the myth' where he is appears with 'all the attributes and qualities of the sacred' (Girard, 1987b:111). In fact the historical accuracy is not the important part of the narrative, it is the symbols contained within the story that offers relief, hope and an identity to the believer. Scholars obsess in 'proving' whether certain individuals lived, when they lived and whether they performed magnificent and 'miraculous' deeds. Their understanding of myth serves a purely scientific approach that desperately seeks to rationalize every aspect of life. In other words, if you cannot prove it absolutely then it cannot be true. In analyzing and dissecting myth we remove and destroy its very purpose; we unpack the myth so that it resembles a religion 'box' containing an illogical story, adages, a few symbols and some rituals. Obsessive investigation has destroyed myth without ever truly understanding its real purpose.

Myth existed as an expression of man's reflections on the true meaning of life; these expressions served as a guide to assist him in the way he lived and participated in his community. It 'allows us to understand why disorder prevails', why a guilty victim is driven out of the community and why 'the lynching is a just and good act' (Girard, 1987b:115). Society is established by the persecutors and murderers and therefore reliant on its ultimate authority through mythical concepts and symbols. Often myth takes the form of exhortations that direct the believers to a higher moral purpose so that they can witness how their heroes/models lived. A supernatural element to understanding myths is that the victim is also permitted to make mistakes. In the process of making these 'mistakes' the heroes also display their humanity. As with the Shi'ite hero Ali who represents the best in all humanity he is pious and disinterested in material possessions. Yet Ali makes the 'mistake' of wanting to retain his powerful position as caliph when competitors want him to relinquish his authority.

This desire to maintain control surpasses and runs contrary to the higher personal morale of piety. Yet as a believer there is an understanding of this development, the hero isn't dismissed because he made a mistake rather it is explained and justified as an essential aspect in the character's morphology. Often heroes perform serious indiscretions on their part but this adds to magnificence of the character and the believers want and need the hero to make these otherwise and often-misguided decisions. When charges are leveled against these individuals, rather than berate them as the mythological community does, we feel empathy for the victim rather than hatred and disgust. However we need to understand that the mimetic crisis generates the need for victims (Girard, 1987b:123).

It is this aspect of humanity in the divine hero in all myth that is central to its purpose; when the ritual is invoked this supernatural event is replayed so that its power can be 'witnessed' for the benefit of the believers. The concept of 'witness', central to the Shi'ite tradition, plays a crucial role in defining the character and authority of the perfect individual. While the idea of martyrdom is depicted in the Qu'ran the term *shahid*, doesn't usually mean 'martyr' rather it depicts 'witness'; not only does the martyr 'witness' Paradise in the act of dying but his followers 'witness' his struggle in revealing the truth.

It is only through myth and ritual that the presence of the sacred is secured (Hinnells, 1988:20-21). For the myth to be effective as a symbol it must have 'terms' and 'images' that have meaning to the believers but in the process the efficacy is lost to outsiders of another culture who might not possess an understanding of these symbols. Ali is certainly scapegoated for the death of Uthman but this scapegoat is also 'martyred', as a representative of God he does not wait for the Day of Judgement to witness Paradise, he ascended to the 'highest station in Paradise' and revealed to followers that they would all experience it.

A real problem is that the outsider in trying to understand and relate these myths is that they will place emphasis on the 'bizarre' and 'odd' elements of the myth and completely misconstrue the deeper insights contained within the symbols. Instead they focus on the symbols in isolation ridiculing and reducing the importance of the myth to its believers. They fail to see what is being symbolized and that it forms a very central part in the whole, living tradition. Often the scholars in a religious field themselves will try to limit the exuberance of myth somehow embarrassed by the colourful interpretations of certain events and the behaviour of the heroes and heroines. Criticism certainly exists regarding Ali's rule and there are numerous scholars as found in Asfaruddin's *In Praise of the Caliphs* who dispute whether Ali was worthy of being a Caliph and whether Mohammed had ever complimented him as highly as he did the eventual other three Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman.

However the power of myth and belief allows believers to see past these developments and criticisms and to accept the vulnerability and strengths of the hero Ali that outsiders cannot fully understand or appreciate. In contrast, and until recently Shi'ite authors and religious authorities tended to be 'more concerned with ensuring the survival of their community than with justifying Shi'ite faith and practice' to outsiders and not being steadfast in support of their divine heroes (Pinault, 1999:292).

Myth is important for what it means to the believer and for the reflections it contains on man's view of himself, his surroundings and God. It provides a point of departure for a group and a position that distinguishes them from other cultural and religious groups, corresponding to the social, political and economic difficulties a group often faces defining why the 'hero' characters are imbued with symbols that have much relevance for believers. As the Islamic community faced issues of corruption, greed and

innovations, the perfect individual to 'rescue' the community from this situation is the entrance of one who possesses characteristics of piety, frugality and equality. What develops is that a victim is held responsible for this social disorder that results in the unanimous 'undifferentiated' gathering against him as well as the 'return to order' afterward (Girard, 1987b:108). Myths are therefore not bogus historical narratives but provide an important 'hope' (Hinnells, 1988:134).

Myth in the Shi'ite tradition reveals a distinctive aspect of Shi'ite piety and although it can and has been argued by scholars that Ali was quixotic in his leadership or perhaps just ignorant of political developments, for the Shi'ites Ali's actions were 'perfect'. The importance of myth to believers reveals that an exegesis of the Shi'ite literature is unnecessary and possibly irrelevant to the understanding of myth. Highly visible lamentation rituals define them 'as a community entirely distinct from that of Sunni Islam' (Pinault, 1999:290). Such is the relevance of myth, to distinguish oneself from another group and to extract strength from the actions of the heroes. Their characters invoke passion and ecstasy for their believers and so the genius of the Shi'ite author is 'bound up with the abandonment of the preconceptions of [rational] individualism' and like many other authors, the writings featuring Ali 'have been misunderstood' by outsiders (Girard, 1978:7). As Girard views Jesus as the cure for the disease of myth that is religion, so it should be considered that Ali holds an equally venerable position in depicting 'truth'in Shi'ite Islam. However the Shi'ites regard 'religion' as a cure rather than a disease that enlightens all to the innocence of the victim and to hear his message.

> Girard's interpretation of mythology has also been called into
> question by those who argue that not all myths are ideologies
> of violence told to conceal the founding mechanism.
> (Hamerton-Kelly, 1994:23)

As a form of mimetic transformation Shi'ism does not conceal its religious origins but exposes them acknowledging the innocence of the victim by giving him a voice. This should equally be construed as an attempt to 'vindicate the truth' of Shi'ite revelation scientifically as with Biblical revelation. The cycle of violence from the rioters, to

armies to Ali and Kharijites reflects a desire of all the groups to bring an end to the immediate conflicts but also results in further violence and conflict. The irony lay with the intentions of the characters involved who desire to restore the Islamic state to their earliest perception of purity as established under Muhammed. All the characters desire the same thing yet are fighting each other on this point for dominance, control and interpretation. Perhaps what is most enlightening is the manner of interpretation from the contemporary nihilist Shi'ite scholars who have erased the mythological and spiritual aspects in interpreting Ali's tragedy. One senses from their writings a sense of despair that the death of Ali was devoid of religious and mythological meaning. Rather they seek a logical sequential event unlike the earlier scholar al-Murid who balances the impossible coexistence of the guilty caliph and the innocent scapegoat within a perceived environment of harmonious humanist blessings that makes the tragedy magnificent. Myth creates a horizon, a peek into other possible worlds that surpass the limitation set out in this earthly reality and therefore it is truly liberating.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SCAPEGOATING OF ALI IBN ABU TALIB

The story of Ali is an exemplary myth that contains all the stereotypes of persecution. When unveiling the scapegoat mechanism, it must be considered that the portrayal of Ali differs in the historical, populist and the ghulat texts. Literary developments of Ali was a continuing process that continued for centuries after his death. Arguably in response to socio-political changes, the development of Ali's character had become more elaborate and his origin more divine. Distinguishing between the various portrayals of Ali is not important here. Rather, the inclusion of all these texts assists in unveiling mimetic desire, envy and conspiracy. The Shi'ite texts are essentially secondary to those of Girard as it is the scapegoat mechanism that needs to be shown as existing within the socio-political reality surrounding Ali. Often the historical texts and the biographies of Ali are diametrically opposed to what is contained in popular Shi'ism. There is often no correlation between the historical facts presented about Ali and the ghulat and popular literature in which he is portrayed as a sinless divine individual.

It began with a socio-political crisis that rose from the corruption and nepotism in the caliphate. The expansion of the Islamic state incorporated new cultures that differed from the first community that formed around the Prophet. Having left the rural areas for the urban environment these subsistent communities were confronted by the obvious wealth of individuals connected to the Prophet, the earliest converts to Islam. This was compounded by the heavy taxes that elites appeared to be exempt from paying. The population perceived the elite to be unmoved by the financial burdens of the poor. For the populace, the commonly held belief was that the Prophet had not introduced Islam as a financial gain for an elite. The resentment of the population was part of the social crisis.

What the scapegoat mechanism revealed was that the crisis and the acts of violence were real. Ali was the popularly nominated caliph; he was venerated before he became the scapegoat. This title was the single issue that made him *primus inter pares*. Prior to this nomination Ali had been absent from the political scene. It was this nomination and difference that polarized the elites against him. Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, possessed the marks of a victim. He was chosen because he bore certain signs

and not because he was guilty for the crimes he was accused of. It was suggested that Ali was responsible for this crisis.

However, the community did not possess the self-determination in deciding Ali's guilt. The victim was suggested to them by a conspiracy that consisted of elites, people of Ali's social class. These individuals I named 'friends' because of their close association in disseminating Islam, began to behave like Ali's enemies. These were people who dominated political life and they chose to increase their power by seeking favour with the community. The conspiracy polarized on Ali's supposed participation in Uthman's death, which they magnified out of proportion. They chose Ali for their model while the rest of the community followed and imitated his first imitators. Once the community decided that Ali was guilty of polluting the caliphate, they responded by destroying him.

3.1. UTHMAN'S DEATH

This chapter will determine, from a Girardian standpoint, whether the life of Ali meets the criterion of the scapegoat mechanism. We shall establish if Ali's death was the 'cure' for the social violence yet at the same time its cause. His life played out between the historical periods of Mohammed becoming the Prophet of Islam and ended with the advent of the Umayyad dynasty. This period characterized socio-political changes that had its roots in tribal rule that grew into an empire where authority was vested in an individual. From a mimetic standpoint one can deduce how rivalry and conspiracy, within the Islamic empire, were brought to a conclusion. The unchecked rivalry led to a convenient scapegoat, Ali, who was very different to the society's sense of order. Girard argued that the interaction between violence and desire, that threatened to tear this society apart, established the foundation of its culture and religion. This chapter will focus on how Ali, as surrogate victim, became the cultural antidote to this violence.

The scapegoating of Ali occurred during the tumultuous interim between the death of Uthman, the third rightly guided caliph[1] who served as the religious administrator of the Islamic community, and the appointment of Mu'awiyah, a political administrator who founded the Umayyad Dynasty. This was a transitional period in the Islamic community from a nominated republican structure to an Islamic dynastic empire. This transition was central to Ali's tragedy marking this period as a 'crisis of Degree'. This is a very important theme so it comes first in the tragedy where the Islamic empire is unraveling. The tragedy of Ali takes place in the advanced stage of the crisis and while there is a great deal of mimetic interaction, the desired object is not the focus rather it is the antagonists. Their role in the collective violence is examined as well as how they transfer their disorder and offences to the victim. Yet as part of Girard's double transference the antagonists transfer their peace to him too.

The murder of Uthman serves as a point of departure for the tragedy where we are introduced to an individual, Ali, who is admired by everyone for his honesty and generosity. Ali is the hero who dedicated his life to living, teaching and spreading Islam. Admired for his 'noble serenity' he dedicated his life to the path of spiritual Islam and attempted to 'cure' the community of their religious confusion. Devoted to Islam, he refused to entertain the religious innovations introduced by Abu Bakr and Umar, he wanted to remain truthful to the spirit of the religion.

It is clear that Ali did not have the monopoly on 'righteous indignation' since all the antagonists, perceived themselves to be informed by Islam. They were all in some manner associated with the Prophet, and many became known as his Companions. Many were familiar with leadership responsibilities in proselytizing populations in spreading the new religion. When Ali was popularly nominated as the fourth caliph, he sparked a contest amongst his rivals that would yield disastrous consequences. What set Ali apart from his rivals Talha, Zubayr and Mu'awiyah, was that he 'triggered the tragic plot' by initiating a political contest that drew everyone into the 'structure of violent reciprocity' (Girard, 1977a:69).

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[1] A caliph is a successor or a representative of the Islamic community following in the path of Muhammed. Caliph is the title given to the leader of the Islamic community and serves as the spiritual head and temporal ruler.

There was widespread social and political violence before Uthman was murdered. Rebellious groups, for all manner of reasons, had an axe to grind with the caliphate. Many felt that they were alienated from the message of the Prophet and were not seeing an improvement in their socio-economic realities. It would seem that with the expansion of the empire, and the various racial and linguistic groups being incorporated, 'there was a hidden disunion of hearts' where the majority of people felt confused and betrayed by their leaders (Massignon, 1982c:34). Not only was there social depression but also it was common knowledge that many of the Companions had become incredibly wealthy after his death.

The rivals considered that they were better suited as leaders to assume authority as the 'righteous caliph'. The caliphate was strongly desired, so each rival positioned himself politically to create symmetry in relation to this religious position. The rivals including Ali considered themselves 'outside of' the violence because they 'all initially came from outside' of the collapsing social scenario. They presumed mistakenly that since they did not contribute to the social chaos that they were in positions of moral and fundamental 'superiority'. They saw themselves 'to be above the battle' and not part of the mayhem occurring in their community (Girard, 1977a:69). While each of the protagonists believed in their ability to quell the violence, in time, they all succumbed to it.

This period signified a great social crisis, disaffections and internal wars that were not as a result of 'Quranic forgetfulness' but from a 'deeper malady'. There were agitated groups in Egypt, Kufa, Basra and Medina, areas spread across the vast Islamic empire (Nadwi, 1991:126). Many believed that Uthman's political regime benefited the rich at the expense of the poor. Uthman was not the monstrous exception in the political establishment; instead he was representative of the 'problem'. The community's resentment had reached such crescendo that aspects of logic and deductions were swept aside. Puerile and unfounded accusations were made against Uthman offset against the serious allegations of corruption and economic mismanagement. Tensions ran high in the society and any baseless accusation was taken as fact.

Once dissention began it quickly accelerated becoming increasingly volatile. Forged letters 'under the name of eminent companions' reached these already agitated

groups inciting them to violence. When Ali confronted the groups surrounding the city of Medina, how they accounted for their reappearance in Medina they gave Ali a letter containing orders to the governor of Egypt. In it were instructions to arrest these 'insurgents and put them to the sword'. When Ali asked members of the disgruntled group how the recovery of such a letter 'could be promptly known to the groups returning to Kufa and Basra, which were in different directions and also to bring them all back to Medina' simultaneously they were unable to answer him. Undeterred by the letter, the crowd dismissed the lack of incoherency of their arguments. They had only one intention and that was to depose Uthman from the caliphate.

The insurgents blockaded Uthman's house and placed him under house arrest. Although he could not leave his home others could visit him though they were subjected to criticism and attacks. Ali had struggled to get water supplied to Uthman. Eventually the rebels asked Uthman to resign from the caliphate but he refused. As tensions continued to escalate unknown assailants murdered Uthman. It was related that he was alone in his house 'reciting the Qur'an that was found lying open before him' (Nadwi, 1991:130).

Many had turned a 'blind eye' to threats made against Uthman, distancing themselves from his predicament. When Uthman was murdered, no one wanted to administer the caliphate.   However, when Ali was nominated as his successor, his rivals then also desired the position. Antagonistic toward Ali, his rivals evoked their moral superiority; suddenly they all possessed the required expertise to lead the caliphate.

While held captive in his house, none of the Companions assisted or negotiated Uthman's release. They mimicked one another in behaviour and as not to stand apart from their peers, each distanced himself with varying impetus. Each rival considered himself to be an observer detached from the violence. They wanted to be 'judges' yet even as 'moral authorities' they were unwittingly drawn into the violence through their 'illusion of superiority' (Girard, 1977a:68).

Plagued with nepotism, avarice and corruption, Uthman's caliphate was considered by many to have been disastrous for Islam (Momen, 1985:21). However, that a caliph who was the supreme authority in the Islamic state, was murdered shocked the community. A crisis ensued 'weakening normal institutions' and 'mob formation' replaced these entirely (Girard, 1986:12).

Uthman was the only individual murdered and the entire community, regardless of the social hierarchy, was aware of the inevitability; so could Uthman be considered a scapegoat? The answer is 'no' because he still had supporters who visited his house while he was held hostage. Many 'offered' military assistance but it is alleged that he declined their offers. Therefore, his supporters assisted in maintaining a social 'differentiation'. Another important fact was the lack of rivals. There was no 'storm of passion' for his position by his political and social peers (Girard, 1977a:70). There were no hostile exchanges nor did anyone wish to usurp his leadership. In the development of heroes, the murdered individual is presented as innocent or naïve but Uthman abetted the nepotism and corruption under his leadership. There were claims that '150 000 gold coins and one million silver coins were found in his house…and there were countless camels and horses'(Nadwi, 1991:134). He was immensely wealth and that his 'relations ruled all the principle cities' identified Uthman as complicit in the pillaging of state resources. Therefore, his guilt could not be concealed. Because Uthman's death did not secure peace, the resistance and violence of the rebels continued. If his death had been intended as a sacrifice, it had failed.

Ali's rivals sought an opportunity to wrestle power from him by creating confusion in the caliphate. The claim that Uthman's blood had spilled onto the Qur'an he was reading prompted a political response (Nasr, 2006:35). The rivals wanted to avenge Uthman's death. Governors and interest groups, most of whom were relatives of Uthman, demanded revenge as part of tribal justice. A power struggle developed between the new caliph, Ali, and the governor of Syria. Protagonists emerged who considered themselves to be above this crisis. They claimed to possess no personal interest in avenging Uthman's death and did not consider themselves part of the community; again raising the issue of 'moral superiority' (Girard, 1987a:69).

Far from being merely observers, many saw Uthman's death as the opportunity to challenge political leadership. Although no one wanted their status in the community challenged, the murder of the caliph raised concerning issues. Their positions were precariously balanced dependent on the generosity of the successor, of which on this occasion they had no influence. When Uthman became caliph he was advised,

O Children of Umayyah! Now that this kingdom has

> come to you, play with it as the children play with a
>
> ball, and pass it from one to another in your clan. This
>
> kingdom is a reality; we do not know whether there is a
>
> paradise or hell or not. (Rizvi, 1985:6)

The caliph was primarily a socio-religious position to guide citizens in the manner of Islam. However, the position was reinterpreted as a powerful political position that could potentially create a kingdom for a particular clan. Religious impetus, as an instrument over the community, had less of an impact it would seem over political interests. This position held political and economic strength for clans. Uthman's caliphate showed the immense growth of an empire that needed political, economic and administrative changes. This was not what Mohammed had envisioned in his successor; the caliphs were to serve only as guides in the Islamic community. However, the 'community' was fast becoming an 'empire' and the caliphs were ill equipped for the rapid growth. 'We do not know whether there is a paradise' reflected a changing mood within the leadership. The religious and spiritual aspect was taking a backseat to the economic and political needs in the administration of the state. Under these circumstances clan members elected to prominent positions, not only as a matter of territorial security, secured personal interests.

Family was central to the religio- politics of the caliphate and Shi'ites argue that there was a deliberate ploy to exclude the Prophet's family from participating in political and religious decisions. Yet the caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, often approached Ali for guidance on legal and religious matters showing that there was a profound respect for his knowledge in these areas.

The political vacuum created by Uthman's death created unprecedented situation for the Islamic society. Uthman was the second caliph to be murdered, Umar the first, but the change brought vast political unrest further complicated that Uthman had not chosen a successor. It would be difficult for his clan to usurp political power without encountering resistance. The political and economic changes the expanding Islamic state faced required a particular form of leadership but what was it going to be? Muslims were killing each other and Uthman's successor would need to place impetus on the inviolability of Muslim life and blood.

Uthman's death introduced an interesting dynamic to the socio-political environment. Constant challenges to the caliphs' position of authority and relevance, since the Prophet's death, had degraded from clan-on-clan threats to murder. Every caliph was challenged in regular confrontations and the ferocity intensified over time. The environment experienced constant tension, from the social maligning of the believers and the economic and political isolation of particular groups.

> The new rapidly growing cities became centres of discontent
> which seems to have been due to dislocation and frustration
> more than actual hardship. Among the wealthy, the arrogance
> of the conqueror aristocracy and the disabilities imposed on
> those who did not belong to it became increasingly irksome;
> among the poor, ripped from their protective village systems
> and adrift in the cities, the unaccustomed spectacle of wealth
> aroused new desires which could not be satisfied. (Lewis, 1970:223)

Without a successor, the Islamic state was in the precarious position of fragmentation. This well-differentiated populace and hierarchical society panicked because 'everything was touched and overwhelmed by the weight and magnitude of such a horrible calamity' (Girard, 1986:13). The lack of a successor brought into question the role of the caliph. The widespread unrest led to a virtual collapse of the legal system, which can be compared to Girard's argument of a primitive society exposed to escalating violence (Girard, 1977:30). There were no measures to contain the violence and petty grievances were equated with that of the serious socio-political issues.

> A tempestuous spark is lit…magistrates are bewildered,
> people are terrified, the government thrown into disarray.
> Laws are no longer obeyed; business comes to a halt;
> families lose coherence and the streets their lively
> atmosphere. Everything goes to ruin. For everything is
> touched and overwhelmed by the weight and magnitude
> of such a horrible calamity. (Girard, 1986:13)

The violence spread threatening the cohesion of the Islamic population. 'Scandal-mongers spread rumours; everyone asked the other what was going to happen next' and the chaos simply escalated (Nadwi, 1991:137). 'Rather than blame themselves, people inevitably blame either society as a whole, which costs them nothing, or other people who seem particularly harmful for easily identifiable reasons. (Girard, 1986:14) The community no longer experienced a sense of unity because this had been destroyed by the social crisis. It is impossible to find people who agree on anything or who could take a unified course of action. Each person in the community transferred the collective burden of responsibility to his 'enemy'. The way in which the society existed under the authority of a caliph was being questioned so whoever assumed this caliph would never be as respected as those who preceded him.

3.2. NOMINATING ALI AS CALIPH

Within this social chaos and at the insistence of the Egyptians, Ali was elected as the new caliph. He was expected to bring stability to the Islamic population and to correct the failures of the previous caliphs. Many had hoped that as a relative of the Prophet, Ali could return, or perhaps re-introduce, the principles the Prophet had espoused in the earlier Islamic community. Socio-political changes meant that a return to earliest Islamic ideals would be difficult to implement since the population had greater economic and social interests than earlier communities. Yet the population romanticized of the past desiring a leader that possessed the qualities of the earlier caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar.

The companions had fled Medina and those that remained in the city confined themselves to their homes, reluctant to be involved with the unrest. This violence set a precedent in the Islamic society; never before had such vast rioting and discontent taken place with such anger directed toward the caliphate. Because of the socio-political stress, the population were ready to embrace anyone as a potential saviour, 'especially someone totally unknown and easily endowed with a certain exotic prestige' (Girard, 1987c:82). While Ali was not 'totally unknown' to the community he was an 'outsider' in terms of administration and leadership in the community. The population only knew of Ali, as a relative and confidant of the Prophet and that he lived a very simple life far removed from the ostentation of Uthman and his political elite. To many he was a religious individual who lived as the Prophet had. Excluded from political office since the death of Muhammed, Ali represented potential leadership that was not tainted with corruption. Pursuing interests not associated with the political environment made Ali a suitable candidate for the caliphate.

In Medina the rioters had 'proposed Ali's name for the caliphate' (Dorraj, 1990:47). Although other prominent individuals were reluctant to succeed Uthman, they were surprised that Ali, as much as he himself was, was to be appointed to this position. Elites such as Talha or Zubayr were not interested in the position but Muawiyah certainly was. As the son-in-law and ally of Uthman he did not attempt to claim the position. This was in itself revealing of the social crisis, no one was prepared to rescue the state and take responsibility for any events. Co-conspirators who

contributed to the socio-political decline did not solve the problems of the state. Instead they too looked for someone to solve the social malaise. An expectation was created in that a single person must take responsibility and solve the issues. This individual who will be nominated to represent 'supreme authority' in the community will become a target for violence (Girard, 1986:15).

When the community nominated Ali as caliph they transferred responsibility for the crisis from themselves to him. There was unanimous belief that Ali would correct everything that was wrong with the community. He was expected to equalize society yet maintain a strong and powerful political order, he must be a military strategist and soldier yet understanding and serene, he must be a political bureaucrat but also a religious individual available to all people. These contradictions introduced tensions into the community and manifested in frustration and anger. If these new 'contradictory' desires were not met and things did not improve quickly, then Ali's popularity would be short-lived.

Before Ali gave his oath of allegiance, public opinion sought in Medina was that 'everyone opined that none except Ali was competent to hold that precarious office' (Nadwi, 1991:135). There was popular support for Ali; he was a loved and a revered individual amongst the greater population. He had withdrawn from the political arena refusing to undertake military expeditions when Abu Bakr became the caliph. After the Prophet's death he never directly assisted in the state's administration. Instead he spent his time in Quranic interpretation offering advice in legal and religious matters. His piety and honourable nature drew people to him. When the first caliph, Abu Bakr, was elected it was done by agreement amongst the most prominent clans and thereafter it was by appointment. Ali was the only popularly elected caliph.

His career began very well, and Girard argues that often scapegoat are initially celebrated individuals in their communities. They garner absolute respect and integrity and it is for this very reason they are likely to be killed (Girard, 1987b:14). Girard argues that victims are often 'insiders' or 'outsiders' (Girard, 1986:24-25) and Ali occupied both positions, as an outsider as well as an insider. As an outsider, he dwelled peripheral to the administration, political and economic development of the Islamic state but as an insider, he was at the core of the Islamic ideal. He was the closest relative, confidant and ally of the Prophet. Ali was the first caliph to inherit a socially unstable

state and whereas under Umar's and Abu Bakr's caliphate issues were sorted rapidly, the complexity of a growing state brought about new problems for which Ali was not politically equipped.

While the Companions reluctantly pledged allegiance to Ali it was evident that he would not apply the same political initiatives as the previous caliphs had. He' came to the mosque clad in a wrapping and a woolen turban and his shoes in his hand' in complete contrast to the cloaks and robes worn by Uthman. Ali showed the crowd that these were his meager possessions so he identified with the hardships people experienced (Girard, 1987b:16). He was not a wealthy as were the other political elites rather he wanted to identify with the poor and marginalised.

The community, already impatient with the apathy of the previous caliph wanted immediate results from Ali. In his first speech, as caliph, he said to the community that, 'it is not meet for any Muslim to put another Muslim to harm'. Ali argued that the blood of Muslims had been 'rendered so cheap that Uthman had become the victim of their insurgency' (Nadwi, 1999:136-137). These religious principles that once united the community were ignored and violated. Yet it would be Ali's desire to identify with the community that aided his demise. He wanted to counter the social disintegration where Muslims had turned on each other for petty reasons, the social unrest interrupting the functions of the caliphate. Ali attempted to restore social cohesion through a love of God furthering his moral agenda of equality amongst all Muslims.

His mistake was to project that all Muslims, including himself, were a unit devoid of any difference, rather than impressing the notion of the caliph's superiority as Uthman had. Ali should have impugned on the community that killing the caliph was wrong, that his death was immoral for more reasons than him just being a Muslim. By not enforcing the socio-political hierarchy Ali had inadvertently became 'the slayer of distinctions' (Girard, 1987a:74). His physical appearance with a 'woolen turban and shoes in hand' brought contradiction to the austere of political leadership. How could Ali expect respect as the caliph, yet present himself as a pauper who often was regarded with scorn? This position of extreme poverty coupled with him being the cousin of the Prophet placed him marginal to his community. This double marginality 'is indicative of a social organization in turmoil' (Girard, 1986:18).

Unlike the other caliphs Ali did not have the support of Talha, Zubayr and Mu'awiyah. It was only when they were threatened with death that Talha and Zubayr pledged allegiance, on condition that Uthman's death was avenged (Ahmed, 1979:24-25). Vengeance is a phenomenon of the sacred and Girard argues out that in order for violence to be appeased there has to be reciprocal violence; however, this is 'reciprocity not of gain but of loss' (Hamerton-Kelly, 1994:18). Those who pledged allegiance now complained of Ali's caliphate all seeking vengeance for Uthman's death. Like Girard, Morteza Mutahari argues that imitation is central to human nature. Rather than 'stand out' and be considered different, the companions, with varying degrees of imitation, imitated others and envy of Ali's caliph increased (Mutahari, 1980: 15).

Girard's argues that the 'third stereotype' of the 'signs of the victim' include disabilities, foreigners, kings and the sons of kings. However, this 'abnormality' need not only be physical. What the stereotype suggests is that an individual was marginalized and interpreted to be an outsider within his own community (Girard, 1986: 24-25). Coupled with his position to the Prophet, as the new caliph Ali's political position further pushed him to the fringes of the community.

He had difficulty in securing political support from some companions and members of the Ansar and the Omayyad. He represented two very different positions in the Islamic social paradigm, on the one hand, the general populace saw him as representative of the 'spirit of Islam' and part of the original character of the religion; they wanted a change from Uthman's caliphate. On the other hand, the political elite was concerned with their economic status so for them Ali's leadership was a question of political economics. Many were concerned with his comments on social equality and righteousness. Girard argues that potential scapegoats often possessed certain 'intense beliefs' (Girard, 1986:46) and Ali was of the opinion that economic distribution was inclusive of all Muslims.

In relaying the historical position of Ali, one is faced with a tortured and marginalized individual who was duped, manipulated and sidelined by others with vested interests. His character appeared too amicable to deal with the political position he was elected to and in time would undermine his role as caliph.

With the Islamic state in immense turmoil and confusion, Ali was undecided of the manner in which to progress. In recognizing Girard's 'signs' it is apparent that Ali's

nomination was not only as the caliph but also an indirect nomination of the individual expected to solve the social ills. He was about to take responsibility for everything, for the political turmoil, for the death of Uthman, for avenging Uthman, poor judgement and the transgression of violating Muslim blood (Nadwi, 1991:135). In time he would be considered 'monstrous' because he mediated between the Qur'an and God. Believers would cite his actions as audacious accusing him of being 'responsible for the ills that have befallen his people' and demand his death. The whole process of the myth formulation transfers the violence from the community to a single individual who will become the 'repository of the community's ills' and the prime example of the 'human scapegoat' (Girard, 1977a:77).

3.3. ALI'S ALLEGIANCE TO THE CALIPHATE

Ali's nomination to the caliphate was problematic from the onset when he was forced into accepting the position. This was not the first time that Ali was forced to accept a position, in a former incident 'he was dragged before Abu Bakr to offer his allegiance whilst being insulted and humiliated by other men in the community' (al-Mufid, 1977:78). When the Prophet died, Ali found himself without political support or any authority. He was coerced into offering the allegiance. However, he was only prepared to do so after the death of his wife, Fatima. Abu Bakr and Umar had confiscated Fatima's inheritance of land, Fadak so she remained hostile to them until her death. In attempting to please Fatima, Abu Bakr, Umar and now the community, Ali established a pattern of pleasing others to his own detriment. Girard argues that such an individual marks himself 'as an outlet for the annoyance and irritation' of the community (Girard, 1986:29). Where previously he was trapped between Abu Bakr and Fatima, he now found himself in a similar position between the community and the political elite. When an individual accepts the 'intermediary role' inevitably, the mediator is held solely responsible for the manner in which the events occur.

> By Allah I never craved for the caliphate or authority. All of
> you invited me to accept it and when I accepted I looked to
> the Book of Allah….in following those I never needed your

opinion or the opinion of anybody else. (Sharif, 1989:284).

The Prophet is said to have nominated Ali to be his successor at Ghadir Khumm with unanimous agreement amongst all the companions. There was no disagreement of the Prophet's nomination yet hours after his death, loyalties were forgotten and dishonoured. Ali was not permitted to take his rightful place nor did he not protest at Abu Bakr nomination to his position instead. At Saqifah Bani Saeda, Abu Bakr and Umar ignored the Prophet's wishes choosing to further their own personal agendas for political positions. After the Prophet's death the companions changed their manner toward Ali from adulation to resentment. They 'hated him [Ali] so much that Umar – speaking on behalf of the community – rejected that he was the prophet's brother' (Ordoni, 1980:299; Nasr, 2006:37).

He was considered a monstrous individual because he claimed that he was the brother of the Prophet. This audacious statement did not sit well with those who wanted access to power and the position of caliph. Ali was sidelined often in his community on grounds of age, his poverty and the lack of influence possessed by his clan. There was also animosity due to his personal relationship with the Prophet and his marriage to Fatima. Other suitors, amongst them Abu Bakr and Umar had failed to impress her and she rejected their proposals. When the Prophet died Ali's social position went from being a hero to that of a disgraced individual. His 'victim' personality could easily set the 'operation in which to apply a potential myth' (Girard, 1984:830).

One could then ask if he was unpopular why was he not murdered then? There was tension in the community and many clans no longer wanted to follow Islam, it was 'at best, like a small island surrounded by the sea of paganism, polytheistic beliefs, unruly traditions of the Arabian nomads and despotic kingdoms' (Nadwi, 1991:51). Ali experienced the community's hostility when he was dragged to offer his allegiance to Abu Bakr. His relationship with the Prophet and 'rightful position' as the successor marked him with a 'sign' (Momen, 1985:19). Perhaps it was due to the support of Fatima, who had significant presence in the community that spared his life on that occasion.

Now that he was nominated as the caliph, Ali no longer wanted the position,

> Let me alone, and go in search of someone else….
>
> Clouds are hovering over the sky, and faces are
>
> indiscernible. You should know that if I respond
>
> to you I would lead you as I know and would not
>
> care about whatever one may say or abuse.
>
> If you leave me then I am the same as you. (al- Salih, 1967:136)

Ali's response to the community is very informative, when he said that 'he would not care' about their opinions how did the community internalize that? Surely such a statement would not cast him in a favourable light to a community tired of corruption and incompetence. His demeanour seems no different from the other caliphs particularly Uthman. He appears arrogant and dismissive in his exclamation.

Yet one wonders at the nomination of Ali, were the crowd actually interested in a successor caliph because they appear deaf to his utterances. By saying 'I would lead you as I know' Ali revealed his political naivety and it was common knowledge that he did not possess political experience. He possessed instead a steadfast determination to lead in the manner of Islam. He realized that if he accepted the position he would isolate himself from the rest of the community. Ali's words reveal an important fact in establishing Girard's 'undifferentiated community' (Girard, 1986:29).

Ali's words are profound, that 'clouds are hovering over the sky' suggested that tumultuous times were ahead and that the clouds were blocking the sun reducing visibility. This distorted what people would see and presented rivals with an opportunity to impress their thoughts upon the community. Without knowledge of the situation, people are easily swayed by whom they assume to be individuals who possess authority. Unable to interpret the events unfolding around them their vision and therefore their minds are 'clouded'.

While the Prophet uttered to Ali that, 'only believers will love you and only hypocrites will hate you' the social chaos would create such confusion that people would not recognize their behaviour. How then would Ali distinguish between the believers and the hypocrites? Ali acknowledged that the 'faces are indiscernible' so he would be unable to distinguish a supporter from an enemy. This assessment emphasized the 'lack of differentiation' contained in myth (Girard, 1986:30).

Unable to recognize friend from foe, Ali and the community form a central component to Girard's 'undifferentiation'. The community cannot accuse one other of specific actions and therefore prevent individuals or groups from being targeted at a later stage. This inability to identify people serves as a cover for everyone in the community. With such anonymity it is easier for the community to amass and target a common enemy.

What does Ali reveal of himself when acknowledging communal trends he still accepted the nomination? He claimed that he did not accept this position for personal interest because if he were left alone then he would be 'the same as you'. Conscious that the caliph could be a target, he was content to remain as anonymous person in the crowd. An important aspect of the scapegoat is highlighted here is the ordinary member of the community; that without a title, Ali would be an ordinary person. Ali's narrative revealed an aspect of the myth that the 'victims are determined by the criteria of persecution' and not necessarily of a crime attributed to them. By isolating Ali in the leadership post the community have a potential victim. Seeking immediate results for the chaos, in desperation they select an individual that they can make 'responsible for the disasters' (Girard, 1986:27).

In hindsight we know that Ali is the victim in the crowd but we are presented with two important 'scapegoat' points. The first point is that Ali informed the crowd that the role of caliph invited ridicule and violence. The second point is the randomness of the potential victim. In stating that 'I am the same as you' he inferred that an ordinary person could be appointed caliph. The companions could as easily have been potential victims but it was Ali that was nominated as caliph.

As soon as Ali was elected, issues of discontent and jealousy surfaced. With Ali as caliph the 'aristocratic' elites who had previously refused to enter the fracas showed their displeasure that Ali had acquired the position. The companions refused to respect and acknowledge this caliph whom they 'considered owed them his very life' (Girard, 1987:187). Leading members of the Ansar and Mu'awiyah refused to pledge loyalty and members of the Omayyad fled to Syria with Uthman's bloodstained shirt to show their opposition to Ali. All the characters did their utmost to assist the 'course of this tragedy'. The bloodstained shirt was the 'negative qualification' of the social crisis and

the 'accusation against the victim'. In time no one will doubt this accusation because it was adopted by the political elite and passed down to the entire community (Girard, 1987a:113).

Although no one had wanted to be caliph, collectively this group suddenly desired this position because it had been given to Ali, the rivals now focused on this political position. Ali has created the desire in others and envy, endemic to desire, motivated them into action. The bloodstained shirt represented the violence of envy in human relations. In seeking 'vengeance' for Uthman's death 'envy' was present in all their actions and words (Girard, 1991:187). While the community embraced Ali's caliphate the political elites opposed it on the grounds that Ali needed to punish Uthman's killers before they could acknowledge him. These companions became the 'mediators of hatred' dramatizing Uthman's murder united them behind their common enemy. The general population was unconcerned with Uthman's death. It was the elite who first demanded vengeance and only then did the rest follow, 'imitating the first imitators' (Girard, 1987b:49).

Resentment led to the loss of distinction between elites and the general populace. The community already in the vicious circle of reciprocal violence included groups unable to extricate themselves. This circle is defined in terms of 'vengeance and reprisals' and as long as envy, hatred and suspicion exist in the community it can only increase (Girard, 1977a: 81). Ali rose above his rivals in stature so they hated him for being the caliph but 'the more autonomous he subjectively felt the less he was in reality'. Recognising their envy his pride intensified but so did his mental fragility (Girard, 1991:197).

3.4. INSTITUTING REFORMS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES

The growth in the Islamic state meant that the political approach needed to be diplomatic or the social unrest could deteriorate. Ali wanted to remove all forms of deviation/innovation that had become a norm in Islamic life. Although he occupied central authority he was alienated from his clan. His unpopular decisions were grounded in the knowledge passed down from the Prophet that had been distorted by the former caliphs. The previous caliphs inculcated a sense of entitlement and enrichment

amongst certain groups that would be difficult to change as it had become customary. His reforms would affect the wealth many had accumulated under Uthman. One such individual was Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan. In returning the state to the 'divine course' Ali adhered to a particular program but relied on others for implementation. He did not accept money from the Treasury to implement his strategies but gave of himself spiritually and physically to reintroduce the 'path' to the community. This was an important aspect in myth of the 'free and voluntary aspects of his decisions' (Girard, 1986:59). It was Ali's decision to go back to Islamic ideals and become 'the chosen animal that always differs from the general uniformity in some way' (Girard, 1977b:930).

Without seeking negotiation he dismissed provincial governors appointed under Uthman. The Banu Omayya had corrupted Uthman's caliph but Ali was advised to extract loyalty oaths before dismissing these individuals. These were influential individuals with familial ties to Uthman and without oaths they could refuse to acknowledge Ali as the successor caliph (Nadwi, 1991:78; Ahmed, 1979:32). Ali successfully isolated governors, property owners and the members of the Quraish, distinguished individuals who possessed great influence. Commenting on the avarice and corruption that besieged Uthman's caliphate, Ali related it was 'just as cattle on seeing green grass after drought trample it away, they recklessly fell upon Allah's money and devoured it' (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:70).

> With their share of the spoils, their generous endowment in
> lands and revenues, their monopoly of military commands
> and their indirect control of administration, the Arab
> aristocracy of conquest acquired immense riches; amid the
> opportunities and delights of the advanced countries in which
> they found themselves, they found themselves with abandon.
> (Lewis, 1970:222)

Amongst Ali's reforms was the manner in which money would be distributed. He replaced the existing system with that a more equitable system first used by the Prophet. The second caliph, Umar, acerbated class differences with his financial reforms. It also

increased racial tension between Arabs and Persians. In terms of awarding monies more went to those who had embraced Islam earlier than those who embraced later; more went to Quarayshite migrants than other migrants, and more to all migrants compared to Helpers[2] and more to Arabs than non-Arabs (Lari, 2000:62). The population was unhappier with the manner in which Uthman had distributed the money in the Public Treasury. Among the conquered Arab clansmen, discontent grew and simmered (Lewis, 1970:222). Ali had stressed that simply because one believed in Allah, fought for and embraced Islam, or 'any man from the Muhajirin and the Ansar who had kept company with the Messenger of Islam, believing that he had priority over others just because of that', did not entitle these individuals to any greater percentage of state revenues. Instead Ali insisted that financial obligation was an expectation of every Muslim equally 'with no one having distinction over the other' (al-Salih, 1967:269). The impoverished population believed that the Prophet was sent to 'reveal the truth not to collect taxes' so one could understand Ali's popular support as caliph when the opportunity presented itself (Lewis, 1970:224).

However the political elite in Egypt, Basra and Medina opposed his reforms, and in Yemen the outgoing provincial governor looted the treasury not only out of resentment toward Ali but also due to an engrained sense of entitlement (Ahmed, 1979:34). Those who could no longer enrich themselves and punish others excessively for crimes, those who were subjected to higher taxes and had their private property confiscated were all angry and disgruntled.

> The sources are full of stories of rich booty, wide distribution
> and lavish expenditure. They also tell of great new fortunes
> built up by members of the Arab aristocracy. On the day
> Uthman was killed he possessed 100 000 dinars and a million

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[2] Helpers claimed exceptional privilege in that they were amongst the first to embrace Islam; had gained the respect of the Prophet, had taken up arms to spread Islam and that these undertakings reserved them leadership positions. Migrants took a similar position in that they came from the same city as the Prophet and had also made sacrifices in terms of spreading Islam. The logic of both groups rests upon a tribal sense of entitlement to exclude rivals and retain or obtain monopolies for themselves.

dirhams. The value of his estates….also left many horses and

camels. In the time of Uthman a number of the Companions

acquired houses and estates. Zubayr built his house in Basra…

and also built houses in Kufa, Fustat and Alexandria. The

value of Zubayr's property at his death was 50 000 dinars. He

also left a thousand horses, slaves and lands. Talha's income

from his estates in Iraq amounts to a thousand dinar a day….

From his estates in al-Sharah he received more than that. (Lewis, 1970:222)

Faced with other socio-religious adaptations that did not exist in the time of the Prophet Ali realised that eliminating these innovations would be difficult due to his lack of real authority. When he attempted to return Mohammed's pulpit, that Abu Bakr had removed, to its original place he was immediately met with strong opposition, as people did not want anything contrary to Abu Bakr and Umar's practices even if it was contrary to the Prophet's intentions. When Ali forbid congregational tarawih prayers he was chastised for contravening Umar's caliph regardless that what Umar had permitted was an innovation. Ali failed to realise that although the Prophet did not support tarawih prayers, years had passed since his death and the other caliphs tolerated these changes. Umar witnessed these innovations sanctioning them so guaranteeing himself political support in the process. Inexperienced, Ali wanted a return to the instructions of the Prophet risking alienation and appearing dogmatic.

Ali pursued change in everything attempting to return to policies of the past, but while the population romanticized of the Prophet and his community, they were not willing to make similar sacrifices. As an expanding Islamic state the population had changed. Administrative, political and economic policies took precedence over the religio-spiritual position. Those who opposed change sought to pressure Ali by using the social unrest. In response his rivals, Talha and Zubayr, who had gained immense wealth through the previous caliphs were now concerned with punishing Uthman's murderers although they knew that within the crowd at Uthman's house no one was identified. Unable to compete with Ali they revealed their envy so that they could 'claim superiority in small matters' such as avenging a corrupt caliph (Girard, 1991:187). Suddenly the onus was on Ali to punish these anonymous killers (Nadwi,

1991:25-28). Talha, Zubayr and Mu'awiyah knew that identifying the murderers would prove impossible and put Ali in an uncomfortable and unpopular position. Ali was now perceived in many unflattering ways, as a threat, as a collaborator others considered him weak and some as a heretic. The community was now united in rejecting Ali's caliphate as they had been when they electing him. The community began to view him as the sole 'malignant element' and that their miseries could be attributed exclusively to Ali. Collectively the community believed that he was responsible for 'polluting' their reality (Girard, 1977b:83).

The popular enquiry into Uthman's death was the 'investigation into the general subject of the sacrificial crisis'. Seeking vengeance was 'clearly a matter of pinning the responsibility for the troubled state of the community on some individual'. The investigation was a 'feverish hunt for a scapegoat' and the 'full burden of guilt finally settled on one' person (Girard, 1977a:78). Those opposed to Ali strengthened their positions with regard to Uthman's vengeance. Girard argues that in the development of myth any action that creates a victim was an attempt to 'cast a veil over the truth' (Alison, 1997:42). While Girard maintains that the nomination of a scapegoat is spontaneous and short-lived but in this scenario the development of the stereotype extended over five years. It would appear that from the moment Ali accepted nomination, his political rigidity created problems within the community.

To understand the structure of myths one should observe who is the 'stranger' to the social arena. He is the individual who does not understand how things work and he is revealed as a 'social outcast'. It is always the victim that 'differs from the general uniformity in some way' (Girard, 1977a:123). At the same moment every person in the community knew of Ali's shortcomings but this is also coupled with an 'all-inclusive ignorance'. Many considered his religious interpretations to be innovations responsible for the crisis; that he corrupted the interpretations of Abu Bakr and Umar.

By incorporating economic and religious policies based on the Prophet's interpretation of Islam indicated that 'something of absolutely universal significance was at stake' (Girard, 1977a:158). In response many withdrew their support and the population still unsettled from the uprising against Uthman required a carthatic release. The desire to transfer the blame to a single individual is to 'deprive men of knowledge' of the violence that is 'inherent in' themselves. The transfer is their refusal to come to

terms with the social chaos. Instead they develop an attitude that requires 'absolute faith in the guilt' of the surrogate victim. Refuting the innovations of the previous caliphs 'provides the community with exactly what it needed to exorcise the effects of the sacrificial sacrifice'. The hostility toward the victim is now widespread, having filtered down to the community from the elites. Now potential perpetrators 'line-up on both sides' agreeing on the guilt and suitable punishment for the victim (Girard, 1986:61; Girard, 1977b:83).

3.5. UNDERMINING ALI'S CALIPHATE

Without clan support Ali moved his political capital to a location that he believed his popular support to be greatest. Without the support of the political elite the manner of his nomination itself appeared to be an innovation, 'an introduced mysterious illness' that has created this socio-political crisis (Girard, 1977a:103). The 'cure depends on the identification and expulsion of the individual whose presence pollutes the community' and everyone agreed on who the guilty individual was.

> I warn you of this world for it is the abode of the
> unsteady. It is not a house for foraging. It has
> decorated itself with deception and deceives with
> its decoration. (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:331)

Three dissentions marked Ali's tenure undermining his support and the stability of the Muslim community. In the five years as caliph he constantly engaged in armed struggle. From 656 to 658 he engaged in warfare, Ali fought A'isha at the Battle of Camel in 15 Jumada/8 December 656, he fought in the Battle of Siffin that took place in 8-11 Safar/26-29 July 657, and a campaign against the Kharijtes[3], with battles of Nahrawan, Dhu 1-Hijja/May 658 (See Madelung, 1997). He was hated by the

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[3] The Kharijites opposed the concept of a leader (caliph) in Islam after the death of the Prophet. They accused Ali of *kufr* (unbelief) and *shirk* (being a partner of Allah). They opposed the construction of governments, legislation and any interpreters and comments of the Qu'ran. These are all considered institutions of mediation and thus problematic.

Kharijites, resisted by the Syrians and Mu'awiyah's party, disliked by the Hijazi supporters of Zubayr and abandoned by the neutral parties at Adhruh. He was not even well supported by the Kufans although he promised them their treasury. In spite of this he still had limited zealous followers (Hodgson, 1955:2).

With the Islamic capital now at Kufa, in Iraq, Ali put principle above political expediency and amassed influential enemies who aligned themselves to Mu'awiyah (Momen, 1985:25). Ali announced to the Kufans that they were 'the noblest of the Muslims, the most purposeful of them in following the correct course, the most upright of them in practice'. He informed the Kufans of his disappointment in Talha and Zubayr who 'gave their pledge of allegiance to me, willingly, without compulsion and of their own accord'. They betrayed him by asking to participate in 'umra' (the lesser pilgrimage) but instead went to Basra to massacre people creating more violence, instability and confusion amongst the people. What appeared as the biggest shock to Ali was that they reneged on their allegiance, 'O God! They have cut themselves off from me, they have oppressed me and have broken their pledge of allegiance to me, they have gathered the people against me!' (al-Mufid, 1977:186). Ali was now aware that he was being condemned without being guilty of any crime. Although limited, the Kufans formed his largest support base from which he could draw his army.

Ali's rivals, Talha, Zuybayr and Mu'awiyah used the volatility of the socio-political situation to realise their ambitions and access the caliphate. We can assume that Uthman's death is comparative to the death of a king whose lack of heir triggers a war of succession. For the rivals usurping the caliphate had become their main preoccupation. The 'dual conflicts' have given way to the 'association of several people against a single one'. That 'he himself had filled their houses with good things while these wicked men shut him out of their counsels' reflected how Ali had done such good amongst the political elites but that it had gone unnoticed (Girard, 1987b:73). Instead their attention focused on the popular support that Ali had secured. Realising that this popular support was important to Ali the 'three friends' attempted to undermine this support base.

> Al-Hasan said, " I was in the teaching circle of Ali b. Abu
> Talib, when the scream was heard coming from the house

of Uthman b. Affan. I saw Ali raising his hands saying

'O God, I am free of the slaying of Uthman.'". (Umar b.

Shabba cited in Mourad, 2006:45)

Had Ali considered killing Uthman? It brought his 'innocence' into question but also raised two very important issues regarding the surrogate victim. Ali had thoughts of killing Uthman and this, according to the persecutors, attributed to his 'guilt'. However if the victim is given a voice it offered irrefutable proof of his innocence. Could this be the 'key of knowledge' that Ali has come to give mankind? The 'intolerable revelation' that was proof of his innocence that we kill, then hide and deny our participation (Girard, 1983:7). While he had thought of killing Uthman this was not the crime that led to his death.

Once Ali entered his house and found his daughters rubbing

their eyes [from tears]. He said, "Why are you weeping?"

They said, "We are lamenting [the death of]Uthman." So he

wept and said [to them] "Cry".(al-Baladhuri cited in Mourad, 2006:45)

The 'so-called' evidence of murder, Uthman's bloodstained shirt, served as a constant reminder to the population as to what had happened to the caliph. As an emotive symbol it gave 'unanimity to the decision to put a man to death'. If interest in the murder waned then the bloodstained shirt, along with the fingers of Uthman's wife, would revive anger that the caliph was betrayed. It was displayed in the Jamin mosque in Damascus to provoke Ali. It would serve 'to catch him at something he might say' or do (Girard, 1977a:167).

A'isha had popular and political support in Mecca and rallied an army to fight against Uthman's 'murderers', yet she herself had left for Mecca leaving Uthman in siege. When she heard that allegiance had been paid to Ali she announced, 'By Allah, Uthman has been killed helplessly. I shall certainly avenge his blood'. Abu Salamah shocked at A'isha's sudden declaration of innocence responded, 'What are you saying as you yourself used to say "Kill this Nath'al. He has turned unbeliever."' (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:82).

A'isha's words were general consensus amongst the politically elite. As with many of those who dominated local political life she sought to increase her power by manipulating popular sentiment. The caliphate was a desired prize and most were content to let Uthman bear the crowd's hostility but they recognised the 'fickleness of the society'. A'isha remarked to Abu Salamah on Uthman being an unbeliever that, 'Not only I but everyone used to say so'. In stating 'everyone' A'isha revealed that many details of the 'generative event' were being selectively 'dropped out'. Many 'elements became warped and misshapen' and were eventually far removed from the truth and unrecognisable as it had first happened (Girard, 1992:145).

A'isha accompanied by Talha and Zubayr want to 'avenge' Uthman's death. They wanted to renege on their allegiance to Ali claiming it was 'done by the sword'.   In Basra hundreds of men were rounded up, interrogated and killed and the city was in the 'grip of a virtual reign of terror' (Ahmed, 1979:40-43). This upheaval added to an already tense and volatile environment. Though Ali had prohibited looting and unnecessary killings, 'killing and looting prevailed all around. No one was secure nor was there any way to save one's honour or property'. Not understanding the change of heart in his influential supporters he exclaimed, 'I never craved for the caliphate or authority…. all of you invited me to accept it'. Ali was being forced into the role of the 'innocent victim'. By publicly revealing a desire to rid the caliphate of Uthman, Ali had 'infringed the supreme prohibition that governed all human order, and he must therefore be reduced to silence (Girard, 1987a:166).

A'isha supported Talha's ambitions in becoming the next caliph (Momen, 1985:21). Her words and actions were indicative of the nature of false allegations against Ali. On returning from pilgrimage she informed a crowd that the rioters were cruel 'to have killed the caliph in cold blood' and appealed to them to avenge Uthman's death (Ahmed, 1979:38). There was no logic to the investigation because Uthman had been alone when he was killed but A'isha accused the rioters of complicit responsibility. Like the other elites she perceived of herself as above the murder, that she was an 'expert' and an 'impartial observer' detached from the action assume 'the role of judge' (Girard, 1977a:69).

 Other political elites, Muhajurin and members of the Quraish had pledged allegiances but were unhappy with Ali's social and political reforms. Particularly

problematic were the reforms that forbade looting, pillaging, taking the wounded as slaves and claims to the loser's weaponry and women. The Quraish had pledged allegiance to preserve their interests not prohibit them. They united with other groups under the auspices of avenging the murder of Uthman to remove Ali from office. The culmination of events and unpopular legislation united several groups against the caliph. These cultural groups who were first enemies, then became competitors and were finally morphed into a 'uniform condition of violence, engulfed in the same storm of passion (Girard, 1977a:70).

Like Talha, Mu'awiyah the governor of Syria also desired the caliph position and he refused to recognize Ali's caliphate. Confronted by A'isha, Talha and Zubayr, Ali was not in a position to challenge Mu'awiyah. Confronting the widow of the Prophet proved to be an enormous challenge as the residents of Medina were unwilling to challenge her. Ali was unable to garner much support in regions where she was a respected figure. He was also in danger of transgressing the inviolability of Muslim blood that he pledged to honour. How could he possibly go to war and not expect to shed any Muslim blood? When he sought support for his military offenses the conqueror of Iran, Saad bin Waqqas said respectfully, 'Commander of the Faithful, I want a sword that separates Muslims from non-Muslims. If you give me that sword, I will fight by your side. If you do not have that sword, please excuse me' (Ahmed, 1979:44). Similarly in Kufa, the governor, Abu Musa Ashari, was reluctant to choose either the side of Ali or A'isha and asked that his community refrain from participating in their confrontation.

Uthman's death provided old enemies like A'isha with an opportunity to validate their contempt for Ali. She too desired the political authority provided by the caliph although she could only indirectly exert control. She could only pass the official position to another man.

> This identification is eminently competitive, and therefore
> ambivalent from the outset. Among his own class he has
> only rivals who are Trying to outstrip him. They all want
> to become the same sort of uncrowned king that he was.
> (Girard, 1987b:50)

In conversation with Abu Salamah of Uthman's death, A'isha later said 'leave these things and listen to what I am now saying; that is better and deserves more attention' (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:86). A'isha revealed the prevailing sentiment of Uthman's death, it was just not that important to them. Rather it was Ali's nomination to the position that incensed the elites. Collectively they considered Ali to be the problem and possibly guilty. Ali had 'provoking enormous jealousy around him. He was the obstacle of mimetic theory'. Their focus had shifted from being 'doubles' and performing 'dual conflicts' to the association of people 'against a single' highly visible individual. By seeking vengeance A'isha not only conspired against Ali but also demonstrated that it was mimetically generated. The rivals fueled the conspiracy against Ali highlighting that 'nothing unites men like a common enemy' (Girard, 1991:186).

They are united for the purpose of disturbing the entire community. The union of A'isha, Talha and Zubayr formed the conspiratorial stage, the most destructive part of the social order. Fascinated with Ali they were filled with contempt, apparent in almost all their speeches amongst the men who were their social equals. Seeking to resolve the issue peacefully Ali sent a messenger to A'isha and her supporters but they were not interested in negotiation. Other than avenging Uthman there was no direction to their armed insurrection; they were devoted only to this action and particularly their common enemy. Their recruitment was a response to a form of mimetic incitement. A'isha led this conspiracy but it was Mu'awiyah who was the dominant figure.

The conspiracy originated with Mu'awiyah and is confirmed by Ali himself that Mu'awiyah always refused to pledge allegiance or acknowledge Ali as caliph. A'isha successfully engaged Talha and Zubayr to join the conspiracy on her behalf. She never mentioned the scapegoat by name rather she leaves it to Talha and Zubayr to name him, showing them to be easily manipulated. She was a dominant personality in the conspiracy and occupied a role parallel to that of Cassius in Girard's *Julius Caesar*.

Ali pleaded with Talha and Zubayr asking them why they would not respect the inviolability of Muslim blood to which Talha responded, 'But you took part in the rising against Uthman' (Ahmed, 1979:52). Rather than protest his innocence Ali responded that 'I curse the murderers of Uthman' not realizing the severity of the accusation. With

emotion he pleads to Talha asking him, 'O Talha! Did you not pledge loyalty to me?' but dismissively Talha responded, 'Yes but at the point of a sword'. Suddenly Ali's character was also being questioned along with the unsupported accusation of murder. Talha in spite evoked Ali's past victory of being appointed caliph in comparison to where he found himself now.

Although no one had directly nominated himself as the successor caliph, to Uthman, once Ali had been nominated to the position, others are collectively seen according to the theoretical framework as desiring to become the caliph. The rivals now focused on this political position. We are also faced with the aspect of 'truth' in which the community first believed that Ali never lied because of his integrity and honesty. Yet he was accused of murder and other clandestine behaviour such as forcing allegiances. Talha and Zubayr begin to resemble their model, 'growing increasing secure and forthright in their speech'. While they resented Ali for his 'moral' character, they now resembled him by using the same form of speech. Talha and Zubayr confirmed their arrogance as 'judges' removed from the political chaos and all responsibility (Girard, 1977a:69).

3.6. 'THE SHATTERED IDOL CRUSHED BY THREE FRIENDS'

Ali did not understand the 'cause of his misfortune'. What was happening was not attributed to divine intervention but rather to human desire (Girard, 1987a:3-6). Amongst his grassroots support, the rioters, the companions and the provincial governors disenchantment with his caliphate grew. Poor judgement and inexperience in dealing with dissention overwhelmed Ali. Still perplexed he sought to assure his support amongst others who had earlier sworn allegiance. He continued in his attempt to negotiate such an assurance from Mu'awiyah but this was also declined. While his popularity waned and allegiances eroded he also engaged in a confrontation with A'isha, something not looked upon favourably by any of the companions.

> A'isha, Talha and Zubayr have set out. Each one of the two
> men makes claim for the caliphate separately from his colleague.
> Talha only claims the caliphate because he is the paternal cousin

of A'isha and Zubayr only claims it because he is the

brother-in-law of her father. By God if the two are successful

in what they intend then Zubayr will execute Talha or Talha

will execute Zubayr, this one disputing the right of kingship

of the other. (al-Mufid, 1977:100)

Avenging Uthman's death became a rallying point for all parties wishing to undermine Ali and served to unite the community that had become fragmented through social unrest and poor bureaucratic and political decisions. The envy of 'friends and their neighbours' was essential to the transition from the first mimetic unanimity to the second. The frustration for the rivals in dealing with the model obstacle is universal. The crowd merely 'followed upon and amplified the successive reactions of the elite' (Girard, 2004:10).

The rivals proclaimed their innocence in Uthman's death by 'acting as judges' (Girard, 1986:71). They insisted that Uthman had not sought help from any of the provincial governors or the companions even though they knew that to leave him defenseless was dangerous. Although governors had made promises of assistance none had sent armies to protect Uthman, they claimed that he had rebuked their offers. Only Ali had been persistent in his offer of assistance even sending his son to guard the entrance to Uthman's home.

When the blockade to his home became more rigorous Ali alone took him water 'entering the house with great difficulty, the rebels objecting' (Nadwi, 1991:128-129; Momen, 1985:20). Ali was present to assist the caliph and unlike his rivals he did not offer assistance in distant safety. Those who should have assisted him turned away, waiting for events to unfold. 'Know that this world is like a snake. It feels soft when touched but its venom kills' (Mourad, 2006:85).

Ali revealed to us his 'key of knowledge' of the scapegoat mechanism. The snake sheds its skin in order to grow and extend its life. While it sheds it is vulnerable to the elements and to hide evidence of the shedding it often eats the old skin to remove the evidence. The process of shedding is never known because the snake conceals itself while it waits for the new skin to toughen. The rivals and the crowd were not of the real motive behind their actions. They needed a victim to restore peace to the society and

take responsibility for the chaos that threatened to destroy it. How and why they select the victim Ali revealed as the reason why the snake shed its skin. It does not understand the mechanics to its development and neither did communities.

If everyone in the Islamic state – rioters, companions, governors and administrators- knew that Uthman's life was in danger, then all were guilty and complicit in his murder. No individual can therefore be held responsible for the action because the entire society is guilty of the death. 'Uthman's shirt is not the shirt of Joseph nor is Mu'awiyah's tear that of Jacob' (Ahmed, 1979:32-33). Ali's response highlighted the manner in which the shirt was used to stir emotion amongst the population. The function of the shirt was apparent; with the social unrest and general political instability the violence could be funneled by the display of the shirt.

Hasan, the eldest son of Ali and Fatima, told his father that he suspected that Mu'awiyah wanted a war and that he should surrender the caliphate rather than start a civil war saying 'people will accept your leadership'. His own son reminded him that he had not yet garnered the support of all the people but confrontation was not a solution.

Having acknowledged that Mu'awiyah would never pledge allegiance, Ali confronted him to negotiate rather than engage war. Ali still somehow believed that Talha, Zubayr and Mu'awiyah were his friends through the Islamic struggle. However the growing social unrest and the violence in Basra meant that Ali needed to engage A'isha and leave Mu'awiyah unattended for another time. Adding to the tension were individuals in Ali's army, such as Abdullah bin Saba, who did not want A'isha to fight under Ali's banner. Realising that Ali was quickly losing support and unable to contain the growing hostility, Mu'awiyah was given a reprieve to accrue support for himself as the next caliph and permanently remove Ali. It was his desire to become 'the same sort of uncrowned king' that Ali was. The element of royalty in the uncrowned 'king' is by its very definition a position that cannot be shared. Ali now possessed all the signs of the victim, he combined the 'marginality of the outsider with the marginality of the insider', he was 'sometimes a stranger', possessed the appearance and lifestyle of a 'beggar and sometimes an all-powerful monarch' and finally single-handedly held the most powerful position in the state (Girard, 1987b:51).

Mu'awiyah informed the population that the social instability was Ali's fault. While he could not be accused of corruption and greed, his religious and military skills coupled with his inexperience could be used against him to cement Mu'awiyah's accusation. Ali defended himself vigorously so that the accusation could not hold. It was not Ali that has changed but rather those around him (Girard, 1987a:10-11).

> Precisely because it is rooted in mimetic desire, the fascination
> roused by this too-fortunate rival has a tendency to become
> implacable hatred, a hatred that it already contains within itself.
> The type of fascination, full of hatred, that is apparent in Almost
> all the speeches of the 'friends' thrive among men who are
> social equals. (Girard, 1987b:50)

During the time of the Prophet, Talha, Zubayr, Mu'awiyah and Ali had a close working relationship. They were united in their support of the Prophet and experienced his socio-political difficulties in their small community that was the 'small island surrounded by a sea of paganism' (Nadwi, 1991:51). While they might not have had close personal friendships they were united in their desire to see Islam gain prominence in their society. Now these 'friends' who were familiar to Ali wanted 'to crush him with their speeches and pulverize him with words' (Girard, 1987:26). They considered him guilty of something but necessarily 'the murder'. As a victim he threatened to destroy the possibility of creating a mythology because he insisted on his innocence regardless of the unanimous elite hostility. By maintaining his innocence Ali was a true hero of knowledge. The tragedy was the struggle between the protagonists for influence over the people.

> By God, they have not blamed me correctly, nor have they
> done justice between me and themselves. They are demanding
> restitution of a right which they themselves have abandoned,
> and vengeance for blood which they themselves shed. Even if
> I had been in partnership with them in it, they would have had a
> share in it. (al-Mufid, 1977:104)

Envy could only exist between Ali and his equals. Since he was the cousin and confidant of the Prophet, there must have been a 'hidden growth of envy waiting for direct expression' until his first mistake, 'some incident' such as the awarding of the caliph could be 'cleverly exploited' to ruin Ali's popularity among the people (Girard, 1987b:51). When Ali had popular support, the rivals increased their power by rousing emotions in demonstrating Ali's 'wickedness'. It was only the elite who had the power to change the pattern of persecution. The population simply imitated them. Because Ali had become identified with the caliphate, to desire the caliphate was to desire Ali. While Ali proved to be the most successful in securing the caliphate, he was also about to lose everything.

3.7. CONFRONTING THE INVIOLABILITY OF MUSLIM BLOOD

Ali was a well-informed scholar of Islam. He was also a brilliant military commander and his strength was tested throughout his brief role as caliph. That Ali's position was so fragile was indicative of the fickleness of society. It was the elite, the 'friends' Talha, Zubayr and Mu'awiyah who accused him of murder and polarised around his model. Ali's caliphate was contrary to the norms established by the former caliphs and Companions. Ali based his claim on his kinship to the Prophet and his knowledge of Islam. Talha and Zubayr reluctantly pledged their allegiance to Ali while Mu'awiyah refused to so.

> Talha was the first of the prominent Companions to give his pledge.
> The image of Ali's main rival was evidently crucial to lend his election
> credibility and to get it started. Talha did not come voluntarily.
> Al-Ashtar dragged him along roughly...the mood of the public in the
> mosque was, no doubt sufficiently intimidating for Talha to give his
> pledge without being openly threatened...Ali now sent someone to take
> the keys of the treasury from Talha...Zubayr was brought by the leader
> of the Basran rebels to pledge allegiance. He later complained that he
> had been driven by 'one of the thieves of al-Qays and had given his

pledge under duress. Zubayr cannot have been pleased to do homage to Ali. The two men had become deeply estranged since their common stand after the death of the Prophet and Zubayr could see himself with some justification as the Early Companion most entitled to claim the legacy of the murdered caliph...there was evidently a few aside from Talha and Zubayr who later claimed that they had pledged allegiance under duress.

(Madelung, 1997:142-144)

Regarding Mu'wiyah, who was a governor under Uthman's caliphate, Ali did not want him in that position and was advised, 'if you confirm them they will not care who is reigning, but if you depose them they will say: He has seized the rule without consultation and has killed our companion, and they will stir up opposition against you. The people of Syria and Iraq will then mutiny against you'. However, Ali refused this advise because he was 'deeply convinced of his right and his religious mission, unwilling to compromise his principles for the sake of political expediency' (Madelung, 1997:148-149).

These three individuals were being forced to accept Ali's caliphate while at the same time they were being removed from political office. This meant that they would not have the political influence they had enjoyed since the time of the Prophet. They considered Ali solely responsible for these decisions, having used his support to undermine them. They in return utilised their supporters, whose positions would also be challenged, to rise against Ali. Girard proposes that when the elite within a community feels that they are being marginalised in favour of a particular individual they react with anger toward that individual and blame him for the development in their socio-political positions. Their supporters take on their resentment and respond violently. No one could rival Ali but 'everybody was oppressed enough to accept' that he was somehow responsible for the problems they had experienced in their lives (Girard, 1987:51). Once the population began to mimic the anger of the rivals, there was no longer any difference between them. The crowd simply amplified the successive reactions of the elite.

Once accused of the uprising against Uthman, Ali faced another dilemma of killing Muslims if he engaged in war with Talha and Zubayr. Although desperate to avoid violent confrontation, the composition of Ali's army was itself problematic and a further indication of Ali's declining support. Ali sent an envoy to negotiate reconciliation; 'If you are to be fair to yourself' Ali exclaimed to Zubayr, 'it is you and your companions who killed him [Uthman]' (Ahmed, 1979:58). In this statement Ali attempted to distance himself from the accusation of murder. During an overnight hiatus a segment of Ali's army attacked Talha and Zubayr. In the confrontation Talha was killed and Zubayr fled.

Ali's success as military strategist made him victorious over A'isha, Talha and Zubayr but he still had not encountered Mu'awiyah who was considerably more powerful in terms of support in the eastern provinces. Mu'awiyah stated that 'a caliph must be a position put to a free vote by Muslims' (Ahmed, 1979:59). As a rival, Mu'awiyah could only identify Ali as the caliph. Envious of Ali, Mu'awiyah attempted to accelerate Ali's demise. Ali's position cannot be shared only competed for because he is the 'obstacle model of mimetic theory'. Girard emphasizes that although these equals are full of fascination for the caliph they are also filled with intense hatred for him(Girard, 1987:50). By seeking a popular vote Mu'awiyah taunted Ali with his own moral and political policies on social equality. It was these social programs that empowered the community that made Ali a hero and that Mu'awiyah now wanted to employ against him. Mu'awiyah displayed envy through the reciprocal borrowing of Ali's political desire for equality. Mu'awiyah imitated Ali by invoking what was most sacred to Ali, the equalizing and the empowerment of the entire community particularly the poor and marginalized. Mu'awiyah recognized the political power of popular consensus.

Ali continued to make poor judgment calls; particularly sensitive was the seizure of war spoils. Although admirable in terms of adhering to Islamic principles it was not popularly supported amongst the fighters. Ali had remarked to his army that 'seizure of women and property must be regarded as unlawful. Whatever brought to war can be seized but no slaves may be seized. This is the way of the Muslims'. Faced with an eroding support base, Ali alienated more of his supporters by limiting their booty especially the access to women. Ali also impugned that no injured, fleeing or deserting

Muslims could be killed. Although Ali had explained why it was best to leave the assets to survivors of households, many were unhappy with this distribution. His supporters asked how is it that 'their blood is lawful to us but not their women?…you do not act justly amongst your subjects' (al Mufid, 1977:98).

His supporters questioned his sense of 'moral equality' made problematic that Ali was unable to explain why certain groups simply did what they wanted in warfare. That his supporters were expected to receive less booty did not endear Ali to them. Embittered, his supporters amplified the accusations made by the elite, particularly the supporters of Mu'awiyah who openly opposed Ali, as his supporters no longer revered him. Supporters along with enemies waited for Ali to make the slightest mistake so that it could be exploited, along with his eroding popularity and his limited support to bring about his political ruin. However 'great men are too popular' comments Girard 'to succumb immediately to the intrigues that proliferate around them' continuing that this is the 'significance of the delay in vengeance' (Girard, 1987b:54).

Returning to Kufa with his army for reinforcements Ali hoped to journey on to Al-Sham to confront Mu'awiyah. Muawiyah continued to use Uthman's death as a pretext to oppose the caliphate, inciting the people of Al-Sham and Syria into hysteria. When Ali unintentionally asked for allegiances he initiated the process of asking his 'friends' to speak. The poorest and lowest socio-economic groups could now satisfy their bitterness on a more desirable and prestigious victim, venting their rage and anger as a mimetic response to the elites (Girard, 1987a:52).

> Moving stories were told about the tragic murder of the late
> caliph, Uthman. The result was a storm of anger. Thousands
> of Syrians swore to avenge the death of Uthman. They swore
> not to sleep til they had achieved that end' (Ahmed, 1979:61).

Accusing Ali was to 'attribute to him sole responsibility for the sacrificial crisis' regardless that 'everyone shares equal responsibility'. While their attacks 'may not always land on their mark' each is a staggering blow 'to the institutions of religion' and Ali's leadership (Girard, 1977a:71). The speeches of former 'friends' incited popular violence in complete contrast to the inability of the now unpopular victim to invoke any

real response. None of these individuals realized that their anger and resentment was directly related to envy. Mu'awiyah had successfully argued that Ali was responsible for more than simply Uthman's death but also for the deterioration of the state. His informed his supporters that Ali needed to be eliminated and the community took on this sentiment. Mu'awiyah's instigation signaled the 'undifferentiation of a formally well-differentiated populace' (Girard, 1991:185).

Mu'awiyah exposed the role of double mimesis and how the community had vigorously followed and elected Ali and as quickly turned against him. The surrogate victim assisted in eliminating the community's antagonism along with the chaotic violence by channeling the anger to a particular cause, such as removing Ali. This focus shift to a single individual is now identified as the scapegoat. 'I have become a byword among the people and a creature on whose face to spit' and hurl accusations (Girard, 1987b:70).

When Ali heard of the reaction of the Syrians he asked, 'Do they want Uthman's blood from me? Allah knows that I am innocent of Uthman's blood'. Fastidious in vocalizing his innocence he refused to accept responsibility for the murder. Ali's suffering now contributed to the 'good behaviour' of his community who now determined their behaviour to be 'righteous' by taking 'great comfort in the misfortune of the scapegoat'.

Mu'awiyah not only desired the caliphate for himself but also wanted to restore the wealth distribution that Ali had drastically modified to disadvantage the political elites. Both Mu'awiyah and Ali claimed popular support and both claimed to have the best interests of the Islamic community. As rivals they engaged in endless conflicts so that they were indistinguishable from each other becoming doubles of one another (Girard, 1991:185). A new stage of undifferentiation was reached where Ali was both the hated rival and the beloved model.

Mu'awiyah as the less fortunate rival of the 'powerful' caliph became impatient with the relative 'stability' and continuation of Ali's power. According to Mu'awiyah, Ali's caliph 'must be contrary to the divine will since it offended' (Girard, 1987b:53). Attempting to confront Mu'awiyah, Ali marched his troops to al-Sham crossing the Euphrates and encamping at Siffin to engage Mu'awiyah's army. (Ahmed, 1979:60-61). Although a confrontation was inevitable, both sides were unwilling to fight due to

'inviolability of Muslim blood' that Ali had promised to uphold (Ahmed, 1979:64-66).
Several meetings were held with Ali's envoys but Mu'awiyah continued to accuse Ali
of Uthman's murder and that he shielded the murderers, 'after avenging the death of
Uthman, Muslims shall decide with a free vote who is to be their caliph' (Ahmed,
1979:69). Ali who sought negotiation rather than conflict stated,

> Uthman did certain things that offended people. So they slew
> him, then people came to me. I had nothing to do with what
> they had done. They forced me to accept the Caliphate
> (Ahmed, 1979:69).

Each saw the other as a usurper of legitimacy. Each believed the position to be his
right yet both undermined its credibility. The tragedy transforms Uthman's murder,
along with the accusations of economic disempowerment 'into an exchange of mutual
incriminations'. Each sought to place the blame for the state's plight on the other. Both
sides were equally matched and neither appeared to be gaining the upper hand. Ali's
imminent fall had nothing to do with Uthman's death or any heinous crime but was
instead 'regarded as the outcome of a tragic encounter in which Ali will meet defeat
(Girard, 1984:820).

Ali revealed to Mu'awiyah's envoys that 'I neither say he [Uthman] was killed
justly nor do I say he was slain unjustly' (Ahmed, 1979:70). Not seeking disunity and
bloodshed amongst the armies Ali challenged his rival, 'what should the people kill
each other for? Come fight me and leave the people alone. The victor will have the
rule' but his offer was declined. From Mu'awiyah's perspective a personal
confrontation with Ali could accidently allow the 'sociological aspect of the
phenomenon' to show through and the mechanism would no longer be successful.
Mu'awiyah's army, through successful indoctrination, rejected Ali because the mimetic
suggestion has fulfilled itself with very few words (Girard, 1987b:81). As the
conspiracy grew, the job of attracting new members became easier; so convincing the
armies to rally around 'defenders' of the Islamic state, such as Mu'awiyah, was easily
communicated.

Mu'awiyah engaged his forces with a full-scale war that lasted for two weeks. When it appeared that Ali would be victorious Mu'awiyah had his troops 'raise copies of the Qu'ran on top of their spears and swords' reminding Ali's men that they were Muslim and subject to the 'inviolability of their Muslim blood' (Ahmed, 1979:73). Mu'awiyah realized that he needed to gain the support of Ali's army in order to defeat the caliph. Ali was unaware of the collective association that conspired against him within his own army. Like everyone else he was deceived by the scapegoat mechanism that he himself had activated. The army, like all persecutors, perceived that Ali, as the scapegoat, could alter his course if he wanted. This is the 'generative illusion' of the scapegoat mechanism. The blame shifts away from the persecutors and is collectively given over to the victim where they exaggerate his responsibility in controlling the crisis (Girard, 1987b:81). If Ali's army turned against him then there would be unity in the opposition to Ali and Mu'awiyah would have realized a 'mimesis of conflict'. Nothing united men in their hatred like a common enemy even if the victim's love for his community was free from hatred (Girard, 1991:186).

3.8. THE CONSPIRACY OF ARBITRATION

Throughout his term as caliph, Ali had persisted with the concept of the inviolability of Muslim blood. Now Mu'awiyah's forces were using the Qu'ran to acknowledge this concept. It would also avert defeat and force Ali into negotiation. Mu'awiyah imitated Ali's weakness and strength; his love of the religion and the Qu'ran. When Mu'awiyah used the Qu'ran as a buffer, Ali was faced with a dilemma. Realizing his victory was close at hand, Ali saw this action as a ploy, so he wanted to continue fighting. However, his troops were deceived by these actions and ceased fighting.

They demanded negotiation but Ali protested that this was merely a ruse to prevent their impending victory. Without the support of his army of supporters, Ali was unrecognisable as their leader. His army turned against him responding to his pleas with, 'either order the army to stop fighting or we will deal with you the way we dealt with Uthman' (Ahmed, 1979:74). Realising that he was alienated, Ali knew that he was being tricked into taking decisions that would lead to his downfall. His authority had

whittled away since he became the caliph and his decisions were no longer respected. Agents within Ali's army wanted to destroy it from within and the conspiracy posed a greater threat to the social order than the mimetic configurations preceding it. These political answers satisfied the 'insatiable appetite for differences' namely 'conflictual undifferentiation' and even 'opposite political views' as desired by the 'friends' can be defended with 'equal plausibility and implausibility' (Girard, 1991:198). Without Talha and Zubayr, Mu'awiyah was the absolute rival, a role all the more central in understanding the scapegoat mechanism and mythic development.

In *Desire, Deceit and the Novel*, Girard discussed that in Latin the word 'rival' comes from 'ripuarius', 'riverain' which refers to two individuals who face each other across a river (Girard, 1991:187). Mu'awiyah and Ali confront each other across the Euphrates to vie for control of the caliphate. Those in Ali's army who chose to side with Mu'awiyah imitated the reactions of the first imitators. Mu'awiyah's role was limited but it was his idea that filtered down to his men and across to Ali's army. Double mimesis enabled us to understand how Ali's army could turn against him as easily as they supported him. As the surrogate victim Ali eliminated everyone's antagonism in one move, the raising of the Qu'ran, focused all attention on Ali. Raising the Qu'rans immediately brought about a sort of peace. The fighting immediately ceased and there was 'regained unity' as the 'result of the intervention of the scapegoat (Girard, 1987b:69).

In response Mu'awiyah sought arbitration suggesting to Ali that both sides send judges to reach a settlement. Mu'awiyah sent bin Al-As while Ali's army selected Abu Musa Al-Ashari, an individual that Ali disapproved of as he had rejected Ali's nomination as the fourth caliph. As the governor of Kufa, he told people to rebel against Ali and was removed from his position. 'You disobeyed me at the beginning [to stop fighting and to accept arbitration]', said Ali to his men. Now on selecting Abu Musa Al-Ashari he pleaded, 'so, do not disobey me now. I do not see that you should appoint Abu Musa Al-Ashari to arbitrate. He is too feeble minded' (Momen, 1985:25). For the collaborators the arbitration and election of Al-Ashari was a small victory and an opportunity to display gains in contest between the instigators and the victim. Ali had reached the end of his journey as a respected caliph.

The scapegoat mechanism is not a directly observable phenomenon. The disintegration of Ali's army cannot be put down to any real reason; there were collaborators but also the men were tired of fighting, were fatigued and wanted to return home. Their revolt engaged the scapegoat mechanism without them noticing it. 'Those who have recourse to scapegoats are not aware of it' (Girard, 1987a:70). The amicable negotiation with Mu'awiyah resulted in the 'undeserved suffering and downfall' of the victim.

The army, representative of the community, joined in the dismantling of Ali's policies they considered their actions as 'divine work'. Their contribution strengthened the 'groups harmony and applied a sovereign remedy to the community's wounds'. The victim is responsible that even the 'most disinherited' in the community are now participating in a social activity of negotiation, taking 'great comfort in the misfortune of the scapegoat'. The negotiations showed how the scapegoat mechanism strengthened the will of the persecutors. By ignoring Ali's protests they silenced their victim preventing him from revealing the truth (Girard, 1977b:929). It was not Ali that chose to become the scapegoat. It happened against his will and 'no one decided because no one controlled the mechanism'. The heaviest loss of Muslim lives, in history, occurred in Siffin. There in 37AH between the two parties, it was decided to finalise agreements to ascertain their rewards (Ahmed, 1979:76). Ali warned that arbitration would favour Mu'awiyah but his army refused to listen. Defeated, Ali along with his army returned to Kufa.

Angry at being duped by Mu'awiyah envoys, segments of Ali's army rebelled refusing to enter the city. Blaming Ali for the turn of events they claimed that 'only Allah has authority' and that 'we do not accept decisions of anyone but Allah'. Refusing to admit their role in the negotiations they transferred blame for the outcome on Ali. They believed that Ali had a choice in negotiating the outcome. As with persecutors they consider the scapegoat to have a choice in decision-making. They perceive that the 'scapegoat can change his direction because he is an actor rather than a puppet' and that he controls the unfolding scenario. The scapegoat mechanism differentiated Ali as the culprit among all his 'mimetic doubles'. The scapegoat mechanism differentiated Ali and Mu'awiyah in terms of their arbitration. Ali was the

guilty party who entered into the arbitration because in the language of the persecutors' all responsibility must be placed on the victim.

Allegations were made that accepting arbitration was opposed to the spirit of Islam, yet they did not voice these concerns when they forced Ali into negotiation. They wanted to be 'freed of all responsibility' for their unhappy condition but this crisis of 'physical disorder' needed to stripped of violence and deflected onto Ali. All the characters, with their diverse interests and ambitions, 'do their utmost to assist in the process' (Girard, 1977a:78).

Ali, however, refused to renege on the agreement and angrily retorted, 'woe be to you! Do you want me to break my word after giving consent and my pledge?' The crowd seemed oblivious to anything Ali said; to them he had been silenced. Ali was disconnected from his army and his community and the 'full burden of guilt' finally settled on him. His strongest support base in Kufa collapsed, his army joined forces that had revolted against the arbitration that they themselves had chosen. These remaining supporters were accused of polytheism and heresy. The persecutors determined that shedding their blood was not a violation of Islamic instructions but an expectation in preserving the faith. Chaos reigned with 'no connecting thread, however tenuous, linking the conflicts, antagonisms and obsessions that beset each individual'. Ali had to deal with the original group of rioters, dwindling support, the uprising in Al-Asham, the desertion of his army and now the discord at Kufa. When the arbitratration talks failed Ali wanted to regroup in order to undertake a second attack against Mu'awiyah. However, most of his troops had abandoned him and were attacking his administrators. While Ali was preoccupied with Mu'awiyah and his troops, the community elected a new leader, Shith bin Rabi to lead the prayers.

The majority of families in Kufa had lost someone at Siffin and 'there were bitter laments for these losses'. The arbitration had left Ali empty handed unable to redistribute any spoils, which further infuriated people (Ahmed, 1979:78-80; Nasr, 1991:148). When the Bani Tamim was told of the decision, Urwa b. Uzina asked, 'do you appoint arbiters in the religion of God?' The dissidents shouted that judgement could only be to God (Nasr, 1991:149). 'We do not judge men' shouted Ali to his men after they had accepted the plea made by Mu'awiyah's men, 'the Qu'ran judges us.

This Qu'ran is only lines of writings between two covers. It does not speak. It is only men who speak it' (al-Mufid, 1977:201).

> At this very moment, when all seems lost, when the irrational
> runs amok amid an infinite diversity of opinions, the resolution
> of the dilemma is at hand. The whole community now hurls
> itself into the violent unanimity that is destined to liberate it.
> (Girard, 1977b:78)

Over ten thousand men deserted Ali's army. The group of people that had believed in him, made the greatest sacrifices for him, who had always believed that he was true and had even risked their lives in battle for him turned away from him. These same individuals rejected him and now were even willing to kill him. The intensity of the violence is such that it 'cannot burn itself out'. There are two truths with regard to the arbitration that had helped to accelerate the chaos in Kufa; that of the community and that of the victim. However, it is only the 'truth of the victim' that relays the knowledge of his innocence and the unfolding scene.

3.9. THE KHARIJITES (THOSE WHO WENT OUT)

In Kufa the number of disgruntled people increased due to what many perceived to be the inappropriate actions of Ali. These groups were known as the Kharijites. They objected to the arbitration and agreements that were negotiated at the Battle of Siffin, which many interpreted as Ali's choice. The Kharijites maintained that 'any man who gives allegiance to another without consulting the Muslims will both be killed' (Crone, 1998:57). Tired of the corruption and greed created by the ineffectiveness of the caliphs, populations in a manner self-destructed in a desperate bid to reclaim control and access to their religion. They dealt an enormous blow to the position of caliph and the religion.

The Kharijites deserted Kufa and settled in Nahrawan turning their backs on Ali. They demanded that Islam should be central to everyone without the need for the guidance of the caliphs (Friedlaender, 1907:31). Rebellion against tyrannical rulers was

central to their belief and they condemned those who committed capital sins to 'suffer eternal punishment in hell'. As once supporters of Ali, their rejection of him further emphasised the 'undifferentiated' aspect of society. Their interpretation of equality went further than Ali's with a complete rejection of hierarchy and the rule of law (Lewis, 1970:217). The Kharijites helped to define much of the scapegoat mechanism seeing other groups as illegitimate usurpers of power unlike themselves whom they believed were defending Islam. Perceiving themselves above the religio-social establishment Ali became the repository of all the community's ills. They portrayed an extreme perspective within the community with respect to the accusations levelled against Ali and his dwindling support where 'the slightest hint, the most groundless accusation, can circulate with vertiginous speed' and transformed into irrefutable proof (Girard, 1987b:79).

The caliph always led the prayers and for many disgruntled groups he dominated and controlled every aspect of their lives. The Kharijites, who now considered representative of the community; they disregarded the caliph because they now were lending God a hand. They exaggerated their responsibility as 'persecutors' in their environment. The response of the residents at Kufa was representative of much of the Islamic state. They believed that the caliphate did little to promote Islamic ideals since the caliphs had turned political authority into their 'private property'.

Because Ali's government experienced an internal collapse, the Kharijites undermined this security. Influential people such as the companions, envoys and mediators were murdered ruthlessly. Meanwhile Ali, having amassed a depleted army at Al-Anbar for the second confrontation with Mu'awiyah was forced to return to Kufa to quell the social unrest. Again Ali attempted negotiation to prevent shedding Muslim blood. However, the concept of the 'inviolability of Muslim blood' seemed to have no real importance to anyone other than Ali. When Ali's envoys asked who had killed his supporters in Kufa, where even a pregnant woman had her stomach ripped open, the crowd responded that 'we all killed them' (Ahmed, 1979:87).

The Kharijites disagreed with political appointments. Their method of negotiation utilised consensus within the community as a requirement for political leadership. The Kharijites questioned why Ali should be obeyed as a figure of authority when the community was entitled to disagree with him? They considered any arbitration to be a

sin because it cast doubt on the validity of issues where God was the decision maker. The Kharijites represented society without a judicial system or any proper government. They regarded Ali 'as a real threat' that must be dealt with 'any means available' (Girard, 1987a:115).

It was believed that the Kharijites were to blame for Ali's death but to believe this would be to disregard that Ali was a scapegoat. He was an 'indirect victim' of internal tensions brought about by the 'shortcomings' of several caliphs such as the vast financial disparities between groups and the immigration of people into the cities. Even though Ali was an insider, an Arab and the closest person to Muhammed the threat transformed him into an outsider while he was at the centre of power. This position 'served to isolate him from his fellow men, to render him casteless'. The Kharijites exemplified the raging conflicts but appeared as a 'true community' united in their hatred of one, their violence converging on an 'isolated and unique figure' (Girard, 1977a:79).

They attacked Ali's army but were quickly surrounded and brought under his banner ending the Battle of Nahrawan (Momen, 1985:25). There were few Kharijite survivors but they continued to preach lawlessness and anarchy. They continued to announce that 'the imam is not a legal duty' so that when Ali 'alone' accepted arbitration, he flouted God's authority (Crone, 1998:60). After this defeat, Ali wanted to march to Syria but his army, tired and disillusioned, was no longer interested in pursuing his conflict with Mu'awiyah. There was no desire to fight because they couldn't secure booty. There wasn't much to gain from going to war other than sustaining injuries and death. Ali's 'eloquence fell on deaf ears', he no longer had an audience interesting in his 'truth' (Ahmed, 1979:88).

Accused of transgressing Qur'anic injunction, the Kharijites believed it was their 'moral right' to fight such an unrighteous person. Whatever sin Ali was accused of committing in accepting arbitration it was only the Kharijites who were of this view. Ali's preoccupation with doing the right thing, particularly moral and religious issues, deprived him of the flexibility required in a politician (Dorraj, 1990:57). Yet this steadfast behaviour of the victim is very important because Ali possessed the 'key of knowledge' the truth of the innocence of the victim (Girard, 1986:23).

In analyzing the scapegoat mechanism the Kharijites represent an important aspect of the crowd. Violence naturally existed in most societies 'but not to such an extent that the society itself is threatened with extinction'. The Kharijites represented this explosive aspect and their 'chaos' and 'anarchic lifestyle' brought the crisis to a climax. Their violence threatened to involve the whole social body and the 'consequences' could prove 'fatal to any society of modest size' (Girard, 1987a:99-100).

The Kharijites supported martyrdom calling themselves *shurat* (vendors) giving their earthly lives for the benefits of Paradise. They deliberately sought martyrdom, *talab al-shahadat*, for their struggle against corruption and for continued justice and purity in the Muslim community. 'Martyrdom was not merely an inconvenient by-product of struggle for which the martyr needed to be compensated, but a goal worth pursuing in its own right' (Brown, 2003:432). Rather, the essence of humanity was the realizations of connecting with God through 'lack' so that believers understood that man must recognize God not simply amass material possessions. The Kharijites maintained that any Muslim could prepare himself for martyrdom. The Kharijites and Ali both emphasized the essential aspect of socio-political reality. However, there was 'too much contact between the victim and those he represented'. Violence overflowed its channels and 'impure violence began to mingle with sacred violence' (Girard, 1987a:101).

The old mythological drama presented Ali as a polluted object whose 'living presence' contaminated everything he came into contact with. The Kharijites as persecutors are 'very good' because they are naïve and 'unaware of what they are doing' (Girard, 1986:65). At different stages, various elements enacted their grievances toward the victim while others took a longer period to realize that the victim was responsible. As a collective unit they all conceded that Ali was the cause of all the problems in the Islamic state. No additional 'proof' was required because the crimes he was accused of are enough to magnify his 'evil' (Girard, 1987c:83). At the core, scapegoat myths are all the same.

3.10. THE END OF ALI'S CALIPHATE

With an army refusing to follow his orders, Ali had little choice but to return to Kufa. Mu'awiyah recruited a large army and sent men to all the provinces that were under Ali's caliphate. He was encouraged that the Iraqis were flouting Ali's orders. Further weakening Ali's power, he attacked strategic towns creating instability and insecurity. Ali's fall has nothing to do with any heinous sin but it is the outcome of the tragic encounter in which he is ultimately defeated. The 'truth' will be revealed in either his death or in exile. The accusations leveled at Ali signified the abolishment of differences that ultimately transformed him into a 'monster'. Deep within this individual 'as within the religious and cultural system' something was hidden and denied (Girard, 1987a:165).

Responding to his army's decision to accept Muawiyah's negotiation, Ali stated, 'you found it irksome to accept my advice and disobeyed me until a series of attacks was mounted against you'. Mu'awiyah's attacks had left 'many men and women slain. I have come to know that every one of them entered upon were Muslim women and the women under protection of Islam' (Nasr, 1991:165). Ali informed his men that Mu'awiyah had duped them; a real chance at negotiation never existed. Yet, having turned Ali's men against him, Mu'awiyah had caused them to dispute Ali's assertions.

With a caliphate in open revolt Ali still attempted negotiation with groups that were open hostile to him. He made political mistakes in administering the state; he dismissed Qais, the governor of Egypt, and replaced him with an inexperienced Muhammed Abu Bakr. Soon thereafter, he dismissed Muhammed and replaced him with Malik bin Ushtar who was eventually poisoned. Muhammed was returned as the governor but Ali was unable to offer him any military assistance. His armies and supporters deserted him en-masse making it easier for Mu'awiyah to attack the provinces. Unrest flared up everywhere and Muawiyah' armies attacked and usurped Egypt, the province that served as the economic and political support to Ali. Mu'awiyah also captured the provinces of Persia and Kirman; provinces that no longer paid taxes to the caliphate (Nasr, 1991:93).

Leading of prayers, military commands and the right to lead the Hajj pilgrimage were all symbols of the Islamic state. They were a leading aspect of the caliph's authority. The pilgrims themselves no longer respected Ali and were reluctant to be led in pilgrimage by him. No longer the respected caliph, Ali sent a deputy to lead the Hajj

but so did Mu'awiyah, openly challenging and disregarding Ali's political authority. To prevent a violent confrontation between confused pilgrims, Shaiba, the grandson of Talha instead led the Hajj. (Nasr, 1991:94). 'I looked' said Ali, 'and found that there is no supporter for me except my family (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:124).

Ali's excessive popularity created unrealistic expectations within the community. These led to 'a temporary form of a greater crisis' in the caliphate. With no solution to the crisis it became pertinent 'for one man to perish and for the nation to survive'. This would serve as a last resort to avoid greater self-destructive violence. Ali must die because he 'increases the imminent danger by refusing to keep quiet' (Girard, 1986:112-113).

Ali was killed in a mosque during the month of Ramadaan. Three men had agreed to murder him but Shabib b. Bajura and Wardan b. Mujalid failed to strike Ali, but ibn Muljam using a poisoned sword succeeded. On hearing of Ali's attack Shabib was killed by his paternal cousin in what appeared to be closure between family members ind Wardan escaped into the crowd becoming one with them. While the believers slept ibn Muljam murdered Ali in the Mosque of Kufa. Ali had entered the mosque to wake the men for the dawn prayers.

To expand on Girard's stereotypes of the scapegoat mechanism it is important to analyse the scenario. The scene was filled with metaphorical significance. The 'sleeping Muslims' represented the 'undifferentiated' crowd seeking direction. Unaware of their actions and without purpose, it was from amongst this group that the murderer appeared. As has already been discussed the Kharijites came from within the community, specifically from Kufa that was Ali's political stronghold. They had been identified as violent and anarchic. Yet while the group lay sleeping it was impossible to determine who the Kharijites were. As Ali had remarked, 'the faces are indiscernible'. Unable to identify individuals Ali could not identify the threat. It is a Kharijite, ibn Muljam, pretending to be asleep, who struck Ali on the head.

Everything is explicit because Ali's death clearly indicates the 'innocence of the victim' and the injustice of the condemnation and the causelessness of the hatred' of which he is the object (Girard, 1986:117). To his sons he said before dying, '…certainly I do not want you to wade through the blood of Muslims' (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:92). Girard argues that the victim cannot seek vengeance and Ali's words echo

this sentiment. Once the emotional crowd captured ibn Muljam, Umm Kulthuum, the daughter of Ali, asks why he has hurt the commander of the faithful. Their dialogue is as follows:

> Umm Kulthuum: Enemy of God, you have killed the Commander
> of the Faithful!
> Ibn Muljam: I have killed only your father
> Umm Kulthuum: Enemy of God. I hope that there is no danger
> for Him.
> Ibn Muljam: I think you are only crying for Ali. If I had been divided
> among the people of the land, I should have destroyed them. (al-Muljam, 1977:13)

Ibn Muljam's response that 'I have killed only your father' is pertinent to the entire murder. He did not claim to have destroyed Ali the Commander of the Faithful but just Ali, the ordinary man. 'The myth does not burst apart in his hands and show its inner workings' but ibn Muljam revealed the randomness of the victim (Girard, 1986:122). Ibn Muljam did not claim that he killed the 'Imam' or 'Ali, brother and cousin of the Prophet' or 'the caliph' instead he simply offered that he killed a father, 'your father' as easily as it could have been 'my father' or 'his father'. Ibn Muljam did not consider himself an enemy of God nor did he claim to have murdered the 'Commander of the Faithful'. It was Ali's daughter who repeated that he was an 'enemy of God'. Did she speak on her father's behalf? Did she establish how God could have let this happen to Ali? The tragedy 'seemed to move in conflicting directions indicative of its internal struggle' because Umm Kulthuum raised the issue of God elevating Ali's position (Girard, 1986:123).

Ibn Muljam knew that in killing Ali, he had saved the community. He continued, 'I think you are only crying for Ali' to show that she mourned a specific person without appreciating the sacrifice Ali had made. There was a greater reason for his death than simply being a murdered individual. Ibn Muljam informed Umm Kulthuum that if he had been in Ali's position being ' divided among the people' he would have 'destroyed them' instead Ali sought negotiation. If Ali had reacted violently toward the community, then he would not have been a victim. Ibn Muljam exposed the divisions

within the community and that Ali's death united them. The dialogue unveiled the scapegoat mechanism; ibn Muljam revealed that if Ali wanted to save himself, he should have destroyed the community. Instead he saved the community and he was destroyed.

Pointing to his head and beard Ali asked in general, 'What prevents the most wretched person of the community dyeing this red with blood from above it?' (al-Mufid, 1977:8). What prevented ibn Muljam from simply killing him when they first met? The answer lay in a particular scenario that needed to be set before such a murder could take place. The murder need not have been performed by the most 'wretched individual'. The Kharijites had severe bruising on their foreheads from prostration. They are often referred to as maniacal and eccentric, so how was it possible for ibn Muljam to remain undetected in a room of Ali's followers? 'I want his friendship and he wants my death'. If he had been such a wretched individual then why did Ali seek his friendship?

The crowd mourned Ali's death and his son ordered that ibn Muljam be beheaded and his corpse burned. That Ali survived momentarily could have 'accelerated the crisis rather than bring it to a conclusion' because ibn Muljam had ruined the sacrifice. The victim should not have lingered (Girard, 1991:192). Ibn Muljam's ambitions for murder appeared loftier than others and possibly the 'sincerest'. It was alleged that ibn Muljam agreed to murder Ali in order to marry a woman named Qattan and this was her dowry demand. However in applying the scapegoat theory such a development would be construed as a deterrent from the 'true' reasons for Ali's death. The logical progression of the theoretical framework calls into question why a single individual, a woman at that, would seek the death of a caliph. Girard's theory suggests that this aspect of Ali's enemies is very significant in the scapegoat mechanism. Girard related that a beautiful woman could influence the community as Salome had when she requested the head of John the Baptist. What we are confronted with is the seducer of the 'community' and according to the theoretical framework the mythmakers are attempting to conceal the behavior of the community. Arguments have been put forward that Ali killed her male relatives, either father and brother, while others have claimed that it was her uncle and husband, in battle.

Regardless, the emphasis is that she determined to seek vengeance against Ali by requesting his head. If blame has to be apportioned, then according to the scapegoat mechanism it should go to an individual whose orientation is only peripheral, such as a woman. Within the rationale of the scapegoat mechanism, Qattan's dowry serves to personalize the killing of Ali thereby drawing attention away from the community.

The 'crowd reacted collectively' and killed ibn Muljam preventing him from revealing the scapegoat mechanism. When the crowd murdered him, it was a 'grotesque parody' of what ibn Muljam himself had done and they became a mirror for him to contemplate the truth of his actions (Girard, 1991:194). Having failed to perform a successful sacrifice, his corpse was given to a woman to dispose of. The crowd despised ibn Muljam but he should be interpreted as a 'generous man'. He took the responsibility for the collective violence onto himself so that the community could maintain their innocence. They could continue to deny knowledge of the murder and conceal their roles.

3.11. AN OMINOUS WARNING

Ali had sensed the danger in going to the mosque that fateful morning. He said to his daughter when she asked, 'What has kept you awake?' he responded, 'I will be killed if I go out in the morning'. Umm Kulthuum suggested instead, 'Tell Ja'da to pray with the people' and Ali had initially agreed with her (al-Mufid, 1977:9). He then told her of a dream in which the Prophet had said to him, 'O Ali, do not be concerned, you have accomplished what you had to' and 'come to us, for what we have is better for you'. Ali knew he was about to die but he was also assured that he had done the right thing in his lifetime. It took only a few words from the Prophet to change Ali's mind. The more he rose above other men 'the more autonomous he subjectively felt the less he was in reality' and he ultimately sealed his fate (Girard, 1991:197).

When he reached the courtyard of his house by way of the mosque, 'the geese met him and hooted in his face'. The animals tried to prevent him from entering the mosque. Ali was caught in the 'crisis of Degree' because he no longer thought logically. Ali was the 'most virtuous man then living on this earth, the most worshipful, the most selfless, the most learned and the most God-conscious, yet he was forsaken by all'

(Nadwi, 1991:167). Focusing on the 'perfect rule' he learnt of under the guardianship of Muhammed he failed to realize that the society had changed and grown. The community had expanded beyond clans and included diverse cultural groups with their own social rules and traditional obligations. Fast becoming an empire, the rules that befitted a small community no longer applied to administering vast areas and an increasing population. Ali lacked technical and administrative abilities to govern an ever-expanding empire. Cultural issues, lack of resources, the entitlement of individuals, the cultural and economic bias of political authority all led to the instability within the society.

> Rather than blame themselves, people inevitably blame
> either society as a whole, which costs them nothing, or
> other people who seem particularly harmful for easily
> identifiable reasons. (Girard,1986:14)

Dichotomy is central to the structure of myth. If the victim was innocent of any crime then the accusers are guilty of everything. If Ali is virtuous and honest, then the accusers are immoral and deceivers. Ali's appointment as caliph played out as a trial as a 'parody of justice containing at least an implicit indictment of the judges' (Schweiker, 1996:9). Ali discovered that it was easy to speak of ideals but quite another attempting to implement them. When a Sunni authority Muhammed ibn Idris al-Shafi'i was asked to speak of Ali he said, 'What should be said of him when his virtues are concealed by his friends because they are afraid, and by his foes because of jealousy?' (Shahabi, 1988:19).

However, evidence of the scapegoat mechanism was visible. The murder scene is important. Ali was murdered in the courtyard of the mosque; it was quiet, restful, there were people sleeping on the ground. A new day was dawning and Ali was about to announce the new day but he was struck before he could. The 'elements' within the scene suggest that a new establishment is about to appear – the creation of a new monarchy. In the courtyard the caliph walked tall amongst the sleeping followers armed with his knowledge and piety. He stood above them yet he treated them as equals but the sleepers do not acknowledge him or warn him. They did not reveal the presence of a

murderer because it could have been anyone. The scene revealed perfection. The men in the mosque and courtyard are lying down as if to worship and Ali's position is to accept these praises. It was a moment in contrast to the chaos of the past five years; here was absolute peace nothing stirred as the world held its breath. Here Ali was the official protector of the caliphate and the absolute ruler. It was the 'pure heart' of ibn Muljam who alone transformed the murder of Ali into the 'serene beauty of genuine sacrifice'.

Ibn Muljam was no one special, one only encounters him twice in Al-Mufid's *Kitab Al-Irshad*, the first when he swears allegiance and the second when he murders Ali; he appears to be a later addition to the story tacked on to give the murderer an identity and to clear the community of any wrongdoing. His presence served, as a metaphor for the community initially so happy and excited to elect Ali and in the end equally happy to see him depart. Could ibn Muljam be the community's fabrication? His appearance was one of extremes; first he wanted to pledge allegiance doing so three times before Ali relented. Then he reappeared to conspire to murder Ali and is torn to shreds by the crowd. What can be assessed of the Kharijites, was that ibn Muljam was pure of heart in his intention to murder Ali. Within this 'group' such an act signified solidarity not only with God but also with the community. This would not have been evident if Mu'awiyah had murdered Ali. That action would have been contaminated with mimetic rivalry and violence would have escalated.

> Time has made me laugh after it had made me weep. There
> is no deceit which the people despaired of. By God, through
> my restraint and my dignity they tried to act in a false way
> with regard to the nature of God. How very far that is from
> me. If the trials of misfortune are taken from us, I would
> make them responsible for the truth in its purity. (al-Mufid, 1977:217)

What Ali revealed to us in this text is the generative violence. Here Ali revealed aspects of the victimage mechanism. The community considered their actions righteous but Ali disputed that. Ali admitted that he epitomized the truth. The community

demanded his punishment to end their 'misfortune' because he was essential to the system's functioning.

While Girard argues that it is only the Bible gave the victim a voice, it should be considered that Ali also was given the voice to denounce the actions of the community (Girard, 1987b:152). Shi'ite Islam acknowledges the voice of the victim. Yet Ali did not seek vengeance against the community and his rivals. He interpreted the community as being deluded in their morality. They misinterpreted Ali's gestures, 'my restraint and dignity' as an opportunity to hold him accountable for their chaos. Ali's pleas encourage us to champion the 'poor' and 'unfortunate' scapegoat, by listening to him.

In recognizing the community's ignorance Ali knew that his knowledge enabled him to 'laugh' but as the victim to 'weep' in confusion. The community did not want the truth; they wanted to 'deceive' themselves to avoid confronting their actions. They mistakenly believed that they knew the 'true God' but Ali rebuffed them, as 'justice does not hold sway in the world'. God attempted to save Ali by showing men that they were 'dedicating themselves to scandal by their desires that are crisscrossed and thwarted by imitation' (Girard, 1987b:158). Like Girard's Jesus, Ali asked men 'to imitate him', to 'seek' the glory that can only come from God's love and not that which 'comes from men'. Ali revealed the role of the scapegoat mechanism 'in their own cultural system' concealing nothing from the community yet unable to convince them.

CHAPTER FOUR: SANCTIFYING THE VICTIM

An essential dimension of myth is the sacred. In myth, as opposed to the persecution text, the victim is always considered divine. The victim, through his superhuman powers, changes the course of the collective violence into peace. In the process of reconciling the community, the victim is made sacred. The persecution is transformed into a point of religious departure, as the persecutors conceal their involvement in the murder. The myth reveals the mark of the victim who eventually develops a cult following. After sowing disorder, Ali became the founding 'Imam' of Shi'ism.

Ali communicated with the animals as well as the demons of the underworld and the angels in heaven. He even controlled the path of the sun. Heaven and earth communicated and Ali, as a representative of God moved among men, revealing the lack of differentiation. The community failed to recognise the victim as a catalyst for the transition from the violence to tranquility. Possessing all the powers of the sacred and as an all-powerful benefactor, the victim has survived escaping death.

Girard argues that it is only Christianity that exposes the scapegoat mechanism. In revealing the mechanism, the victim, Jesus, was given a voice to protest his innocence. While Jesus acknowledged Satan as the *skandalon*, the mimetic process seen as a whole, Ali argued that materialism took on a similar role. Materialism brought jealousy and envy. As a catalyst, it produced the desire that turned to rivalry. Men killed in order to lie to others and to themselves, but the victim revealed these lies. For this reason Jesus and Ali both rejected the tomb as it concealed the corpse hiding the murder.

In the Gospels this mechanism is revealed in the 'lamb of God'. Yet in Shi'ism, the scapegoat mechanism is revealed in the 'Imam'. The Imam is God's representative on earth, sent to guide mankind. Ali, as the Imam, represented infallibility and sinless, and therefore remained innocent and truthful. Ali, like Jesus, embraced mimetic desire, particularly in the love of God. So Christ was not the only one who rose above the violence to embrace love. Ali argued that imitating love would spread to include all people.

4.1. ESTABLISHING THE MYTHOLOGY OF ALI'S DEATH.

The process of collective violence is a version of scapegoating (Girard, 1991:206). The myth was created to remember the violence but in the process the scapegoat mechanism was distorted. Ali was the scapegoat, responsible for the decay of the political establishment, party to Uthman's murder and the caliph, a dictator albeit benevolent. Therefore he was a real culprit. Ali could not fail to be the scapegoat, since everyone wanted him to be responsible for the crisis of Degree. This crisis is the responsibility of all citizens, or of none at all, since its roots go far back preceding the caliphs, even before Islam. It was not possible for a single individual to be responsible for this crisis no matter how powerful he was. But killing this individual will purify the community. In order 'to be genuinely foundational', Ali's murder must be the 'origin and model of a sacrificial cult'. While Ali became part of a new monarchy, 'as in all sacred monarchies, the founding victim was simultaneously dead and alive' (Girard, 1991:221).

Ali was murdered because the community 'must repeat some foundational violence with substitute victims'. While the Islamic state had no tradition of human sacrifice the need to murder or expel someone from the community was a repeat of this foundational violence. While it was acknowledged that Ali was sacrificed, it was never related that it was a collective method of execution. The system of the righteous caliphs was dead so it did not matter if the people followed Mu'awiyah or any other potential rivals. Girard argued that 'given the choice, they prefer the best rabble-rouser' and Mu'awiyah excelled at creating tension. If he were absent, 'they would follow just about anyone…even the most insignificant characters' (Girard, 1991:195). Uthman's murder served as the model, the desire to avenge him was a mimesis of the conspiracy.

The conspiracy against Ali was 'an unusual enterprise that required a rather lengthy genesis' but once Uthman's bloodstained shirt appeared and Ali, as the new caliph is asked to avenge his death, then conspiracies sprout everywhere. These conspiracies were followed by violence that appeared sudden and haphazard. The crisis turned not only the lower classes into a mob but the elites as well, via the conspiracy, or via their decreasing respect of Ali. At Kufa, total violence was unleashed as the 'point of no

return was reached'. No hope remained and then suddenly peace returned. There is a 'rebirth of Degree; it concludes the mimetic crisis itself' (Girard, 1991:200).

With the scapegoat eliminated, 'the people find themselves without enemies and, lacking fuel, the spirit of vengeance becomes extinguished'. They determine that the conflict and its sudden resolution had the same cause, namely the victim. The violence of the crisis became 'a mystery that dwelled inside the sacred itself, the mystery of pure love' between God and Ali. Ali's love was free from hatred. When Ali died, he became one in death with God so people could be united around him. He became a transcendental being who rewarded and punished. When Ali was caliph, he wanted to stop nepotism in the political establishment but in death he became part of a new monarchy. Ironically, promotion through lineage was something he had tried to prevent. Yet Ali had another role, he was sacrificed to the Ummayad dynasty. Ali's death brought an end to the Crisis of Degree, what followed was the administrative and bureaucratic leadership of Mu'awiyah and the creation of the Ummayad Dynasty. The age of the 'righteous caliphs' of Islam was over. The companions who had assisted the Prophet in proselytizing the community had passed on. Ali's death marked the end of the elected religious caliphs. The Ummayads advanced a dynasty creating a foundation that changed the religio-political establishment.

Before we criticize the great hero, we need to demystify the myth. The myth is the remembrance of the crisis of Degree but it is 'systematically distorted by the scapegoat effect'. Therefore, myth includes miracles and divine intervention. The myth related that a victim took responsibility for the crisis absolving the community of involvement. In the Shi'ite tradition, Ali rejected this pattern of persecution and argued that the victim was innocent.

However, the community denied responsibility and allowed the myth to take hold. Rather than acknowledge their active role in his death the 'mythmakers' assumed that Ali had not been 'murdered' but that he was alive. These mythmakers are not naïve and their texts should be interpreted as persecution texts. Historical evidence 'plays no more than a secondary role in deciphering representations of persecution'. We attempt to place the text in a 'framework of knowledge' but we must still conclude that these texts reflect 'a phenomenon of real persecution'. The mythmakers maintained that Ali manipulated the entire crisis creating a new religious movement. Ali's death was

interpreted as a gift to his followers where he is the 'founding ancestor' of his community (Girard, 1987c:92).

The community never witnessed Ali as victim because he was a 'passive instrument' of their own metamorphosis. For the mythmakers the victim is not dead even though he was guilty of 'crimes'. He was transformed into an 'all-powerful benefactor'. Every cultural decision had a sacrificial character that referred back to an unrevealed effect of the scapegoat. Ali's tragedy encompassed the two types of text that relate to the scapegoat. One set of texts does not acknowledge Ali as a scapegoat while the second reveals explicitly that there is a victim. The community knew that 'everything about him marked him as an outlet for the annoyance and irritation of his fellow citizens' (Girard, 1986:29). However, it is Ali who revealed himself as the scapegoat 'no one has ever suffered from his people as I have'. The victim informs us that he exemplified suffering. He suffered for everyone, received condemnation and punishment from all. He was therefore a scapegoat *in* and *for* the text. Ali predicted his death saying,

> Surely there is a strong shield of Allah over me. When my
> day would come it would get away from me and hand me
> over to death. At that time neither an arrow would go amiss
> nor a wound would heal up. (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:204)

Contemporary authors changed the interpretation of the tragedy reporting it as purely 'historical' removing its mythological aspects. The victim was reduced to theme, motif and superstition. Ali's death was rationalized to promote a historical Ali. There is a conscious effort to avoid acknowledging the scapegoat mechanism particularly the involvement of the community. There is reluctance from modern scholars in acknowledging the stereotypes of persecution because they believe that Ali was not 'a victim'. Instead Ali's death is redressed as a historical event that simply occurred and does not warrant further investigation. Contributions that recognize Ali as a target explaining the victim mechanism in the development of the Shi'ite tradition are dismissed as populist. The impetus of dialogue and monologue is removed from historical interpretations. The 'emotions' highlighted mimetic desire and rivalry but to

remove was a result of 'real naïveté' buried under the 'extremes of skepticism'. This naïveté is incapable of identifying the stereotypes of persecution (Girard, 1977a:72) .

In removing the dialogues and the emotions, scholars portrayed the assassination as a serious political text. Their 'real naïveté' relegated the mechanics of the myth to an era of superstitions and magic. They misunderstood how Ali became the founder of the Shi'ite faith. They could not understand how he came to be deified. They eliminated the scapegoat mechanism and relied instead on 'knowledge' to validate his 'supernatural' status. The scholars are silent on the victimage mechanism because they regard Ali's success as part of a clan mentality where association represented success. Ali's death was based on a real persecution so it should be accepted as the origin of all historical texts because the stereotypes of persecution are visible. Many authors do not reflect on their understanding of the 'representations of persecutions' because it is not explicit (Girard, 1986:28).

> The victim is real, certainly, but as it is represented in the myth.
> The representation is determined by the violent reconciliation
> and the resulting sacralisation. The victim is thus represented
> with all the attributes and qualities of the sacred. Fundamentally
> then the victim does not belong to the community; it is the
> community that belongs to the victim. (Girard, 1987a:111)

Myth does not bear an 'obvious' resemblance to the persecution texts and often the beginning of myth can be reduced to a single aspect like 'heaven and earth communicating' like Ali as the representative of God. Ali is a divine individual, free of sin. He is central to the religious culture and responsible for its preservation. This is the role of the scapegoat, responsible for the mythology and the religion that develops around him. Scholars are unable to explain how Ali's support grew into a religion by itself, considering that the 'logical historical' patterns they utilized do not provide adequate answers to the question. Not understanding the scapegoat mechanism left the Shi'ite faith vulnerable to attack and ridicule. How would one explain how an individual with little support after the Prophet's death eventually got elected to the caliphate? Another factor is that Ali's popularity should have plummeted after his death

if he was guilty of the accusations leveled against him. He would be a pariah in Islamic society, condemned by all.

The myth around Ali needs to be explored because there are no myths and cultures surrounding the other caliphs. Something must have happened that made Ali's situation unique. The word muthos means 'to keep secret' so if a myth rose out of the death of Ali then there must be a secret. This secret is the collective involvement of the community as a collective murdered an innocent victim. Even his supporters turned against him. What is skirted over in the older texts and simply ignored in the contemporary texts is that the Kharijites were once part of his 'shiat', staunch followers that Ali moved his caliphate to Kufa to be near them. Although some historical accounts suggest that many in the community, especially those in Kufa and Medina, sided with Ali, I would argue that the death of ibn Muljam illustrates a tendency in scapegoating to claim innocence and ignorance. It is also a method used to transfer blame. Some accounts suggest that ibn Muljam was tortured to death and his body burnt against Ali's orders that he should not be tortured. However, others, such as Madelung, argue that ibn Muljam was killed in accordance with Ali's wishes. It should be noted that Ali did not possess many supporters and the scapegoat mechanism acknowledges that while a victim may have minimal supporters they will not interfere in the victimage mechanism.

> Ali was assassinated at a time when his fortunes after the lengthy
> crisis following Siffin, the failed arbitration and al-Nahrawan,
> seemed on the ascendant. The mood in Kufa and Basra has
> changed in his favour…the Kufans and Basrans were now ready
> to fight the Syrians…for the glory of Ali…Ali's rule, to be sure,
> had not gained popularity in Kufa during his lifetime. The
> loyalist following that he had built up during the final years of
> his reign, consisting of men convinced that he was the best of
> Muslims after the Prophet and the only one entitled to rule them,
> remained a small minority…In the memory of later generations
> Ali became the ideal Commander of the Faithful…they were
> Now prepared to forget the harsh edges of his rule and his at times

> grave errors of judgement, which had divided his followers and
> rather blamed their ancestors for failing to support him
> unconditionally.
>
> <div align="right">(Madelung, 1997:309-310)</div>

When Ali's followers abandoned him, they also denied his knowledge and authority. Yet scholars claim that Ali sanctioned the practice of *taqiyya* – to falsely deny their faith and align with the masses. This meant that everyone in the community agreed 'on the selection of the guilty individual' (Girard, 1977a:84).

The mythology and its 'secret' are the birth of the religion and bind the followers back to the moment of its origins. This was the moment when they collectively decided that Ali must die. Total destruction of the community needed to be 'diverted' and 'concealed' by means of the surrogate victim. As soon as Ali is murdered there is an outpouring of grief. People lamented his death, they cursed the 'single murderer' ibn Muljam as they concealed their participation. Ibn Muljam was a Kharijite, a group that opposed the Shi'ite belief that a leader was perfect. Instead the Kharijites considered their community as perfect because a leader was fallible and could cause a community to sin. They accused Ali of committing sin because he accepted arbitration at Siffin. But Ali responded that his hand had been forced and that this did not amount to sin. The Shi'ites have considered the Kharijites, who are diametrically opposed to their interpretation of divinely ordained leadership, as blasphemous. Since they physically separated themselves from the Muslim community (umma) due to their perceived perfection, they should be considered a peripheral group. Like Qattan, a Kharijite woman whom I referred to as a peripheral individual because she was a woman, I also consider ibn Muljam, a Kharijite man, to be a peripheral individual. The brutality of his death thus warrants inspection. Ali instructed that ibn Muljam should not be tortured yet the community decided his fate. They used extreme measures to torture, burn and mutilate his body. His burnt corpse torn to shreds by an 'angry' extended beyond ibn Muljam's actions. The community refused to acknowledge their participation in the death of the caliph. Instead the myth 'invented a death' that denied their participation (Girard, 1986:30).

> The modern mind still cannot bring itself to acknowledge the
> Basic principle behind that mechanism which, in a single
> decisive movement, curtails reciprocal violence and imposes
> structure on the community.(Girard, 1977a:312)

The myth of Ali suggests that he is alive in heaven. His death restored harmony and everyone believed that he was divine. After his death everyone spoke of how good Ali was, even Mu'awiyah was reduced to tears on hearing what a marvelous individual he was. In a single instance, collective violence wiped out 'all memory of the past'. It is the reason behind the concealment of the sacrificial crisis and why it is never revealed in myth. Respected once again, Ali's integrity and was celebrated in stories that told of his miraculous character. His character was embellished. It was claimed that he prayed without interruption even with an arrow stuck in his heel because he was 'connected' to God. Nothing of this earth could come between his relationships with God and the angels.

Only one stereotype is required to identify the scapegoat mechanism, the 'selection of a victim for persecution'. The myth overcompensates because it deals in extremes. Ali became a man connected to God, immortal and 'all knowledgeable'. He is immortal because men cannot confront 'the naked truth' of their own violence. They do not have a clear idea of it because 'the survival of all human societies of the past was dependent on this fundamental lack of understanding' (Girard, 1977a:82). The entire sequence of the crisis is divine and should not be 'demystified' (Girard, 1991:214). The community's guilt 'mystifies' the individual in the first place; downplaying their actions particularly their savagery against the victim. They were angry with ibn Muljam for getting blood on his hands, allowing Ali to linger before death and nearly nullifying the sacrifice so murdering him saved the sacrifice. Ali's death purified the followers – the Shiat Ali. It created a cultural symbol of unity and a divinely inspired message. Where there was once confusion, dissention and tension, Ali's sacrifice healed, united and reconciled the community.

> The month of Ramadan has come to you. It is the lord of the
> months and the beginning of the year. In it the mill of authority

>will change. (Next) year, you will make the pilgrimage in one
>
>rank (i.e. there will no Imam). The sign of that will be that I will
>
>not be among you. (al-Mufid, 1977:241)

The mythology successfully disguised the collective violence veiling the role of the community. Importantly it shielded his followers who no longer supported him as the population became 'undifferentiated'. These hidden developments revealed the intensity of the violence and the collaboration between various parties. The mythology was instrumental in establishing that Ali, now a great hero, could not be killed since he possessed knowledge of his death. It was related that if he wanted to prevent the social chaos and crisis then he could have. The purpose of myth is revealed in this development because it protected the community. They are innocent due to their inferiority so the responsibility ultimately lies with the hero.

4.2. THE NEED TO MAKE ALI THE IMAM

Ali's superior 'religious and moral position' made him unique amongst the companions. In the 'process of mythical formulation' it was possible to see that Ali was going to be a 'repository of social ills' (Girard, 1987a:77). From the moment he was elected to the caliphate it was fraught with all sorts of problems, so why nominate him in the first place? The answer lay in the pure spontaneity of the scapegoat mechanism because from its point of departure 'at which it is programmed from beginning to end, it ceases inevitably to be itself' (Girard, 1987b:90).

If we are to assume that Ali's death was simply a matter of politicking as historians claim, then why was he not killed when the Prophet died? The Prophet had secured Ali's position as caliph but Abu Bakr usurped the position. It was argued that he was too young for the position. If he were so young then why did the caliphs approach him for comment on legal and religious issues? After being sidelined for decades, Ali suddenly was popularly elected.

Ali was offered the caliphate several times but refused it, each time with less reluctance. Ali eventually succumbed to the position of authority. To murder such an individual was considered 'regicide, if not actual, then by anticipation'. We are

confronted with the murder of a pious, honest and knowledgeable individual yet he is dangerous. This collective method of execution is called 'sacrificial'.

The 'foundational victim' became a 'transcendental being' who 'rewards and sometimes punishes'. Regardless of the socio-political development of the society, such as the Islamic state, the need to regress to the sacrifice arose because the regular institutions were unable to stop the violence. Ali's death was an exceptional sacrifice 'made necessary by circumstances so critical that all political and legal recourse has become impossible' (Girard, 1991:211). Without an effective judicial system, an individual such as Ali who came to be regarded as dangerous 'will as a rule be killed not by a few people but by the entire community'. When his followers turned away from him they helped to eliminate the possibility that he could be avenged. By not intervening to save the victim, actively or passively, all members of the society contributed to his death. His death cannot trigger a chain reaction of vengeance and vendettas.

The death of Ali should be considered an 'exceptional sacrifice' necessitated by circumstances 'so critical that all political and legal recourse' was not possible (Girard, 1987b:77). Shi'ite communities consider themselves 'pure' because Ali 'approved of their devotion to God'. Such comments acknowledge the scapegoat mechanism and the 'naïveté' of the community. The 'healing properties of sacrifice is not rational' because the population cannot explain how their community was purged and purified.

The love for Ali, the messenger of the Divine Commandment, achieved a firm hold very quickly over the poorest and most deprived of the Arab nomads who had become Muslims (Massignon, 1982a:351). These were individuals who were unable to engage the rulers of the Caliphate and possibly not even the governors. As later converts this left many with an inability to understand and acknowledge the companions. Ali represented a link to the Prophet for all people and the desire to recognize people as equals appealed to these marginalized and impoverished groups. Ali is as innocent as Jesus and by 'revealing how the world functioned, he threatened its foundations'. Ali found himself in the position as a 'single victim resulting from a rigorous logic' (Girard, 1987b:157).

Ali revealed the scapegoat mechanism by refusing to be silenced saying 'By God, they have not blamed me correctly, nor have they done justice between me and

themselves' (al-Mufid, 1977:123). The incorporation of Talha and Zubayr into the mythology is central to understanding the role of mimesis. It is difficult to imagine that Talha and Zubayr would 'force' Ali to 'commit the crimes of which they accuse him' in order to make determine with absolute certainty that he had 'really committed them' and so give him 'back to the community' (Girard, 1987b:14).

If the believers reflected on their behaviour leading up to his death, then their guilt resulted in the development of an embellished divine character. What is revealed in Shi'ism is similar to, if not more so, the Bible where Girard claims that the pattern of violence is revealed. The Shi'ites claimed that the followers of Ali practiced *taqiyya* – denying their faith publicly - on Ali's request. Indirectly, the texts acknowledge that they had deserted him when he desperately needed them yet they refused to take responsibility for their actions.

Similar to Jesus in the Gospels, as a victim, Ali was fully revealed. This divine individual appeared in a social context as an innocent victim who died as a scapegoat. Rather than being simply viewed as a victim, Ali identified with victims exposing the victimage mechanism as a deception. Rather than respond in anger and resentment, Ali responded with non-violent love contradicting Girard's position that only the Bible reveals the love and forgiveness of the victim. While Girard argues that the Church has misunderstood the position of the victim by interpreting the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, so similarly have Shi'ite institutions interpreted Ali's death as martyrdom. The issue of 'martyrdom' revealed the community's awareness of their actions. As with Jesus, Ali knew he was being scapegoated and both were unable to persuade their respective communities in the moment of crisis to recognise this development. 'Beware that sins are like unruly horses on whom their riders have been placed and their reins have been let loose so that they would jump with them in Hell' illustrated the uncontrolled chaos (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:88).

Ali and Mu'awiyah's armies must be forgiven for their decisions, as thoughts of murder do not enter the soul spontaneously. Ali's tormentors held him responsible for the whole crisis of Degree even though the crisis couldn't be the responsibility of a single individual. Accidental and insignificant actions were exaggerated to portray the situation with completely unfounded negative significance. This was done simply to stigmatize and victimize an individual. Members of Mu'awiyah army, through the

manipulation of Mu'awiyah, recognized the superiority of the Qu'ran. They were led to believe that their violence was a 'divine force' that they could 'use for their own purposes' (Girard, 1977a:144).

While various forms of Ali's reverence exist, it was his death that formed the foundation of all Shi'ite groups. Ali highlighted the social chaos at the battle of Siffin,

> You have committed an action, which has pulled down
> the power of Islam, reduced its strength and bequeathed
> it weakness and humiliation. (al-Mufid, 1977:134)

The dominant theme of the violence was revealed and bestowed value on the victim. Ali became the 'stone rejected by the builders that will become the cornerstone' of the Shi'ite faith. He submitted as 'the sacrificial lamb to his potential executioners knives' (Girard, 1986:117).

Because Ali's was made sacred, there was a need to emphasize his relationship with the Prophet. Also, Ali was considered to be very passionate about Islam. His ability to convert others to Islam was so moving that he even convinced demons to accept the faith. Because he was portrayed as a teacher, having imparted that Islam was about respect for all things, the community was seen as belonging to Ali and not that Ali belonged to the community. It was from this community ownership that the concept of the Imam was conceived.

> The Imam must be a mature male of outstanding intelligence,
> not blind, deaf, senile, nor lacking limbs which would prevent
> him from taking part in the obligation of *jihad,* nor should he
> be a eunuch or emasculated. He must not be mad or feeble-
> minded, nor should he be envious, cowardly, mean, a liar, nor a
> man who fails to keep his promises or agreements, nor possess
> any other characteristics that may cause concern. He must be a
> man of great learning for without learning and perception how
> can he carry out his duties and interpret the laws aright and

ensure that his subordinates do so? (Wilkinson, 1976:538)

These physical attributes did not suggest divinity in the Imam. It differed substantially from the constructive imperatives of myth. This Imam was a 'just man' who led the faithful but did not reflect any aspects of the sacred. These physical requirements and eligibility of the Imam were a later development in response to a rational historical approach. Scholars removed the impetus that made the Imam who he was, a divine figure representative of God. Without this connection, the rationale behind this divine development made little sense. Was there refusal to acknowledge that the Imam was a victim? Ali was the 'ultimate truth' behind the 'misunderstanding' of the texts. Contemporary scholars misunderstood the scapegoat mechanism and eliminated the powers of the divine Imam. His divinity afforded him infinite knowledge so Ali could effectively respond to the 'innovations of Abu Bakr and Umar'. Unable to legislate these changes with the assistance of the 'naïve' community, the Imam used 'the only path open to him that was the supreme sacrifice' (Girard, 1977a:231). The commentators attempted to ignore Ali's nomination as a divine Imam in the mythological text without understanding the role of the community. Instead they utilized a rational, logical interpretation to validate his existence misunderstanding the scapegoat mechanism and the sacredness of myth. As the cornerstone of a new religion, the Imam would guide the population and eliminate the interpretive differences that created confusion in the community.

4.3. THE LIFE OF A DIVINE IMAM

Veneration of an individual is contrary to the spirit of Islam and the Prophet strongly opposed veneration other than God by shattering the statues around the Kaa'ba. The first four caliphs continued on this path yet a cult developed around the memory of Ali. That Ali became the Imam, a venerated individual of 'divine birth', was evidence that a dramatic event had taken place. The Imam was as a 'sort of king' who was looked upon 'as a future sacrificial object' (Girard, 1977a:112). This venerated position imbued with all the characteristics of a perfect individual is linked to 'spontaneous violence'. Shi'ism acknowledged this 'victim' Imam.

The 'myth makers' utilized Ali's familial ties to the Prophet to establish a divine monarchy. Because contemporary scholars did not consider the scapegoat mechanism, there was no logical explanation for Ali's 'royal' lineage. There was no investigation on how myth was constructed so there was a lack of understanding regarding Ali's role in his society. It was as a result of the scapegoat mechanism that Ali's veneration surpassed that of the Prophet. Myth does not engage logic because that is not its purpose. It exists to reveal camaraderie and adoration for the individual who 'sacrificed' himself (Girard, 1990:11). How could this monarchy be established with Ali's limited political support? Ali was pre-occupied with rooting out corruption that undermined the caliphate so he would have had little opportunity to promote a 'royal' lineage. A tumultuous five years was not sufficient time in which to establish a monarchy. The title of Imam was used to promote the lineage, but descent was a matter of divine information rather than the relation of blood.

Ali's divinity was linked to the Prophet to give the myth a logical sequence. The inclusion of the Prophet gave legitimacy to Ali's divinity and his family's hierarchy. Ali was a cousin of the Prophet but was linked to the descended line through his marriage to Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. Because Mohammed had no surviving sons, the familial clan was used to establish a lineage through Ali. Ali came from an impoverished family and Mohammed adopted and reared him. To support this lineage, it was argued that descent occurred through divine information. Ali had received his information from the Prophet who received it from God. 'I have prayed to God along with the Holy Prophet' claimed Ali, 'seven years before any other person did' (Lalljee, 1973:8). To support the legitimacy of this 'royalty', Ali's reign could be passed to whomever he nominated as his successor, such as his sons, Hassan and Husayn. Ali received the same information about God and the universe, as the Prophet had taught him everything that he knew. While the Prophet communicated with the angel Gabriel and disseminated Islam, Ali's venerated position often surpassed that of the Prophet.

To make Ali a divine individual a divine family was created to demonstrate a pre-existence of the Ahlul Bayt. The Ahlul Bayt included the Prophet, Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Husayn, a kind of divine Islamic royalty to show that Shi'ite 'heroes' existed before established Sunni Islam. As they possessed an inner knowledge of creation, they occupied a divine office and knowledge of pre-existence. This 'divine family'

concealed the instability and the chaos in the society by showing that life was eternal. Part of the mythological theme expressed 'man's fear of natural phenomena' such as life and death (Girard, 1977a:118).

Certain Shi'ite groups highlighted a celestial divine pre-existence that was not an acceptable part of orthodox Islamic dogma. The Prophet received information from God mediated through angel Gabriel. This light passed to Ali who passed it to his descendants. Ali was ascribed divine characteristics, as the creator of the world and granted the dispensation of his creatures. He was considered to be a coequal and coeternal with God. Similar to the Christian concept of the trinity there was also the Shi'ite trinity of God, Mohammed and Ali while amongst other groups the trinity was composed of Ali (ع), Mohammed (م) and Salman al-Farisi (س). This theme was emphasized in Bektashi literature, 'Mohammed and Ali is the one God I have. God forbid that anyone should see them as separate from one another' (Moosa, 1988:51). Ali and Mohammed are equal in everything accept the prophet hood because Mohammed had explicitly stated, 'you are to me as Aaron was to Moses, only there is no prophet after me' (al-Mufid, 1977:26).

To depict divinity in an individual, the community must recreate the victim's life. He cannot possess normal origins but must be reborn in a divine environment. His life must take on extraordinary proportions and possess such significance to prove that he was born with divine and superhuman capabilities. The various episodes of Ali's birth make palpable the 'humble beginnings of the revelation' and his 'light' revealed that sexuality was not part of the picture that correlated to 'violent mimesis' (Girard, 1977a:221). Sexual union was removed from his birth and emphasis was placed on the mother.

> He was born of the Divine Light that shone in God's sanctuary
> of the Kaa'ba and was brought up in infancy by the Holy
> Prophet himself, brought up by him as a son and given his
> daughter in marriage. The Holy Prophet imparted divine
> knowledge to him. And, on attaining manhood, Ali stood by
> God's Apostle, risking all dangers flinching fidelity that his
> name became synonymous with loyalty and faithfulness. (Lalljee, 1973:218)

Abraham and his son Ismail built the Kaa'ba under the supervision of Gabriel. It became a place of worship because of its purity. When Fatima bint Asad was due to give birth to Ali she approached the Kaa'ba. The walls of the house opened to let her enter and sealed behind her. While members of the community had attempted to follow her no one could find the opening where she had entered. Even the keys could not open the doors. On the third day, the lock disintegrated and Fatima emerged with her newborn son, the only child ever to be born in the Kaa'ba. Unlike other newborn babies Ali did not cry but was happy and smiling. According to an Arab superstition at the time, babies were born in sin and touched by the devil and so they cried at birth. Everyone born in this world and of the flesh 'is tainted by violence' and eventually reverts to violence. The child whose birth is simultaneously divine and human 'is a particularly relevant metaphor for the resolution of reciprocal violence' (Girard, 1977a:220-221).

 The baby was presented to the Prophet who fed him 'the moisture of Mohammed's tongue' as Ali did not eat when he was born. The Prophet gave Ali his first bath predicting that in return this baby would give him his last bath. (Lalljee, 1973:6). To legitimize his authority, Ali's relationship with the Prophet was emphasized to show that he knew as much as the Prophet. The Prophet reared Ali, he was married to his daughter Fatima and became the Prophet's confidant. He was akin to the Prophet.

> At every blink of the eye, the Beloved comes secretly in a
> different form – to enrapture the heart and disappear. In
> every instance, the Friend arrives in another garb, sometimes
> old sometimes young….he was Jesus, whose ascension to
> the moving dome (of heaven) gave Him glory. In sum, he
> was all of those who have come and gone in every century
> you have known. Until the appointed time, when he came
> forth as an Arab….he was lastly the sword in the hand of the
> dualist Ali – who battled time. (Massignon, 1982b:269)

Ali was created from light so he preceded and educated the angels. This development removed his father Abu Talib's from his conception. Since Ali was born

of the light was he a virgin birth? 'No relationship of violence exists between those who take part in the birth' namely God, the mother and the Angel (Girard, 1977a:221). Therefore, Ali's flesh is not 'tainted by violence'. Similarly his partner, Fatima, was also created from light; Gabriel brought an apple from Paradise to Mohammed who ate it before he lay with Khadija and conceived Fatima. He often said of Fatima, 'I smell from her the scent of Paradise'. It was predetermined that Ali and Fatima would be partners; such is Fatima's superiority that where Mary is the queen of the women of her day, Fatima is the 'queen of all women'. At resurrection Fatima will stand at the gate of hell to intercede successfully for those who love her while Ali will be 'set on a pulpit for all to see'. Ali did not request a return of Fadak, the property given to Fatima by Gabriel and then taken by Abu Bakr, because Ali knew that God supported those who suffered unjustly. Ultimately Ali would determine who went to heaven or hell. 'He who wishes for safe passage should take hold of Ali's belt for he is the furthest moved form idolatry' (Tritton, 1951:829-830).

> From his early childhood until the day the Prophet died,
>
> day and night, On journeys and in the cities, in mountains
>
> and on the plains, in battle and in peace, on strenuous
>
> days and on calm ones, in public appearances and in hiding-
>
> Ali was with the Prophet. He wholeheartedly adopted
>
> Muhammad's way of life; he learned about his aims and his
>
> methods of instruction so that he understood Muhammad's
>
> teaching better than any other. (Shahabi, 1988:15)

Ali more than any other individual was central in the Prophet's life. Whatever the Prophet knew so did Ali and for many, he would have been the best individual to champion Islam after Mohammed's death. On many occasions Ali made personal sacrifices for the sake of the Prophet motivated by his absolute belief in the Prophet's message. This closeness was observed in Mohammed's death where only Ali was troubled and mindful of the Prophet's death. He remained with the body, attending to funeral arrangements whilst Abu Bakr, Umar and others discussed succession. For Ali the religious experience was far greater than political and social ideals that other

companions were more concerned with. While Umar became the second caliph and made great conquests expanding the Islamic Empire, it was Ali who suggested sparing the lives of captives. Ali had instructed them on doing things in accordance with Islam rather than humiliating people, such as the daughters of Yazdigird, an Iranian king, who Umar wanted to sell as slaves or to execute prince Hurmuzan.

Ali wanted to inform people of Islam rather than marginalizing and persecuting them because they were not 'Muslims'. Ali was vocal that all people were to be treated as human beings not just Muslims (Shahabi, 1988:17). As the Imam, Ali was concerned with the level of religious knowledge that the caliphs possessed. Because the Imam was infallible he recognized the problems with this limited information. 'When a problem is put before any one of them' said Ali of the caliphs, 'he passes judgment on it from his imagination. When exactly the same problem is placed before another of them he passes an opposite verdict' (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:92). The naive community sought 'pearls from beggars even poorer than themselves' (Girard, 1977b: 929). The Imam revealed that all leaders who are not divinely chosen are ignorant of God's knowledge. Therefore, these caliphs were irresponsible leaders. Like the ordinary individual, they too needed guidance from an authority such as the infallible Imam since it was not possible for any person to surpass him in religious knowledge.

4.4. THE VICTIM MUST SUFFER

Mohammed was the last Prophet sent to guide humanity. His descendants were not to assume his prophetic role. Instead the Imam was sent to guide the community. Like the prophets who experienced hostility, the community also rejected the Imam. Ali was ridiculed but accepted his humiliation because he knew that his reward in death was great. The greater the humiliation Ali suffered, the greater his reward. His poverty and hunger coupled with his inability to gain access to the caliphate after the Prophet's death, or gain true allegiance and to be respected as the 'brother' of the Prophet all added to his mythology. Ali became the scapegoat of a community he informed and educated. Girard argued that a victim came from a broad but identifiable group. Ali descended from a tribal group that maintained the Ka'aba before the advent of Islam.

They were not a wealthy or prosperous group of the Bani Quraish and Ali's immediate family were impoverished.

So was his mission to rescue humanity from the cycle of violence? Yes it was and his death was not the only aspect that was to be considered significant in his sacrifice but also the life that he led; that was the example for all to admire. The Imam was the exemplar of decency and knowledge. He advised the community on how to respond to our propensity for mimetic desire and scapegoating. He was the 'best of men' who dispelled the myth that the victim was unique. 'He has the knowledge of those who came before and those who will come after' said the Prophet, 'he is the first who believed in me and he will be the last of the people to see me. He is my trustee (*wasi*) of authority and the inheritor (*warith*) of the trustees of authority' (al-Mufid, 1977,21). In dying it was Ali who revealed the truth. He forgave the perpetrator as well as the community who indirectly contributed to his death.

When the Prophet died Umar told Ali's cousin that 'the people don't like having that the prophethood and Caliphate joined together in your house' (Momen, 1985:19). Although they were prominent as relatives of the Prophet, they were also an economically disadvantaged. Like Girard's analogy of 'kings being at the centre of socio-political life' so Ali experienced existence at the centre of the Islamic community yet peripheral in political, economic and social interaction (Girard, 1986:33). His self-imposed withdrawal from the socio-political sphere made him susceptible as a subject of persecution.

The Shi'ite devotion to the Prophet's family Ali, Fatima, Husayn and Hassan is a core belief. Devotion to Ali is an intrinsic aspect of Shi'ism, as well as Sufi piety. The Prophet stated,

> I leave behind me among you two important things which, if
> you cleave to them, you will never go astray – that is the Book
> of God and the offspring of my family (*ahlul bayt*). They will
> never scatter from you until they lead you to me at the (sacred)
> waters (of Heaven). (al-Murid, 1977:173)

When asked who amongst all men suffered the most calamities the Prophet responded, 'the prophets, then the pious…if his faith is durable his affliction is increased…afflictions continue to oppress the worshipful servant until they leave him walking without any sin cleaving to him' (Ayoub, 1978:25-26). The socio-political environment at the time of the Prophet and the caliphs required a special individual to fulfill all the requirements of an Imam. In certain respects it appeared that the Imam even surpassed the qualities of the prophets. 'I am the city of learning', the Prophet claimed and, 'Ali is its gate'. This suggested that Ali had a mission to fulfill. The Prophet placed great emphasis on Ali's knowledge and it was evident through Ali's speeches and actions that he resorted to violence with great reluctance. For him more could be achieved through negotiation, as knowledge were central in gaining understanding, commitment and eventually allies.

The community responded to the murder of Ali by embellishing his life, there was a conscious move in not allowing him to be a victim but rather a volunteer in his death. That Ali was divine and human was part of the crisis because this confusion created conflict. By granting him divine attributes that ranged from inner knowledge and closeness to God, to responsibility for creation and the universe, it was easier for the followers not to take responsibility for his death. The community's role was downplayed and one must investigate their 'true' participation. Ali refused to participate in the destructive cycle of violence. Even in the process of dying he refused to retaliate. The crowd challenged Ali to provide them with an unmistakable sign of his knowledge and authority (Girard, 1987a:232). He did not condemn rather he brought life to a new community and a new faith. To his followers he was the best person to do so.

Ali was accused of two very serious events, the murder of the caliph and secondly the arbitration between God and man. Similarly to those who judged Ali guilty of all the socio-religious problems in the caliphate, so Ali also can now be construed as a 'judge in disguise'. However, when he judged others it was done with mercy; he offered benevolent judgement against those who wielded it against others like a weapon. Yet to offer judgement was still construed as a complex form of self-righteousness.

He was innocent of the crimes he was accused of but the community refused to acknowledge that. Further, they ignored their guilt in the events, as they possessed no method of self-reflection of their actions. All the actions they perceive as guilty along with their angst, rage and self-righteousness was transferred to an innocent individual. The victim paid for the collective violence of the community but was made sacred by the community that has sacrificed him, by their reconciliation (Girard, 1987b:75). The persecutors were relieved of their participation in the chaos along with their feelings of hostility toward the victim. The aggression was replaced by admiration.

After Ali was killed, Mu'awiyah asked Dharāh b. Dhamurah to tell him about Ali's character to which he replied,

> He was candid in speech and absolutely just in delivering a verdict.
> He was a fount of knowledge and looked askance at the world
> and its pleasures. He had the touch of conscience, which often
> made him to reproach himself. He was happy to wear garments
> made of coarse cloth and to partake coarse food, lived like a
> common man and made no distinction between himself and others.
> He respected the pious and loved the poor. No man of influence
> or authority could hope to achieve any undeserved gain from him,
> nor the weak ever gave up hope of obtaining justice from him.
> (Nadwi, 1991:180)

Mu'awiyah began to cry his voice choked as he sobbed, 'he was in truth a man of mettle'. His attitude toward the victim changed from hostility to admiration. The transformation of the Islamic society reconciled the community under the political leadership of Mu'awiyah. In his territories and among his troops there was stability, law and order as well as an atmosphere of submissiveness to the ruler. In contrast the territory of the Arabian Peninsula over which Ali was caliph had traditionally been unruly and the society easily manipulated. One encountered a flurry of well-wishing comments of Ali after his death, 'he was the most pious man in the world', 'He did not partake of the treasury', 'He didn't want anything save that is clean and lawful to go down his throat' (Nadwi, 1991:181). Ali's character appeared to be reborn. Suddenly

everyone complimented the character of Ali, no one questioned his intensions or his character. All the accusations were suddenly forgiven, erased from the community's memory.

> If you follow our [ahlul bayt] pronouncement, you will be
> guided by our clear vision. We have the standard of truth.
> Whoever follows it will attain it…Indeed through us, the
> vengeance of every believer will be realized. Through us,
> the rope of humiliation will be removed from your necks.
> (al-Murid, 1977:178)

That Ali could quote from the Qu'ran and the Prophet showed that he 'retained complete mastery of himself, right up to the point of death' (Girard, 1987a:232). Believers and unbelievers entertained 'the same magical, sacrificial conception of the deity'. Ali revealed that the scapegoat mechanism was a war that was fought in order to realize the truth. In the ideological war people such as himself and those in his family were often killed. As the 'standard of truth', Ali was at the forefront of ideological confrontation and those who continued to seek the 'truth' would find it. 'The rope of humiliation' was the mental 'slavery' that communities found themselves in. It was an ongoing battle but Ali offered them an opportunity to free themselves. More than the psychological and mental slavery the 'rope' represented a collective 'blindness'. There was nothing 'more ritualistic and traditional' than this 'abolition of memory' (Girard, 1987b:118).

Myth suggests that since this sacred individual was so knowledgeable, it would never have been possible to murder him. The suffering that he experienced in the society was at his own hand; he chose this path. Known throughout the community as someone of piety, knowledge and guidance, Ali claimed that 'I guarantee that by a true oath that I am not one of those who make false claims'. The decline in confidence through corruption and nepotism, the society wanted a return to their perceived glorious past of the Prophet's community. The anger at not being able to receive it through Ali led to his persecution and death. Suddenly thereafter the violence subsided saving the community. It appears miraculous so the community assumes that it is due to this

particular individual that the violence rescinded. He must therefore possess the power to create and stop the violence and more spectacularly he should be able to restore the community on its true path of Islam. Believers then began to consider that under Ali's caliphate the state experienced the Golden Age, where there was honesty, truth and equality. Suddenly no one wanted to recall the social upheaval and political unrest that occurred instead there was a focus on his sermons, his miracles and his family.

It is important to note the manner in which al-Mufid, one of the foremost figures of Shi'ite history, wrote that during Ali's brief period as caliph, 'that he was prevented from administering the laws (of the office)…troubled by wars against the hypocrites, those who broke their pledges, the unjust and those who had gone astray' (al-Mufid, 1977:5). The violence of the community was acknowledged here and the roles played by those who broke their pledges, colluded and went astray. One assumes that those who went back on their pledges did so overtly and directly to Ali. While some did, many had not so Ali was unable to gauge his support. We are led to believe through the 'veil' of the scapegoat mechanism that the Imam has prior knowledge so Ali must have known that his people would turn against him so why does he not act?

While this was an admission of the role of the community, in general the involvement of associate and 'friends' was a deliberate omission. The supporters of Ali are not mentioned in the playing out of the scapegoat mechanism, we do not encounter these individuals who once stood with Ali. Perhaps many still support him but authors such as al-Mufid ignored this aspect so his support must have evaporated. This prevented the sociological aspect of the scapegoat mechanism from showing itself to the reader. Are we to assume through Girard's 'undifferentiation' that his supporters have all turned against him or had denied their allegiance? Have his supporters begun to question his authority and knowledge or did they not simply wish to be associated with him? For this reason the character of ibn Muljam is so important and surpasses what Shi'ite authors have written about his role. His existence indicated that there was denial of the involvement of Ali's Shi'a in his death.

The role of his supporters played out in the character of ibn Muljam where he offered his pledge of allegiance to Ali on 'three occasions'. When Ali finally accepted the pledge he asked, 'What prevents the most wretched person of the community from doing his wicked deed now?' This comment nullified any resistance from his

community in the development of his persecution. In this manner they had removed any link between the collective violence and Ali's death. Instead as the divine Imam, Ali foresaw his death. Yet the community cannot conceal their participation because ibn Muljam was a supporter when Ali was nominated. To be denied 'three times' as Ali had rejected the caliphate three times, ibn Muljam persisted in offering his allegiance. He must have had immense respect and love for Ali even though he is spurned and criticized. 'Stiffen your breast for death', uttered Ali, 'indeed death will meet you. Do not show grief at death, when it arrives in your valley' (al-Murid, 1977:7). It is difficult to determine whom Ali is speaking of or to, could it be of his own inevitable death or could he be speaking of ibn Muljam; either way it revealed the strength in Ali's character. It also shows that he was a very forgiving individual and that he extended his knowledge by informing us that we shouldn't fear death. It was inevitable and shouldn't be grieved at. One also does not sense anger or resentment in the statement rather it reflected kindness, mercy and understanding.

It should be noted that when ibn Muljam gave his allegiance so did everyone else, it was Ali who singled him out to engage dialogue. Ali failed to recognise the 'undifferentiation' in the pledging of allegiances. 'I want his friendship and he wants my death' signified a greater problem for Ali. He wanted everyone's friendship regardless of who they were or their 'true' feelings, most notably with Talha and Zubayr. In a way Ali created the 'undifferentiated' support base to strengthen his caliphate. Yet in an attempt to create equality, he exposed himself to greater envy. He created a forum in which envy could be concealed. It slowly escalated, waiting for Ali to make his first mistake so that it could have direct expression. For Girard such an incident would be exploited to ruin the victim's reputation (Girard, 1987b:51; Girard, 2004:15).

Indirectly, Ali accelerated his own demise when he sought to equalize his society becoming the 'obstacle model' of mimesis. The elites and the existing governors would have been resistant to any economic and social changes, as these would undermine their social positions. Yet what of the more economically deprived supporters? Why did they turn on him after all he was looking out for their best interests? The answer lay with the social elites. Girard argued that it was the elites who supported Ali giving their allegiance; flattering and venerating him and the population simply followed, imitating

them. While an argument that Ali was popularly elected could be used, that none of the elites wanted the caliphate directed the population toward Ali. While the other companions confined themselves behind walls, it was Ali that was visible and communicated with the angry rioters. The same applied when the elites withdrew their allegiances and support from Ali, the masses responded by doing the same thing. Ali's decline in public opinion first began in his socio-political circle and then spread out and downwards. Although the elite who posed as 'friends' of Ali behave more like enemies the populations perceived them as a cohesive social unit that supported one another.

The community hated Ali as much as his rivals did. The community imitated the actions of the elite and what they perceived to be happening in the elite establishment. We witness this with groups such as the Kharijites where the initial wave of popular support dissolved into anger and resentment against Ali as his elite supporters reneged their allegiances. Those in the lower ranks of society cannot rival Ali as an individual but due to their socio-economic exclusion they accepted blindly, mimetically, the scapegoat suggested to them. They satisfied their 'permanent bitterness on the most desirable and prestigious victim who, just yesterday, was all powerful' (Girard, 1987b:52). His most loyal supporters turned against him and murdered him.

4.5. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MIRACULOUS IMAM

Central to the aspect of knowledge is also the greater human character of chivalry. The Sufis consider the chivalrous individual to be trustworthy, wise and pious. This personality trait was so central to the human condition that an individual who possessed it was known 'throughout the land'. To elaborate on this characteristic there was further claim that chivalry was actually a 'legacy of Ali' that he was a 'Friend of God' endowed with chivalrous character. Such an individual possessed immense wisdom and logic and only a person following Ali's methods and instructions can experience these characteristics. Ali's rule was the Golden Age in Islam filled with his miracles. It represented a period, although fraught with socio-political upheaval that was informed by the pristine values of the faith and dealt 'with the birth of divine thought' (Girard, 1987a:120). Ali's sacred knowledge surpassed that of the caliphs and he feared that their ignorance corrupted the community. Although he emphasized his relationship to

the Prophet to support his authority and knowledge, the political elites and the community ignored it.

All Sufi rites and lines of affiliation can be traced back to Ali 'establishing him as the supreme source of the virtues of *futuwwa* (chivalry)' (Mahjub, 1993:552). Chivalry is the locus of Sufism and Ali's position is an integral part of the ascetic and mystical doctrine,

> If you are a man of chivalry both the worlds are yours:
> Both the worlds heaven and earth, are the chevalier's wages.
> The true chevalier is a saint and friend of God;
> Benevolence was the path of Ali, "King of Men".
> (Sa'di cited in Mahjub, 1993:555)

The logic of this prophetic message necessitated that the community required guidance for a lengthier period than the Prophet's life. 'He therefore entrusted the accumulation of laws and ordinances' that he received from God through the Angel Gabriel to his successor 'and legatee'. In the time that Ali spent with the Prophet, he claimed that he had embraced Islam seven years prior to any other individual, 'he inculcated in his spirit and heart, knowledgeable of all truth, preparing him for leadership'. If a society did not possess an Imam, then mankind could not govern and navigate its socio-cultural destiny. Simply using their own intellect, 'no link would exist between the human race and the world unseen and efforts to attain perfection would falter and fail'. In Shi'ite doctrine 'every group counts Ali as one of their own; every virtue rises from his being and every science and branch of learning goes back to him….he is the supreme teacher of all' (Lari, 2000:106-123).

> People, I am the cousin of your Prophet and the closest of you
> to God and his Apostle. Therefore question me, question me.
> It is as if knowledge has already wasted away among you.
> When anyone who possesses knowledge perishes, then part of
> his knowledge perishes with him…Take hold of whatever
> knowledge appears to you. (al-Mufid, 1977:170)

Using his social position he encouraged the community to seek his information, as it was accurate and closest to the 'truth'. His charge against the caliphs was that through their ignorance, knowledge had 'wasted away'. Because the Prophet did not educate the greater population, the caliphs were ill equipped to fulfill this role. Therefore, they allowed, through their own ignorance, the introduction of innovations. Because the caliphs were not as close to the Prophet as Ali had been, their information was at best speculative. Could Ali be using the community 'as an intermediary for something much larger' that is of 'absolutely universal significance' (Girard, 1987a:158)? Ali had revealed the aspect of love and prayer over materialism while the caliphs were more interested in power and prestige. It was this hankering after prestige that incited the populations to rebel against their own social circumstances.

Ali invited people to question him on the ways of Islam, daring and challenging them to ask him anything, he was that confident in his ability as he mentioned in Basra, 'I am the greater testifier of truth for I believed before Abu Bakr believed, I became a Muslim before he became a Muslim'. Ali used his position as a relative of the Prophet to support his knowledge. It was the evidence to support his position to the community that they must 'take hold of whatever knowledge appears'. It was best if it came directly from him.

Ali's irritation and anger as a response of others elected as caliphs because of their assumed interactions with the Prophet. 'May a man who has knowledge use it only for the sake of God' and not use it 'that you may disregard the leaders of the people in favour of yourselves becoming leaders' (al-Mufid, 1977:140). Could this be interpreted as an open challenge to the other caliphs? The popular Shi'ite perception has been that Ali removed himself from the political arena because he was unhappy with the succession though he never ridiculed any particular caliph. 'When the one who possesses knowledge dies, a breach is made in Islam which can only be filled by his successor and the one who seeks after knowledge'. Ali perceived himself the 'successor' as well as the 'one who seeks after knowledge'. It is also further evidence that the Prophet had surely appointed a successor to whom he had passed all his knowledge.

All goodness is within a man who knows his own ability.
A creature who is most hateful to God is a man who is
deviating from the true path, enarmoured of words of
heresy. He has become addicted to prayer and
fasting. Yet he is seduction to those who are seduced by
him, himself going astray from the guidance of those who
came before him, and leading into error those who follow
him. Thus he bears (responsibility) for the sins of others,
being (himself) settled in his own sinfulness. (Such a man)
has picked up the refuse of ignorance amid ignorant men
without guidance. Unaware of intense darkness of
rebellion, he is blind to guidance. Yet men like himself
call him knowledgeable while he is not constant in following
it even for one complete day. (al-Mufid, 1977:172)

The social rank of individuals in the Islamic society depended on the relationship
established with the Prophet. Ali said, 'How surprising it is that they submitted to Abu
Bakr and Umar yet showed hostility to me. But I am not inferior to either of those
men…Give me victory over them'. Ali's suggestion was that the entire community had
become ignorant due to ignorant leaders who were oblivious to their mistakes and who
obsessed over rituals, 'becom[ing] addicted to prayers and fasting' perceiving this as the
sole purpose of the faith. This was the limit of their knowledge, their supporters as
ignorant as they, had been 'seduced' and the caliphs in turn perceived themselves in
believing that they really possessed knowledge, however limited.

He goes out early and seeks to make much of what is little
(regarding it as) better than what is (truly) much, so that
when he has quenched his thirst on polluted water and
sought to increase (his knowledge) from what is vile, he
sits as a judge responsible for the clarification of what is
obscure to everyone else.   (al-Mufid, 1977:172)

The caliphs approached him on legal matters because they were ignorant of the correct procedures. They asked his opinion regarding adultery and theft. Yet it would be the caliph who appeared to be providing the entire correct ruling and then perceived to be knowledgeable and just. 'O God, judge them both for what they have done against my rights and how they have attempted to diminish my authority' (al-Mufid, 1977:172). The ignorant population revered the caliphs because they didn't know the laws and assumed that what was being presented to them was accurate. Umar had allowed prayers to be lead at any time because he saw other people doing it. According to Ali, this should have been challenged what in time became a norm. Instead Ali's challenge when he gained the caliph was perceived as an attack against Umar and Abu Bakr; 'If a matter is obscure to him, he conceals it because he knows his own ignorance, deficiency and the necessity (of hiding it) in order that it cannot be said that he does not know. Therefore he puts himself forward without knowledge' (McEoin, 1984:19).

Ali wanted to prevent the 'hereditary transmission' of faulty interpretation. He attempted to curtail this 'intellectual and spiritual solidarity' of the caliphs because through ignorance and arrogance they had 'scattered the traditions like the wind scatters sand' (Girard. 1987a:160). Little or no respect for the teachings of the Prophet remained and Ali attempted to rectify this scenario by informing the community that the Prophet passed his information to Ali and not to other companions. All they had done was usurp power. (Nasr, 1993:6).

As a response to Ali not assuming the caliph leadership, instead taken by Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, commentators remarked that the 'love of leadership is strictly condemned'. Imams such as Jafar as-Sadiq stated that 'whoever seeks leadership shall perish. Cursed is he that begins to lead and cursed is he that resolves to lead' (McEoin, 1984:19). This was not a rejection on the part of the Imams to lead the Muslim society but rather that an Imam does not seek a leadership position. The only suitable time would be when the Imam appears 'with sword in hand' to lead the community (Ahmed al-Ahsai'I, *Hayat al Nafs* cited in McEoin, 1984:22).

The Imam loved his community and forgave them for their crimes against him. The voice of the victim was revealed and his character was evident to all believers and outsiders. Ali destroyed the mechanism of sacred violence and revealed it through his 'chivalry' (Girard, 1987a:6). The crucifixion of Jesus was an effective sacrifice and the

method to appease God, should this imply a similar context regarding Ali? The spirit bears witness that his sacrifice was accepted by the sign of blood (Massignon, 1982a:618). Ali's message of the love of God and his innocence revealed that the old ways in which the society was usually stabilized through the scapegoat could not be utilized again or would never be as effective.

Through the rejection of Ali as caliph, in death he became the guide to the society that had rejected him. The Prophet's words that 'the People of my House are like the stars that help men find their way on sea and dry land and deliver them from misguidance and errance' served as guidance for the Shi'ite follower that the Prophet's family were possessors of the 'truth'. The Imam provided the necessary information to guide and inform the Shi'ites by guarding the religion. 'The knowledge with which Adam descended, and everything with which the prophets were favoured down to your Prophet, the seal of the prophets, is in the offspring of your Prophet, Mohammed' (Lari, 2000:46).

Ali's magnificence played out in his daily miracles often-arbitrary events embellished to reflect some sort of divine magnificence. Ali's greatness appeared on several levels, from his greatness in performing daily tasks to occupying a central role in creation. Even as a child Ali was depicted as a special individual that possessed divine characteristics. He was central to aspects of death and judgement. Ali's position at Judgment Day revealed an aspect of the scapegoat mechanism. The scapegoat mechanism generated an 'absolutely perfect world' after the death of Ali, this was coupled with 'perfect' sacred heroes that were witnessed in the perfect individual in Ali.

Where Girard argues that there is enormous emphasis on mimesis in Western literature there is a similar trend in Shi'ite Islamic literature. There is a great emphasis on creating 'relationship triangles' regarding Ali. Whenever a scene played out to reflect the social reality during the early Islamic period then Ali was portrayed differently from the companions and other people in the community. Whenever Ali appeared, automatically the scene took on a confrontational nature. It was always Ali against someone else rather than Ali and someone. It produced a scenario in which Ali's existence demonstrated his divine capabilities to an unknowing audience. Ali was to Islam; he was the gifted individual who was the embodiment of all things divine.

In the texts there was often a use of 'social triangles'. When Ali was presented in a particular scene it was always in opposition to another such as the companions. The converts at Qoba, south of Medina, wanted the Prophet to lay a foundation stone for their mosque. The Prophet instructed his companions to ride his camel allowing it to create a circuit and where the camel stopped a stone would be laid. However the camel refused to budge until Ali mounted it; the camel stood and walked creating a circuit and knelt down again (Lalljee, 1973:17). The companions were presented as a united force against Ali. Every scene was a demonstration, the companions did something and failed, Ali repeated the action and was successful. The rivalry gained momentum in as much as the companions competed for the affections and companionship of the Prophet but they struggled to compete against Ali. Ali was the obstacle.

Once Ali witnessed a woman carrying a heavy water skin and offered to carry it to her house where many children were waiting anxiously. She was a widow; her husband a Kharijite whom had died in a battle against Ali was now alone. She had to rear several destitute children. The next day Ali returned to her house with a basket of food but on his way a crowd wanted to carry the basket for him. He refused their offers saying, 'you will share my burden today but who will be there to share it on the Day of Judgment?' (Lalljee, 1973:227). One does not sense any tension in the passage and yet this was a volatile period in Ali's rule as caliph. The rise of the Kharijites was the response of the collective undifferentiation of his most staunch supporters living in Kufa. Although this was only a single woman one can infer from the historical aspect that there must have been many in her position that were struggling financially and socially.

What Ali's actions demonstrated was that it was incumbent on the society as a collective to assist women and their families in similar situations. He wanted his actions imitated, to produce a collective understanding for the community in terms of love and compassion. This was his instruction to the community that if 'love and compassion' were central, then the 'Kharijites' would not be considered as enemies but simply part of the community. The deceased Kharijite was after all still a 'brother'. This is why the appearance of a 'crowd' warrants comment. The crowd wanted to assist but Ali rejected their offer because he wanted to show them that it is not he that required their assistance but rather the woman and therefore, all individuals in the society. Ali assumed the role of teacher to stimulate mimesis amongst people but the population was

misinterpreting Ali's actions. It was not the issue of assistance but the concept of compassion. With compassion the community would not entertain the economic difficulties of widows.

In his role as teacher, Ali attempted to maintain a level of distance and difference between himself and the community. By maintaining a 'them' versus 'me' scenario the tension and hostilities are maintained. What was further emphasized was the number of children that she was left to support, certainly a common occurrence that could certainly amplify socio-economic anger without the community. By helping the woman, Ali attempted to alleviate the situation but through his own actions without assistance, single handedly attempting to address problems within his caliphate. By acting alone Ali demonstrated that compassion came from within individuals not groups of people. However, the community misinterpreted his action and Ali placed himself in a difficult position because it appeared that he refused assistance. His distance should be interpreted as socio-political isolation that assisted in him being blamed for anything that went awry in his community.

Ali's words were profound, and while this event does not suggest any miracle; it is the foresight that Ali possessed that was significant. Which 'Day of Judgment' could Ali be referring to, for surely his death signified his judgment? None of his followers were there to support him when he needed them rather they had turned against him. Not supporting the widow and similarly turning against Ali emphasized Ali's notion of compassion. This 'crowd' was central to understanding the scapegoat. The spontaneous gathering of the crowd was a reflection of the spontaneous persecution. Collective violence was about to descend on Ali and the apathy of the community reflected their inability to think for themselves and reflect inwardly (Girard, 1987b:106). Ali reminded the community that imitation was a conscious action that should not only be observed because the Imam was present.

In another account, Ali was riding his horse when a crowd began following him. He inquired as to why they followed him and they responded that they 'felt elated by walking in the retinue of Ali'. Ali then replied that they should go about their business rather than infecting him with arrogance as well as breeding feelings of inferiority amongst themselves (Lalljee, 1973:228-229). Again we are presented with the image of the righteous man. The populations recognized and respected his authority to the extent

that they want to imitate him via external mediation. They acknowledge him as superior and themselves inferior. The absolute desire to create equality in the society proved to be Ali's downfall and his 'weakness'. Again the community misinterpreted Ali's mention of imitation. Rather than assuming themselves worthy through the concept of loving God, they responded with the antithesis.

> You should not accord me that treatment which is only befitting
> to tyrants…Do not show any consideration to me if you feel
> that I am wanting in justice, and never conceal the truth from
> me…we men are all alike. (Lalljee, 1973:229)

Ali's position on equality was problematic; while he insisted on social equality he wanted his command to be unanimous acknowledged by people. He wanted people to acknowledge his authority yet he did not want to be perceived as superior. Ali did not want to develop internal mediation but for the community to acknowledge his authority nullified his statements. How did he intend to reconcile authority with equality? Perhaps Ali was aware that 'too rapid a rise is always paid for by as sudden a downfall' and that it created rivalry and jealousy. Perhaps Ali wondered how he could prolong his political life. Shi'ite scholars maintain that Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman were not the intended successors to Mohammed and therefore were usurpers and 'tyrants'. This supported Ali claim that 'tyrants' seek validation and worship.

Girard's concept of the 'Righteous man' is central in understanding Ali, a faithful follower of the true God who has 'been discouraged by the apparent inertia of divine Justice' (Girard, 1987b:55). Beyond the aspect that the crowd was central to the scapegoat mechanism, one should also consider that the crowd wanted to participate in the life of the future victim, Ali. What was revealed was that at this stage in Ali's political career, the entire community had not rejected him. However, the 'Righteous man' had several rivals, depending on the speaker, each considered them self, righteous and deserving (Girard, 1987b:56). Girard argues that the righteous man will not die so the murdered victim maintains his righteous position. He might not be alive on earth to rule directly but he exists in the divine where his position as the righteous man remains unchallenged and unsurpassed. Ali believed that those who were illegitimate leaders

would attract punishment to themselves. For Girard these individuals gain favour through the populations who also later topple them (Girard, 1987b:58).

Ali often contradicted himself in his desire to be treated equally to others but requested that his community acknowledge his position of authority. When his chainmail was lost in battle, it was retrieved and later worn by a Christian. Ali wanted it returned and took legal steps to reclaim it. When Ali was asked to produce a witness he brought his son, Hasan to the Qazi, but the Qazi of the city argued that the relation was to close and therefore an unfair assumption of his truth. Yet it was Ali who argued that it surprised him that the Qazi did not accept the evidence of 'one who was pronounced by the Prophet as the Head of the Youth of Paradise'. Was Ali not invoking authority and prestige regardless that he was a sacred individual? When the Qazi was unable to decide on the matter Ali responded, 'the judge ought not to be influenced by the dignity of any party'(Lalljee, 1973:231-232).

If the Imam offered such contradiction then surely followers too are entitled to do the same. These contradictory aspects confront everyone and Ali knew that disgruntled populations toppled leaders. He had witnessed it with Uthman where the poverty of the masses contrasted his personal wealth. Ali presented the opposite to his followers living a frugal life, saying that 'your Imam is content in this world with two coarse old garments and two loaves of bread' (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:450).

While he was often irritated at the decisions taken by population and his exasperation at attempting to lead them on the correct path, he always demonstrated a willingness to share information and forgive individuals. He forgave ibn Muljam, he smiled when he was fatally injured when he was brought before him. The perpetrator and the victim are often very close in terms of being 'righteous' but it was not ibn Muljam who was 'second best' to the victim rather it was Mu'awiyah. Like Ali, he too was unaware of the severity of his actions. This played out when Mu'awiyah was informed of Ali's character after his death and Mu'awiyah was moved to tears. We witness his regret and most importantly that he wanted to distance himself from the 'knowledge of his actions' (Girard, 1987c:99). This was a position shared by most of the population after Ali was murdered. The statements made by the Imam are pertinent because there was once again imitation but this time it was regarding Ali's death. The imitation was one of regret and the shared sense of loss. With his vast knowledge the

Imam attempted to warn the population of the tendency to imitate on issues of authority and materialism rather than that of love and sympathy. The Kharijite widow story and that of Ali being trailed were both issues of imitating apathy in the first situation and the second was a example of external mediation in terms of worship. Both expressions were at odds with the love of God.

4.6. MIRACLES ATTESTED TO THE COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL

In terms of elaborating on myth and the sacred, the use of miracles emphasizes the victim. Not only is a victim special but also possesses divine powers. These sacred victims, while in possession of immense powers, used it to benefit their communities. Ali's immense knowledge and powers were used to assist humanity. By helping others Ali revealed his love for others, and as suggested that he was also responsible for creation, his love extended to include everything. Ali loved in his entirety and his existence was indicative that his message to humanity was the love of God. 'The ruler' uttered Ali 'should pay attention to his own soul' so Ali wanted people to engage inner reflection. Because rulers set the example and were individuals to be imitated, it was important for them to reflect compassion.

People follow and imitate their leaders and if God is a central factor in the life of the ruler then the population will be 'saved'. There would be an abandonment of the violent mimesis and jealousy eliminated. However, Ali alone was dedicated to the knowledge of God, 'I have only the ability' he said, ' to use reason to guide you…from the knowledge of God' (al-Mufid, 1977:130). The miracles mentioned here are all attested to Ali but and show that as a divine teacher, he willing shared his knowledge to benefit his society. Ali wanted people to trust him and imitate him in his love and knowledge of God. His miracles were central to the concept of the 'sacred scapegoat' that continued to live and thrive after his death (Girard, 1986:44).

The waters of the Euphrates had risen and the community approached Ali with their concerns. The Euphrates had burst its banks and flooded and people were anxious about drowning. After performing his prayers, Ali, with a staff in hand, went to the river followed by a group of people. He struck the water saying, 'Abate with God's will and permission'. The water receded and the fish surfaced greeting Ali with the title of

Commander of the Faithful. The fishes that refused to speak his name were eels and mudfish. The people were amazed and asked why some fish spoke while others remained silent. Ali responded, 'God made those fish which were ritually pure, speak to me and he kept those silent towards me which were forbidden, impure or worse' (al-Murid, 1977:263).

The second miracle revealed how Ali and his army were headed toward Siffin when they had exhausted their water supplies. Desperate for water they followed Ali who turned off the main path and approached a hermitage where he asked a monk where there was access to water. The monk replied that it was six miles away and that he brought his store of water with him. Ali's men wanted to travel further while they still had enough strength but Ali told them that such exertion was unnecessary. He turned his horse toward Mecca and ordered, 'uncover the ground in this place'. They followed Ali's instructions and dug in the area he pointed out. They came across a huge rock. They exclaimed to Ali that the rock was blocking access and collectively they didn't have enough strength to move it. Ali eventually dismounted his horse and moved it 'with his hand and pushed it many yards away' revealing the water beneath it. On seeing this, the hermit approached Ali and asked him if he was a prophet or an angel. Ali responded, 'I am the testamentary trustee of the Apostle of God' (al-Mufid, 1977:254).

In another scenario, Ali was sent to the valley of the Jinn (demons) who were plotting against the Prophet. The Angel Gabriel instructed Ali to enter the valley and fight them, 'you will be protected by the names of God which He has specially endowed you with the knowledge of'. Although accompanied by one hundred men, Ali instructed the men to wait. After Ali asked for God's assistance the men went into the valley and were flattened by a hurricane. However, Ali descended with the assistance of spirits, 'persons in the form of gypsies' while reciting the Qu'ran. Sweeping his sword from left to right he descended deep into the valley. He eventually returned to his men and 'the place became yellow as a result of what had happened to it'. The Jinn raced to the Prophet and 'submitted to Islam' and he accepted their submission. The Prophet then continued his journey through the valley unobstructed. 'When the enemy showed themselves to me' Ali explained 'and I shouted the names of God among them,

they became smaller and I knew the terror which had come upon them (al-Mufid, 1977:257-258).

A fourth miracle related that Gabriel was in deep discussion with Mohammed as he 'used the thigh' of Ali as a support. Mohammed did not raise his head until sunset. He enquired of Ali as to whether he had performed his prayers to which Ali responded 'I could not pray because of your position'. The Prophet replied, 'Ask God to send the sun back for you so that you may pray it standing at its proper time just as (it was) when you missed being able to do it' continuing that, 'God will answer you because of your obedience'. Ali did so and the sun was set back to its position so that Ali could perform his prayers, returning to its set position once he had completed. A similar event occurred when he and his followers crossed the Euphrates and were unable to stop and perform their prayers at sunset. Ali asked God to 'send back the sun' so that his followers could perform their prayers at its proper time. When the people had completed their prayers, the sun disappeared and 'a violent throbbing was heard from it which terrified the people' (al-Murid, 1977:261-262).

While speaking on the pulpit at Kufa, a snake appeared and mounted the side until it was close to Ali. Those in the mosque were fearful and nervous of its presence but Ali insisted that they remain calm and not attempt to drive it away. When the snake had reached Ali he reached down toward it and the snake 'made a croaking sound' to which Ali responded 'in a whisper' and the snake listened then disappeared into the ground. Ali eventually completed his sermons and his followers raced to ask him of the snake and his dialogue. 'That was not as you had thought' responded Ali, 'it was only one of the judges of the jinn, whom a case had confused'. Ali continued, 'I informed him about it. He wished me well and departed' (al-Murid, 1977:264).

In the first and second miracles there is a common element of water. It is symbolic that in each case it is associated with life and continued survival. In the third story the issue of strength and knowledge was emphasized. These were issues that Ali continually imputed to his followers. In the fourth and fifth stories we are confronted with the realms of existence. Ali comfortably moved within all spaces of creation with the ability to manipulate aspects within it. There is an overarching framework of communication and superhuman heroism.

The miracles unveil the connection to God and the knowledge that Ali possessed. Miracles are the sign of the true Apostle and represent his divine origin. It should be considered irrefutable proof of his superior being. This ability distinguished Ali from his rivals who presented a false image of leadership. In this manner the miracles assisted Ali by authenticating his message in creating faith. The miracles provided him with the strength to reach out when the rivals drowned out his voice. Instead his divine ability served the purpose of revealing the truth and that God was by his side (Girard, 1987a:218). The future victim, Ali, 'was the idol of his future executioners' but during the period that Ali performed his miracles, he possessed absolute power over his followers. As the divine being he was not part of the community, instead they belonged to him.

4.7. ALI'S MILITARY SUCCESS

Ali's chivalry was central to knowledge and wisdom, and symbolized his legendary heroism. The *Zulfiqar*, his legendary fork-tongued sword symbolized his military success. According to al-Khulayni the sword was brought down from heaven by Gabriel and given to Ali and considered an incorporeal spirit, everlasting and faithful (Moosa, 1988:70;Nasr, 2006:37). The efficiency of the sword and particularly its 'forked' design represented two paths of interpretation. On the one hand it would prove very efficient in dealing with his enemies but it was at its zenith of success, it was unable to further his support turning his entire army against him.

In terms of military prowess it was related that Ali never feared military confrontation and was diligent in killing the enemy. At the battle of Badr it was alleged that he killed thirty-six men while still a youth demonstrating immense resilience and bravado. At the battle of Ohad when the Prophet was struck down due to the negligence of his army, it was Ali who defeated the enemy. Members of the army had deserted the Prophet in favour of collecting booty, rather than focusing on the battle and the enemy Meccans. In the confusion, most of the army ran away in fear thinking that the Prophet had been killed. It was only Ali Having received sixteen wounds, Ali was unable to remain on his horse but Gabriel, disguised as a young boy repeatedly lifted him into his saddle saying, 'Go on fighting, O hero! God and his Prophets appreciate thy services'

(Lalljee, 1973:32). It was alleged that Ali never sustained any wounds in battle nor could anyone injure him. 'There was no doubt about his victory over every rival who came against him and his killing of every hero he fought'.

In the battle of Khandaq the Prophet encountered the maximum strength of the Meccans and a particularly large individual known as Amr. While others refused to confront him Ali agreed to do so. Amr was considered so skillful that his ability was said to be 'one equal to one thousand antagonists'. After a lengthy battle Ali struck Amr shouting 'Allaho Akbar' (God is Great); it was the 'divine decree that the Prophet saw inscribed in letters of Celestial Light in the Heavens on the night of Meraj'(Lalljee, 1973:39-41). Ali easily overcame the Banu Quraitza Jews as well as the Banu Mustaleq; Ali killed the Jewish leader, Quttada along with another warrior named Malik and his sons. Ali's military ability and negotiation skills forced the Jews to pay tribute.

At the citadel of Khaibar, Ali received a blow so severe that he dropped his shield and another fighter ran off with it. This enraged Ali to the extent that he 'jumped across a trench, approached the iron gate of the fortress, wrenched it off its hinges and used it as a buckler for the remainder of the battle…after the war [Abu Rafe] examined the gate and tried with seven other fighters to turn it over but the attempt failed'.

When the companions asked why the Prophet entertained Ali in private conversation regarding the Khotham clan, the Prophet responded, 'God himself had inspired Ali with Divine Secrets' (Lalljee, 1973:53-64). The Prophet's suggestion was that Ali could not be compared to any of the companions because his position in relation to the Prophet was based on knowledge. This showed that Ali was a special individual who possessed a special communication with God and the angels. There was an attempt to separate Ali from the other companions to exaggerate his unique position and provide reason as to why others, potential rivals, envied him. Everyone desired a position close to the Prophet but Ali appeared to be favoured by him.

For someone this young to be the possessor of an amazing military and proselytizing career it would most likely end badly simply because it began so well. Although this stage was far removed from his latter years when he was marked for death, all these events form a whole that cannot be interpreted separately. There was something in his socio-political rise that contributed to his political fall. What we can interpret from this situation was that the companions represented the crowd. Ali's rivals

would come from within the group of companions; Muawiyah, Talha and Zubayr were all companions of the Prophet becoming part of the 'crowd of persecutors'. To them, Ali would be transformed into a 'wicked' individual and once 'denied by the crowd, former idols can never justify themselves the poor unfortunates are condemned once and for all' (Girard, 1987b:15).

To further inculcate Ali's difference it was mentioned that an arrow had penetrated Ali and could not be removed using ordinary methods. While in the reverence of prayer, 'he found that the arrow had come out of its own accord through the intervention of divine favours' (Lalljee, 1973:219). These 'miraculous events' determined that Ali was represented with all the attributes and qualities of the sacred. Shi'ite authors suggest that Ali never belonged to the community rather it was the community that belonged to him. This remains an essential component to understanding mythology. Ali's divinity represented that a visitor from outside of the community, but also a member of the community, moved from the outside to the inside and again from the inside to the outside to save and reinvent his community. Ali's unique traits exacerbated the 'all against one' development in the scapegoat mechanism.

Ali's military prowess posed an interesting question. What would have happened to Ali if Mu'awiyah had defeated Ali at the battle of Siffin? If he was forced to surrender the caliphate, would the collective hatred toward him have faded or would Ali have been accused of heresy? However, Ali could not be defeated on the battlefield so other avenues were found to undermine him. His military ability coupled with his poor eyesight and spindly legs should be considered as part of the 'signs of the victim' (Girard, 1990:11). His military knowledge particularly his success against Aisha, Talha and Zubayr demonstrated that in terms of a 'historical' persecution he remained distinct from the accusations. There was to 'be no mistake about the nature of the process'. Described as a military individual undefeated in battle, an individual attached to his sword and shield, yet he was without these attachments when he went to the mosque. When ibn Muljam attacked him, he was unable to protect himself.

However, the historical position brings a rational understanding of the victim without directly blaming him, although there is always a reason to support the victim's death. The distortion in persecution became weaker as the text moved from the mythological texts to the historical where the mythology accepts the superhuman and

divine abilities of the victim seriously. Although an understanding of military prowess incorporates a sense of cruelty and morbidity in a rational sense, but the use of it by the victim is considered bravery and highlighted in the development of myth. Ali's superior military capabilities gave validity to the historical texts, which was reflected that the authors wished to distance themselves from the superstitions of mythology, that they are 'free of mythical illusions' (Girard, 1986:37).

When the violence overawed the community Ali was considered such a threat that he needed to be dealt with any by any means available. He committed a crime that 'poses an immediate or long term threat to the community'. The community could rationalize their beliefs that the heresy combined with military prowess was a deadly combination for their continued survival. Yet Shi'ism like Christianity rejected the idea that the murders are just and a good action. What remains accurate was that the deaths of the victims in some way dealt with the 'birth of thought' (Girard, 1987a: 120). It was the ideals of Ali, particularly the 'charisma' and the 'chivalry' that would eventually become a central component of the Shi'ite reflection of Ali as well as a characteristic that all followers should embrace. However, followers and the persecutors refused to acknowledge their own violence by casting it off themselves and placing the full blame on ibn Muljam.

4.8. SUCCESSION AT GHADIR KHUMM (POOL OF KHUMM)

The events of Ghadir Khumm were the conclusive evidence that Ali was the Prophet's elected successor. General consensus was reached amongst the companions regarding this nomination. This event at Ghadir Khumm, *waşiyyal ali*, contradicted the Sunni interpretation that the Prophet made no allocation for a nominated successor. It became the central argument in the Shi'ite polemic against the Sunni doctrine of consensus and election. According to the Shi'ism, Ali had received 'the unique authority to legitimately interpret revelation', the Qur'an, for the community. This knowledge and authority was also given to Ali and all of his descendants (Sanders, 1992:88). This meant that Ali's authority was fundamental to the notion of *walāya*, that required complete submission and allegiance to the Imam. Belief in Ali completed, perfected and legitimized religious duty and was the reason that the Prophet appointed

Ali as his successor. Ali's knowledge of and submission to God made him unique amongst the companions.

In the year 10/632, Mohammed returned from Pilgrimage stopping at Ghadir Khumm (the Pool of Khumm) and took refuge under a grove of trees from the intense heat. When the Prophet asked who would assist him in his tasks, be his brother, trustee and helper, Ali responded that he would assist him. The Prophet answered, 'sit down, you are my brother, my trustee, my helper, my inheritor and successor after me'. On a raised platform after performing the noon prayers he said to his followers, 'Do you not recognize that I have a claim upon the Believers that is prior to any claim they have upon themselves?' There was unanimous agreement to which Mohammed continued, 'whoever's master (*mawlā*) I am, Ali is his master. Assist whoever assists him and oppose whomever opposes him.' An individual in the crowd, Umar b. al-Khaṭṭab turned to Ali said, 'Greetings to you, O son of Abu Talib. You have become the *mawlā* of every Believer, man and woman' (Sanders, 1992:87-88). This is a *mutawatir* tradition related by a number of prominent companions and thus generally acknowledged to be a reliable tradition (Afsaruddin, 1999:338). Ghadir Khumm symbolized more than simply succession, it reflected that Ali was an individual whom the Prophet greatly respected and admired. Here he was among members of an 'elite' who dominated local political life.

When the Prophet died, the agreement of Ghadir Khumm disappeared and Abu Bakr was chosen as the successor. Ali's only support was amongst the Bani Hashim, his tribal clan. It was only members of his immediate family that continued to offer support. Once the political elites nominated Abu Bakr and rejected Ali, the community imitated them and supported their political initiatives. Abu Bakr was the first caliph and according to the Sunni tradition was the guardian of Shariah and the defender of civil liberties.

The Shi'ite equivalent rested in the Imam Ali whose powers far exceeded the Sunni caliph in responsibilities and character. The Imam was not an elected official but was a divine appointment with religious knowledge passed from the Imam. The Imam was a pontiff and an infallible teacher and his duties included those of the temporal Sunni caliph. As an infallible he inherited the dignity of the Prophet and the 'super-eminent prerogatives of witness'. He was also an interpreter of the revelation and the sole

permanent channel of all 'sanctifying prerogatives and illuminative inspirations' (Lammens, 1929:147). 'Ali will judge mankind and allot them either paradise or hell. He was the leader of men and Jinns, the true Testator of the Holy Prophet' (Imam Shafai's verse in Lalljee, 1973:215). There was no comparison to the Sunni Caliph according to the Shi'ite sources.

When Ali offered his prayers he was often observed in an odd physical condition, his pallor was ashen and pale, and his body trembled. What was 'witnessed' was Ali's surrendering in pray to God, an act so powerful that his body contorted from the powerful engagement. Ali's reaction to prayer was for the believers to 'witness' the strength and power of God. Considered pious and most holy of all believers in the faith, his abilities and knowledge came directly from God passed to the Prophet. The Prophet said, 'If I am the city of knowledge, verily Ali is the gate by which people can enter that city….Ali surpasses all in the possession of knowledge. Wisdom and knowledge have been divided into ten parts, one part given to the entire world while Ali alone possesses the other nine…the relationship of my other companions to Ali in matters of knowledge is that of a single drop to a mighty ocean' (Lalljee, 1973: 219-220).

The Imam's existence was proof of God and that of divine guidance for mankind (Arjomand, 1997:7). He was the highest religious authority based on the designation by the Prophet and on 'exclusive possession of religious knowledge (*ilm*)' (Bayhom-Daou, 2001:188). Ali was a recipient of many forms of divine inspiration and beliefs concerning the supernatural aspects of the Imams are thought to have originated amongst the *ghulāt* – extremist Shi'ite groups. Ali's poverty was borne with pride as he suffered from deprivation and lived in extreme poverty. 'He wanted to remain true to the Logos of the God of victims' (Girard, 1987b:158).

> If I had so wanted I could have very easily found ways and
> means to provide for myself the purest and clearest honey,
> the best variety of wheat and the finest silk clothes. But my
> desire can never overcome me nor can greediness persuade
> me to select the choicest victuals. (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:132)

Ali related that this adherence to poverty and hardship caused 'the heart to submit and the faithful to follow'. 'He was not secretly motivated by a taste of failure' but by the 'logic of the God of victims' that 'unerringly' led to his downfall. This constant reminder of his deliberate poverty stood in contrast to the other caliphs and their associates who amassed great wealth. Material wealth distracted believers and Ali wanted to lead by example, 'no cattle to play hide-and-seek with the real problems' (Girard, 1987b:159-162). It reminded his followers that his character was sufficient reason and evidence that he was the legitimate successor to the Prophet as agreed upon at Ghadir Khumm. The recommendation was 'pay attention to the victim' rather than on the material possessions because the victim struck 'at the objects' and possessions 'belonging to the initiators of violence' (Girard, 1972:144).

Ali accepted the Caliphate of the first three caliphs because he practiced *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation and to fear God) (Kohlberg, 1975:395) but I consider this contrary to the intellect and personality of Ali. The concept of *taqiyya* is problematic when relating it to Ali and when it is used to excuse the behaviour of Ali's followers when they no longer supported him. Ali would never have deliberately have concealed his beliefs (Kohlberg, 1975:399). As the Imam, he knew how events unfolded so there would have been no reason for the pretense. Instead he waited, supporting the political establishment rather than add to existing socio-political tensions. Abu Bakr already oversaw a tumultuous Islamic community where many tribes wanted to desert Islam and their commitment to the Prophet. Because of Ali's love for the society and the faith, he wanted these to succeed ahead of his personal ambitions. Ali respected law and order and would not seek to destabilize the community in order that he gained political power. There was the danger of fragmentation after Mohammed's death and rather than exacerbate issues, so Ali spent his time advising the caliphs and studying the Qur'an. Far from pretense or the need to practice *taqiyya* Ali demonstrated to followers that they needed to live with the political decisions. While he suggested respect for other authoritative figures, Ali advised that an authority should possess religious knowledge.

What his behaviour depicted was a man who was gracious and respectful; a man not guilty of guile and deceit. Mohammed had told Ali as he lay dying that 'the community will betray you after my death….if you find helpers, hasten to fight them; if you do not find helpers, restrain your hand and do not spill your blood' (Kohlberg,

1975:398). It remains difficult to ascertain whether Ali, as a less fortunate rival, became impatient with the leadership of Abu Bakr and Umar and Mohammed's words served as a warning. Would Ali have interpreted these nominations to be 'contrary to the divine will'? As Girards suggests, 'they [Ali] would like to hasten the course of things, but they dare not openly oppose those whom the populace venerate' (Girard, 1987b:53).

Ali did not have the military support to fight the caliphs; the enemy outnumbered him so the entire process was pointless. However, Ali was a 'righteous man' being 'a faithful follower of the true God' but Girard argues that such an individual is discouraged by the 'inertia of divine justice' (Girard, 1987b:55). However, his demeanour suggested he disapproved of Abu Bakr and Umar's appointments, relinquishing military and political involvement. If anything Ali wanted to be viewed as another in the community without seeking political favour. Yet even with his eventual nomination he was content to remain an anonymous person in the community no different from any other.

In support of the 'undifferentiation' contained in Girard's scapegoat is the announcement by Ali in Kufa that under coercion his followers (*Shi'at Ali*) were permitted to vilify him (*sabb*) (Kohlberg, 1975:401). This was evidence that Ali's closest supporters vilified him; they are the most disinherited within the community participate. Thanks to Ali they are partially integrated into the society that excluded them. But even if it was argued that Ali supported their use of *taqiyya*, Girard argues that the innocent and those who never participated in persecuting and abusing the victim, they 'all take great comfort in the misfortune of the scapegoat' (Girard, 1987b:71).

Ali was the rightful heir and this denied prestige did not affect his functions in his community; he continued spreading the message as taught by the Prophet. However, in this marginal position he received flattery and veneration from his peers because he did not, at this stage, draw any envy. He was not a model rather an advisor to the caliphs but his nomination at Ghadir Khumm proved that Ali was special. Yet it remains a mute point as to how his popularity had grown from the time of the Prophet's death to that of Uthman. Were people looking to the past and romanticizing of the time of the Prophet? Did they believe things would be perfect if they implemented the Prophet's

wish of making Ali his successor? His nomination as caliph was the 'temporary form of a greater crisis' in the Islamic society and his death supported the idea that it was 'better for one man to perish and for the nation to survive' (Girard, 1986:112). However, the events of Ghadir Khumm and the unfolding events helped to create the political characters and future rivals. All these individuals could have been victims or perpetrators. It should be noted that 'nobody incarnates the true oppressor or the true oppressed'; there are no 'good' guys or 'bad' guys (Girard, 1977a:150).

4.9. CREATING IMAMOLOGY

The origin of Islam is not separate from the origin of Shi'ism as the Prophet's teachings were central to the faith (Rizvi, 1999:8). The Imam was a temporal manifestation in a person that occupied 'a position midway between human and divine beings'. While they are human they can die and be resurrected. The Imams are born through the first Imam, Ali, chosen through the power of the divine eye and are said to be 'greater than all tradition' (Ayoub, 1978:56). According to the Prophet, 'the people of my House are like the stars that help men find their way on sea and dry land and deliver them from misguidance and errance' (Lari, 2000:46) and for the Shia those who possess competence in terms of knowledge and conduct must be identified with the Prophet and be appointed by him. Ali was the closest to the Prophet whilst Abu Bakr and Umar were only soldiers in the army of Usamah (Lari, 2000:52-58). The creation of the Imam as a divine being came from the 'desire' of the community to deny their participation in any violence that led to his death. However, his creation as a divine being 'stalks' the community 'like a shadow'. The notion of the Imam represented the violence, he was the 'signifier' of the 'cherished being', the 'signifier of divinity' (Girard, 1977a:151).

For the Shi'ites Ali's caliphate was a Golden Age since it provided the only opportunity for the Islamic state to be governed by a 'divinely-chosen' individual (Momen, 1985:26; Kohlberg, 1991:8). As a divine being he was aware of how events regarding him and the Islamic state would unfold and he voluntarily withdrew from political and military life. Momen argued that he did so 'to show his discontent' for the manner in which they dishonoured the Prophet's nomination of him. However, at every

step of the way, Ali was in control and his 'discontent' can only be interpreted as pretense. The Shi'ites and the Kharijites stood in stark contrast to their interpretation of leadersthip. The Kharijites argued that no leader was immune to erroneous commands and decisions but the Shi'ites responded that there was 'perfection' in the Imam and his commands could therefore not be erreneous. The Kharijites stated that a leader could lead a community astray and cause them to sin, the Shi'ite then claimed that the Imam was 'sinless' and therefore his decisions should never be questioned as he could not lead a community astray. The Shi'ites placed emphasis on a charismatic leader but the Kharijites rejected the notion of a leader that would be above the law. According to them this would result in a tyrannical ruler that was above reproach and punishment. They argued that a community didn't need leaders and that a 'charismatic state' should be the desire found in tribal solidarity and security (Dorraj, 1990:55).

Essentially the Kharijites argued for a return to a period without caliphs but inclusive of the message of Islam but the Shi'ites argued that there needed to be reconciliation after the death of Ali for the community. While Girard maintained that Christianity was unique in uncovering the sacrificial origin, Shi'ism reveals a similar possibility in the victim, Ali. Shi'ism prescribed imitation of the positive Imam Ali, in other words, they removed their participation from the violence and social chaos. There was a collective refusal in recognising the victim as the 'catalyst' that transformed the environment from collective hysteria to tranquility. To the community Ali never died because he gave the community the 'gift of life' and the 'totemic order' (Girard, 1987a:108).

Ali's death depicted the man of faith who experienced suffering and calamity in accordance with the strength of his faith and closeness to God. Ali's death was the zenith of a life filled with difficulty (Ayoub, 1978:27). For Shi'ites, suffering must accompany divine favour and therefore a high status with God. An expectation arose that all Imams needed to suffer and experience socio-economic difficulties. No other Imams after Ali were swayed by materialism or hubris. In Ali we see someone who possessed compassion for the poor and the manifestation of a divine being (Dorraj, 1990:45-46). The community was on the brink of socio-political disaster and it made sense that the individual who most identified with the population should be the

individual singled out for death. He increased the 'imminent danger' by refusing to remain silent.

Girard argues that the biblical writers sided with the victim but I assert that the Shi'ite writers do as well. If Ali has been sent from God, then Sunnism has according to Mabee 'failed to acknowledge this fact even as it functioned historically as the matrix' of Shi'ism and 'must be fundamentally misguided or incomplete' (Mabee, 1994:105). Rather than demonstrating a divide between Sunnism and Shi'ism as many authors do, the scapegoat mechanism and the 'coalition of powers' is found at the origin of all myths. The Sunni schism utilized a political thought that criticized only 'one category of power' either the crowd or the political establishment. However, it was also a denial of the scapegoat mechanism. Denying 'the crowd' and the 'establishment' was to deny the involvement of the community in Ali's death.

The Bible 'struggles to tell the truth of the victim' rather than like other religious and mythological texts that do not tell the 'truth' because they legitimize violence (Girard, 1986:115). Ali was depicted as a victim and as a scapegoat but it falls short of directly implicating Shi'ites followers. Instead they suggest that Ali supported that his followers feign resistance adopting 'taqiyya'. Importantly the victimage mechanism is not concealed, it is not obscured with support for the establishment or the crowd. The Shi'ite literature reveals what historical texts hide and that is the knowledge that their victim is a scapegoat. Like the Gospels that reveal in the 'lamb of God' so the Shi'ites reveal the Imam and indicating the 'innocence of the victim, the injustice of the condemnation, and the causelessness of the hatred' of which he is the object (Girard, 1986:117).

Ali is often compared to the persecuted and murdered prophets before him. He attempted to educate the population of the correct way to co-exist. According to Ali,'with respect to their morals, people resemble their rulers more than they resemble their fathers'. The Prophet mentioned that whoever 'dies without recognizing the Imam of our time dies the death of Jahiliyah' (Lari, 2000:10-12). The Prophet had predicted that after his death his followers would divide into seventy-three factions as individuals and groups sought to transform the divine leadership into tribal based. To determine the correct leader, the concept of divine transference eliminated the question of succession

and turmoil. The cohesion of the community was certain because no other individual can claim a position that belonged to the representative of God.

Spiritual brotherhood such as that of the Prophet and Ali became a genealogical kinship and the Prophet had informed Ali that their relationship was akin to that of Musa (Moses) and Haron (Aaron) (Lari, 2000:42-44). Ali's was attributed as the founder of the study of Arabic grammar through his disciple al-Dū'alī, as well as initiating the correct method of reciting the Qur'an (Momen, 1985:25). He could interpret the inner meaning of the Revelation, of the Qur'an as revealed by God, and guide men upon the 'ascending stages of the path of spiritual perfection'.

People should not dispute over those whom God sent as guides and brought religious laws and commandments because the Imamate is a continuation of the Prophethood. Although the Prophet had pointed out that 'there is no Prophet after me' he did emphasise a need for there to be an individual who would continue to lead the community along the righteous path (al-Muzzafar, 1982:31). God created the Imams as well as Fatimah and Mohammed, as beings of light before the creation of the material world. This light became the instrument of all creation and all knowledge, 'God created Ali and me from one light before the creation of Adam'. Therefore, the Imam was without sin (*mansūs)* and infallible (*ma'sūm*) and the best of all people (*afdal an-nās*) (Momen, 1985:147-153).

Ali's death signified the 'end of the pious caliphs' and in the twenty-five years leading to his appointment as caliph of the Islamic society, the caliphs Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman all experienced extreme difficulty in trying to govern and administer a growing Islamic community as well as stave off military offences and attempts at jostling power away from them (Ahmed, 1979:24). It would appear in hindsight that Ali's caliphate was doomed to fail from the outset. With vast socio-political expansion the caliphate had moved from the time of the Prophet where there was a community of believers to a vast Empire that included various cultural and linguistic groups and the need to amend legislation as well as the need 'to wear many hats' for the highest political and religious position in the Islamic state.

Ali's credentials regarding Quranic knowledge was never questioned or in doubt. Yet after being elected as the caliph, he was assassinated at the mosque in Kufa, a 'victim of a hatred without a cause'. Although it was difficult to establish Ali's physical

appearance and which Girard often cites as the reason why a particular individual becomes the scapegoat; Ali did remark in his youth when the Prophet had asked him to be his successor Ali responded 'I was youngest of them in age, the more diseased in eyesight, the most corpulent in body and thinnest in the legs' (Momen, 1985:12). Ali already considered himself different and this extended into his role as the caliph and possibly as the victim. The victim was acknowledged as real but not as he is represented in myth. This representation was determined by the 'violent reconciliation and the resulting sacrilization' where this victim was represented with 'all the attributes and qualities of the sacred' (Girard, 1987a:111).

Although Ali attempted to rectify much of the damage done under Uthman's reign he also attempted to legislate as he envisioned the Prophet would have and as he knew what was the 'right' way to lead his followers (Nadwi, 1991:141). One can see the importance in such an action when attempting to build a unified state with a strong political and economic base, but with the existing socio-political state structure it developed into resistance. While Ali wanted to reveal himself as an impoverished caliph his army did not share his economic frugality. Instead Ali wanted to be,

> a patron and a guide and a guardian; an exemplar of moral behaviour, and a custodian of the religious conduct of the people… urged them to offer prayers, advised them about religious matters, told them what Allah has made lawful or unlawful to them…He used to sit outside the mosque where people came to seek his advice about their religious or personal affairs….Accessible to the meanest of his subjects and never gave an impression of superiority in his talks or behaviour with others. He kept a sharp eye on the functioning of the state…what was the opinion of the masses about their administrators. The executives and public servants were filled with his awe. (Nadwi, 1991:185-186)

Could it be that he wanted others to imitate him; how did the love that Ali represented become so destructive? Ali advocated mimetic desire because he wanted

people to imitate him. However, Ali became disillusioned with mimetic desire when he wanted people to stop practicing the innovations incorporated by Abu Bakr and Umar. Mimetic rivalry generated through the mimesis invoked by Ali. He met with resistance as he attempted to rid the community of ignorance; by removing the structure of the community he could not curtail reciprocal violence. In announcing to the community that 'no-one has suffered for his people as I have', Ali presented himself as the model that all others must imitate. He stood alone as the individual with knowledge and credibility. Ali used his political office seeking to teach and inform his community of the Qur'an. The Prophet stated 'I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is the gate' lent further credence to the role that Ali played in his society, the learned individual (Momen, 1985:14).

Ali was willing to give himself to others and committed to God thus affirming 'a positive, derived sense of the "sacrificial"' not because he wanted to be harmed but out of love and faithfulness. However, the desire to imitate will eventually make Ali sacred because he was killed. The gap between the victim and the community must not be so vast that no similarity exists such as in the case of Uthman where his lifestyle and political style placed him at odds with the society he governed. Uthman's death produced a superabundance of violence of 'a particularly virulent kind'. Ali's death on the other hand was presented as an event that brought salvation to humanity.

Ali preferred negotiation rather than engage violence, particularly once he became the caliph, but this was not to say that Ali was not violent. His motivation came from God enjoining his followers to imitate him, to recognise that God interpreted the 'just and the unjust without distinction'. Ali's fate was inseparable 'from that of the Word of God'. However the community opted for the old ways rather than follow Ali's life of equality, economic frugality and God consciousness, 'knowledge is better than wealth'. Girard maintained that the 'full disclosure of this truth can occur only in the moment it is being driven out' (Williams, 1996:189). Like Jesus that Girard placed such great emphasis on as the key to revelation confirming the work of God, so Ali assumed an identical role by being the representative of God's work amongst man. The importance of wealth became the mimetic predicament that Ali emphasised to his community. Ali was the 'agent' capable of 'escaping from these structures' liberating the community from the dominance of socio-economic dominance. Ali became the 'stone rejected by

the builders' that became 'the cornerstone' of Shi'te ideology (Girard, 1986:117; Girard, 1987a:220).

A considerable body of traditions characterizes Ali as 'a breed apart, created of a heavenly substance and combining pure origins with impeccable moral qualities' such that although he was human as an agent he must also be a part of God (Kohlberg, 1985:237). His role was to disseminate the teachings of the Qur'an, extending inner guidance to mankind, inerrant, never corrupted or persuaded demonstrating immense self-restraint. His knowledge of 'the essense of creation' shows that he was unable to commit a sin (Lari, 2000:137). Only a child of ten years, some sources say seven years others nine, but still a child when the Prophet encouraged him to believe in him, to accept his faith and knowledge. At such a young age he acknowledged God and the Prophet demonstrating comprehension of the complexity of religion.

In Shi'ism the Imamate and caliphate are inseparable. Spiritual Islam and political Islam are two parts of a single whole. The Imam was an exalted person who combined in himself intellectual authority and political leadership. He was the head of Islamic society preserving the collective identity and the human dignity of the Muslims from decline and corruption. In implementing the devotional and social precepts of God's religion, he was a model for imitation. It was the Imam who guides the movement of men toward perfection. Because the community hated Ali 'without a cause' they have created a larger than life individual that cannot be touched by any human. To harm the Imam was impossible because he was divine (Girard, 1986:103). It is therefore incumbent on all believers to follow him in all matters, for he is a living exemplar for the development of the self and of society, and his mode of life is the best specimen of virtue for the Islamic community.

4.10. MAKING ALI THE FOCUS OF SHI'ISM

The hypothesis of a scapegoat mechanism is about turning the magical accusation where Ali stood accused of speaking on behalf of God into an ostensible truth in a text. We are able to navigate around unbelievable features of the accused contained in the text and distinguish them from believable ones. The scapegoat mechanism suspended the law of contamination, with reference to the accusation of heresy, 'we do not accept

to have men rule in the religion of Allah'. Yet this statement was based solely on the fact that Ali rejected Mu'awiyah's army raising copies of the Qu'ran on their spears. It then makes complete sense, in a relative sense that the aspect of miracles and divinity fit in with the inflated and distorted accusations.

One of the greatest miracles attributed to Ali is that in his youth, as a boy he was able to understand the message of God and the Prophet. He was entrusted with the 'secrets of the religion, the defence and preservation of it, and the fulfilment of the trust in it'. It is considered by many to be a sign from God that such a young boy could comprehend the complexity of the religion. His ability transcended normal human behaviour and revealed, according to scholars such as al-Mufid, that he possessed a 'special' relationship with God. He was nurtured for the Imamate of the Muslims and was the 'the proof of God to all mankind' (al-Mufid, 1977:230). To many Shi'ites, Ali's position was equivalent to that of John the Baptist, despite the question of his youth.

The inclusion of Ali in the *adhān* (call to prayer) of the Twelve Shi'ites attested to his temporal and spiritual authority – *wilāya*, where it is announced that 'I bear witness that Ali is the friend of God'. Although historically this is a later development in Shi'ite history and religion, it lends impetus to the centrality of Ali's death in the community. There was a constant elevation of his persona and memory and somehow it also revealed a hidden guilt. However the implementation of religious instruction by the clergy offered an understanding of the position of Ali more akin to political expansion than to the understanding of Ali's message.

Similarly to the Girardian position that clergy have misinterpreted the message of Jesus so the Shi'ite clergy insisted on emphasizing the sacrifices made by Ali. In enhancing doctrinal and liturgical uniformity, the first three caliphs were often cursed in Shi'ite texts. The insertion of the *wilāya* in the *adhān* was deeply intertwined with political authorities, such as Shah Ismail, to generate deeper commitment to Shi'ism amongst the population. Before the Safavid empire, Shi'ism was virtually unknown in areas such as Iran and by including the *wilāya* in the *adhān* it popularized Shi'ism amongst the laity (Takim, 2001:181).

There was a desire particularly amongst the post-Safavid jurists, such as Khāshif al-Ghitā, to constantly separate Ali and differentiate him from the 'other friends of the

Prophet'. He asserted that the *wilāya* was insufficient and that it would be better to state that 'Ali is the *khalīfa bilā faṣl*' (the successor to Mohammed without any interruption) a move to promote Ali's superiority to the other caliphs. However, there were many that rejected the inclusion of the *wilāya* in the *adhān* seeing it as an innovation and questioning that if Umar's inclusion of 'prayer is better than sleep' is an innovation then so is the *wilāya*. Those who refused to include the *wilāya* were accused of being Sunni, however Shi'ite adherents bypassed this edict by practicing *taqiyya* – the doctrine of dissimulation – to recite the *wilāya*.

This dissimulation was a process used by Shi'ites to protect them from victimization, the adherent simply replicated the popular behaviour in order to fit in and not appear to be going contrary to societal expectation. However, inwardly their spirituality rejected what others perceived them to be doing, in other words they concealed their true intentions and beliefs. Here *taqiyya* was used to 'assert rather than hide Shi'ite identity…the *wilāya* was recited to avert accusations' of being a Sunni affiliate (Takim, 2001: 170). The *wilāya* came to symbolize Shi'ite ideals, identity and aspirations, a means of defiance. There was also the belief that the *wilāya* was practiced during the time of the Prophet.

> A man entered to see the Prophet of God and said, "Oh
> Prophet of God, I have heard a thing which I have not heard
> before". The Prophet said, "and what is this?" [The man] He
> replied, "Salman bore witness in his *adhān al shahāda*
> (testimony) to the *wilāya* of Ali. He [the Prophet] replied,
> "You heard a good thing." (Takim, 2001:176).

What was once considered *bid'a* (innovation) has become *sunna* in order to support a Shi'ite identity. These innovations are important in concealing the participation of the community in the murder by legitimising Ali's divinity and superiority.

However it should be noted that although such arguments of the *wilāya* were advanced there seems to be no evidence even in Shi'ite juridical works that it was performed during the time of the Prophet or the Imams. What was demonstrated was the development of the mythology of a divine Ali in the Shi'ite texts. This mythology

became popular amongst the laity, emerging as a central aspect of these developments. In advancing the scapegoat mechanism, such a development and its wide acceptance by the laity can be construed as an acceptance of the community's role in the death of a victim. As previously discussed, future generations will conceal the participation of their forefathers in the murder by claiming their wholehearted support of the victim by using a vehicle such as the *wilaya*. This development can be construed as a double homicide since there was now a new homicide to cover the old one; ibn Muljam alone was killed to take the responsibility for Ali's death. However, it was the importance of the first murder, which was the founding murder, and Ali's divinity that concealed the murder committed by community that was the foundation of the Shi'ite community.

4.11. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A TOMB

A tomb exists to honour the dead but it is the concealment that is essential; it conceals from the viewer that death is no longer visible. It testifies 'to a concealed relation of dependence on the founding murder' (Girard, 1987:163). The tomb conceals more than the individual within but also the violence of the community. It includes the tension within the environment, the collective violence of the community, those who have killed others for a myriad of petty reasons but that there was also a trend to continue killing. These reasons are all buried within the tomb. Girard argues that the tomb was used to obscure and conceal the truth because it is murder that calls for the construction of a tomb (Girard, 1987a:164).

Ali informed his sons, Hassan and Husayn, that his 'coffin was to be lifted only from behind, as the front would of itself be automatically carried'. The impetus was that the divine would take on the decision of finality regarding his death. The persecutors participation after his death would be to follow the route the coffin took and that where it stopped they would find 'a grave already dug for him' (Lalljee, 1973:261). In his own words, Ali attempted to prevent the construction of a tomb to conceal the reason to his murder.

Contrary to other cultures and religions that are built on this foundation and dependent on the concealment, Ali challenged the norm of the muted scapegoat. Before his death he announced to his family, 'Oh thou Hashimites! After I am gone, do not

spill Muslim blood' he ordered, adding 'do not kill anyone except my murderer' (Lalljee, 1973:262). The tomb can no longer call for the perpetuation of murder because Ali exposed the foundation demanding an end to the killing of innocent victims. Ali did not want the tomb to be the consent given by the 'sons' to their 'fathers' for their actions and reminded his family that,

> No less than 10000 persons have I killed by my own hands
> on different occasions, and I do not wish their relatives to
> violate the sanctity of my repose, and expose my corpse to
> indignity. (Lalljee, 1973:261)

The cycle of violence was exposed and Ali defused it by simply having a single murderer killed to stop the crisis of Degree. He did not want violence to intensify again and prevented an inevitable mimetic contamination and the system of dual conflicts. Ali revealed that the tomb contained and concealed the evils of not only the victim but also the community. It was further projection that if he revealed his tomb then the cycle of violence could continue. His tomb would also validate the foundation murder by concealing the truth. All forms of the violence were revealed even the violence that Ali perpetrated against enemies. Ali did not conceal it but what he allayed to was that not only the individual 'sin' but also the sins of all others involved, particularly the future cycle where sons will take the place of the fathers. Ali prevented the knowledge of the murder from being lost by revealing his own contribution. By not remaining silent, others do not have recourse to violence and Ali expelled the truth about it. Ali requested that his burial site should remain unknown to the public.

Ali continued, 'Was I a bad Imam or an unkind Ruler'? Ali only asked of his caliphate rule and not any other period in his life bypassing events such as the Battle of Ohad where 'Ali and Hamza, the champions of Badr, unsparingly dealing out death, worked havoc among the enemy' (Lalljee, 1973:29). He asked that no harsh treatment be metered out to his murderer. He was not to be tortured, or his body mutilated, or his family made to suffer or that his property be confiscated after his execution. Ibn Muljam's execution ended the scenario of violence against Ali but because ibn Muljam

failed in the successful sacrifice by spilling blood and allowing Ali to linger in pain, so he too must be expelled from the community.

Ali does not want another murder to occur because repetition will bring about the return of the crisis. Ali had been wronged by the political powers and naturally he became the 'sponge' of dissatisfaction – economic, political, religious – that had rapidly accumulated in Islamic society after its inception. Dissatisfied and somewhat disenfranchised groups gravitated toward Ali seeing him as a representative for the opposition yet someone with the pedigree to challenge the religio-political structure (Friedlaender, 1907:2-3). However, his death did not signify an end to the struggle but he exposed the intensity of the united force against a common enemy.

> Lord! I thank Thee for rewarding me with martyrdom; how
> kind art thou and how gracious. May thy mercy further lead
> me to the realm of Thy grace and benevolence. (Lalljee, 1973:260)

As was considered the graciousness of Ali, he forgot his own pain when he saw the manner in which ibn Muljam was brought before him. He asked his followers to treat the murderer more humanely at which ibn Muljam began to weep. Ali smiled and said, 'it is too late to repent now, you have done your deed'. Ali ratified the idea that Girard puts forth of the behaviour of the murderer, who has effectively done his task. Ali does not go to the grave angry, he transferred the blame from the society to the grace of God.

Ali's tomb is presumed to be at Najaf and one of the most important shrines in Shi'ite doctrine. The Shi'ite tradition suggested that there was a personal relationship between every believer and the Imam and visiting the tombs reinforced the bond between them. Visiting these shrines also carry an 'educational aspect' aimed at preserving the collective Shi'ite identity. It also raised the aspect of miracles often associated with the divine Ali.

It was related that Abraham and Isaac visited Najaf, an area plagued by earthquakes and tremors, yet these ceased while Abraham and Isaac were there. On the night they went to a different village, Najaf experienced another earthquake and when they returned the villagers wanted them to live there instead. Abraham agreed to do so on condition that he be allowed to purchase the valley – *Wadiu's Salaam* - behind the

village. Isaac protested saying that the land was unfit for cultivation or for grazing but Abraham insisted that in time a tomb with a shrine would be erected there. Ali related that the *Wadiu's Salaam* – Valley of Peace – was a part of Heaven. He continued that everyone regardless of their origin, their souls will come to this place. 'As there is nothing in this world hidden from my eyes,' Ali exclaimed, 'I see all the believers seated here in groups and talking with one another' (Lalljee, 1973:264).

When Harun ar-Rashid, a ruler in the Abbasid Empire, went hunting the deer he chased ran to a hill for protection. Although he sent his hunting dogs to retrieve the deer they refused to climb the hill. His horse refused to mount the hill and immediately he was overcome by awe. He asked the villagers of the area and they related that it was the grave of Imam Ali. Harun erected a shrine over the grave and people began to settle in the vicinity (Lalljee, 1973:266).

According to the Imam Jafar-as-Sadiq, Ali ' is in the sight of God better than all the Imams, and to him belong the merit of the works of all the Imams' (Lalljee, 1973:267). There are numerous prayers and salutations that are offered to pilgrims that evoke the majesty and brilliance of the Imam. Adam, Noah and Ali are buried in the same spot at al-Ghari (Kohlberg, 1980:58-59). The importance of a shrine remains static and unchanging while the social reality experienced change. People engage the anthropological Ali as well as the divine Ali when they visit the shrine. When pilgrims visit the shrine they announce, 'Peace upon the exalted essence of God and peace be upon the manna and the quails'. The tomb becomes a rallying point for harnessing wishes rather than the rationale that Ali attempted to provide his community with. Ali is even depicted as food and sustenance for the believers, just as manna and quails 'were sent by God as food and sustenance for the children of Israel in Sinai' (Lewis, 1970:168). Ali is therefore made from the same essence as God and is essentially 'life'.

Ali did not rise from the ashes like a phoenix and play with the issues of 'life and death'. His actions demonstrated what the 'empty tomb' was designed to show (Girard, 1987a:232) Instead of recognizing the foundational murder, people reinterpret him in a variety of positions that respond to a society's existence. The truth of the founding murder was expressed in Ali's words connecting the conduct of men for all time. Ali revealed the fear and inadequacy of the population and his accuracy is confirmed at al-Siffin and the resentment of the army is that they have recourse to violence to expel the

truth of violence. The tomb that hid the violence became a point of peace concealing all that was negative and destructive in a society.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Using Girard's theory of the scapegoat mechanism and applying constitutive reductionism I have reduced much of Ali's historical and populist revelation to its basic constituents. In doing so, I have been able to explain some of the laws of the scapegoat mechanism and how Ali can be revealed as an innocent victim in a similar vein as Jesus. The scapegoat mechanism allowed for the complexity of Shi'ite doctrine relating to Ali to be reduced to simpler fundamentals. This process allowed for the historical and mythological events to be interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework. With this method I have demonstrated that Ali was an innocent victim. Ali offers a non-violent message to people for all time that will destroy the scapegoat mechanism. Ali revealed his poverty and the lack of material accumulation as an example to his community that this was the source of rivalry. It was materialism that steered competition between people to the extent that hatred resulted from it. While he embraced mimetic desire in the imitation of the love of God, Ali revealed that God was understanding and benevolent, not an angry and punishing God. Ali's poverty revealed that imitation of God took precedence in his life as well as the aspect of non-violent negotiation.

Girard's mimetic desire was applied to Ali and his social position. While Ali was not wealthy, he was part of the political elite. In spreading Islam, the companions along with Ali and the Prophet collectively shared in their desire to for a social reality that embraced the new religion. However, the mimetic desire to be part of Islam and to imitate the actions of the Prophet and his cousin, Ali, changed to mimetic rivalry after the death of the Prophet. While Ali had removed himself from the political arena, his nomination to the caliph thrust him into the most powerful position in the state. This brought about the mimetic rivalry. This rivalry is defined by envy and the sense of inferiority assumed by the subjects. Ali was the only popularly nominated caliph, which suggested that the entire community supported his nomination. Ali was seen as a potential saviour to his community but other political elites desired this position. These elites eventually joined forces forming a conspiracy revealing their envy. The envy was not initially revealed because it is an emotion that seeks support while recruiting for the

conspiracy. Girard contended that envy constantly looked for company before it exposed itself (Girard, 1991:129).

The hatred developed among the political elites first and then filtered down to the community. In seeking to imitate those they perceived as being superior, a demonstration of external mediation, and the community desired the 'desires' of the political elite. A crisis of Degree having taken hold of the state in the death of the third caliph, was further dramatized in the corruption and social unrest. There was a top down movement of anger and the community reflected the opinions of the political elite although their rationale differs. The community blamed Ali for all the socio-political problems he had inherited from earlier caliphs and accused him of heresy. As an innocent victim he was blamed of events that were not in his control or of his doing. The community collectively acted against Ali although this was demonstrated in a single individual, ibn Muljam who delivered the fatal blow. It is alleged that when Ali was murdered, the violence subsided and calm returned over the community. The myth that was created from the perspective of the persecutors made the victim sacred. However, Girard asserts that it is this aspect of the myth that attempts to conceal the role of the community but that Christianity is unique in revealing the innocence of the victim.

Girard insists that the resurrection of Jesus reveals to us what no other religion has done and that is to expose the scapegoat mechanism and the innocence of the victim. It is this exposure, according to Girard, that has forever changed the course of history and our mentality towards victims. It has allowed us to see the victim for what he truly is. Girard concludes that religion no longer forms as large a role in our existence and our institutions because of this knowledge and that our social institutions have informed people of the crimes against the innocent. The victim in exposing the myth and invoking empathy means that religion should not be fused with the socio-political structure instead there should be the separation of politics and religion. However, when incorporating Ali into the scapegoat mechanism the results are different. While the scapegoat mechanism is exposed the emphasis is placed on a fusion of state, politics and religion so that the population will always be kept on the 'right path'. While it has been shown that Ali was an innocent victim, Shi'ism establishes that there are other Imams who were murdered.

What can be deduced from the divine Ali is an acknowledgement by believers that Ali was innocent of any crime. There was the conscious belief that he was not guilty of the accusations made against him. There is recognition that other members of the political elite desired the political position of the caliph although none of them could ever be the Imam. While believers entertain ideas of Ali's innocence and mimetic rivalry they refuse to acknowledge the community's participation. The prevailing mob mentality is difficult to escape or recognise.

An overall significance is betrayed in historical and spiritual texts. Yet to discuss that religion has somehow lost its relevance due to the elimination of a 'scapegoat' limits the understanding society and human development. Like Jesus, Ali recognised the need to have respect for one's neighbour but Ali went further by specifically mentioning that we need to respect and love people of all religions, cultures and faiths because we are all the same. To acknowledge this respect for another would result in abandoning the violent mimesis. Similarly as Jesus promised men that they will become the sons of God if they did his will so Ali encouraged communication with God by respecting knowledge and releasing materialism. The Bible does not hold a monopoly in 'demythifying' the victim mechanism exposing the lie that the victim is to blame for the community's collective violence.

In analyzing Ali's suggestions to his community, it becomes apparent that materialism serves as the catalyst to the violent mimesis. In investigating the literature of Ali's murder it is apparent through the usage of the scapegoat mechanism that the entire community is involved in the violence, whether overt or covert. In unveiling the innocent victim it is possible to recognise the disintegration of the social hierarchies when the social institutions collapse. However, Ali argues that the social hierarchies are based on an element of materialism and this encourages the rest of the community to follow them. Girard argued that it was the materialist aspect in the object of desire that created tension within the socio-political elites. The removal of materialism would eliminate the violent mimesis but could also remove the system of socio-economic hierarchies. Ali revealed the truth about the violence by not encouraging it use and opting for the non-violent negotiation. As the representative of God for all eternity, Ali was the victim who represented the truth of the founding murder. 'O' people what I fear most about you are two things – and that is acting according to desires and the

extending of hopes. As regards acting according to desires, this prevents you from truth' (Naqi-un-Naqvi, 1989:126). The 'God of Victims' desired 'love and justice' rather than 'sacrifice and burnt offerings'. This was in agreement with Ali's message that the accumulation of unnecessary wealth was unnecessary. It must be remembered that it is the 'murderers' who carry on the 'sacrificers' that the God of victims is not concerned with.

Girard asserted that myths are told from the perspective of the persecutors. It is part of the perpetrators language that supports the need to perform a 'sacrifice'. However, when the victim is given a voice then there is an emphasis to those 'who understand that God holds all sacrifices in abomination' (Girard, 1987a:231). Shi'ite theology recognizes the divinity of Ali and evoke excessive in praise of Ali. Ali, in being the representative of God on earth, is the only being capable of transcending the violence that had transformed the Islamic society. He was conscious that violence was a central theme and the controlling agent of the Arab tribes; it permeated every form of mythic and cultural structures. Only he was capable of transcending it because he was a nonviolent 'deity'. While Ali was portrayed as a military genius, nonviolence was the only manner in which he could 'signal his existence to mankind' and for him to be 'driven out by violence'. 'This demonstration is bound to remain ambiguous for a long time' adds Girard, 'and it is not capable of achieving a decisive result, since it looks like total impotence to those who live under the regime of violence' (Girard, 1987b:215-220).

After Ali's death, the Ummayad period was established under Mu'awiyah's leadership. Preachers made conscious efforts to ridicule Ali although intentions proved fruitless. Governors flogged those heard speaking of Ali,

> I still hear our followers and the members of our family curse
> Ali ibn Abu Talib, suppress his merits and urge the people to
> hate him. Yet that does not bring the people's hearts anything
> but closeness (to him). They strive to bring the spirits of the
> people closer to themselves. Yet that does not bring their
> hearts anything except (to make the people) more distant from
> them. (al-Mufid, 1977:233)

It should be noted that the portrayal of the divine Ali has been omitted in this speech. Yet it was apparent that the community that had participated in killing Ali are now so enamoured with him that they refused to entertain hostile comments.

Girard claims that once the scapegoat mechanism is exposed and the society is made aware of the method in which the victim was chosen and eliminated, then religion will cease to exist (Girard, 1987a:172). Utilizing a European paradigm of classic literature to demonstrate his theory that religion was not central to the socio-political development of society. Girard claimed to have investigated 'all religions' and to have detected the scapegoat in all faiths but that it is only Christianity that revealed the truth of the victim by giving him a voice. He elaborates on this with Joseph and Jacob, Lot and his *coup de grace* in Jesus Christ. However, Girard had not considered the Shi'ite hero, Ali. Girard has also made the mistake in assuming that religion was not central to socio-political development. He ignores or misinterprets the application of religious laws where it is part of the social reality in Shi'ite Islam and interpreted it as rational moral societal laws. Yet he does not suggest how these have come about other than to reflect on the mythological development of the victim. The Islamic world, on the other hand, combines Islamic principles to the socio-political development but this is not to suggest that they were unable to acknowledge the victim or that the victim was silenced and not given a voice with which to speak. Girard's assertion that religion will eventually be excluded in socio-political reality is problematic.

Ali's death made divine Imams the basis of a complex theological system. The friend (*awliya'*) of God, the Imams like the prophets, had the ability to perform miracles. Like the religions of Judaism and Christianity, Islam emerged as a persecuted faith systems that developed 'elaborate rituals' to cope with repression and death. Those who fell victim were considered martyrs and their deaths became associated with the celebration of life. The understanding is that he 'who loves life never fears death. He fears neither punishment nor imprisonment.'(Dorraj, 1997:491). This lends credence to Girard's emphasis on truth and that only those who are agents of nonviolence can remove themselves from the social violence and the need to continue killing. Rather the knowledge in knowing of your death and somehow choosing to die is not necessarily self-negating but actually an act of 'self-aggrandizement' to affirm

loyalty to a tradition. Although the concept of a scapegoat is a time-honoured tradition as Girard affirms in all societies, it is the establishment of a new tradition that Ali intended to follow and still be 'true' to the instructions and expectations of the Prophet. This loyalty created the sense of communal honour amongst Shi'ite followers and consolidated 'cultural vitality and historical continuity'.

The epic of Ali, rightful inheritor of the caliph, the perfect and honest individual that ushered in the Golden Age of Islam recounted his victory in the heroic age of Islam and became the divine hero of the people's story. The Shi'ites, for whom Ali is their hero, always considered themselves marginalized and prejudiced against, developed a social identity based on ' defeat and tragedy'. Rather than seeing death as an end it was interpreted as a beginning where the individual returned to God. Ali reportedly said, 'martyrdom has been my long-held dream' and his devotion was measured by his willingness to experience death, 'God is a just arbitrator who does not change what is in people until they change what is in themselves' (al-Mufid, 19: 120).

In utilizing the Girardian notion of Christ as God, it is possible to discern similar attributes in Ali the representative of God. Both Jesus and Ali rose 'above the violence that had, up to that point, absolutely transcended mankind'. Ali is a non-violent victim who had been able to appear to mankind because he had himself been driven out by violence. It was the violence that was the controlling agent of 'every form of mythic and cultural structure'. This was an ambiguous situation because the non-violent Ali was not immediately apparent after his death for a long time. It does not achieve conclusive results particularly for those 'who lived under the regime of violence' (Girard, 1987a:219-220). Ali suffered for three days after being stabbed but the mythmakers interpreted a message of persistence rather than exposing the scapegoat mechanism and expose the concept of the tomb. Instead there was an emphasis on Ali's dedication to God and the aspect of forgiveness and therefore 'love'. Although in immense physical pain Ali still 'loved his neighbour' and forgave ibn Muljam in an extreme gesture of generosity and knowledge. 'I advise you' he added, while on his deathbed, 'to maintain good relations among yourselves….for good relations are better than prayer and fasting' (Jafri, 1988:46). This concept of 'three' was also central to Jesus 'end of the sacred' where Jesus announced that 'three days' should elapse between 'death and resurrection'. Ali's 'three days' of suffering revealed a similar

message of 'death and resurrection' but he gave the most important message to his sons to 'respect the blood' of others.

Ali suffered the anxieties and tensions of ordinary people that revealed an important aspect of the scapegoat mechanism – that the victim was an ordinary person. The founding mechanism is revealed in the texts and can be reduced to a purely anthropological context. In understanding the Girardian context one cannot understand the 'true religious content' if one does not understand the historical and anthropological context. In death Ali is victorious over the community; his death revealed the mimetic violence that was at the root of society. He revealed that the violence was not a 'misunderstanding' but that the community participated. By revealing this participation, active or passive, Girard argues that social reality and the 'world can never be the same again' (Girard, 1987a:220).

Girard asserts that the scapegoat mechanism exposed the misunderstanding of the communal violence. The innocent victim has resulted in our ability to recognise and sympathise with them. Therefore, the world has been affected by this revelation. I disagree with Girard's argument that the Cross relates a 'growing concern for victims' everywhere. This suggests that Christianity is globally centralized and that populations all understand the victim of Jesus, that his message is available to all populations. Girard does not acknowledge the viewpoint of 'Western principles' in the Middle East. He also disregards societies that do not acknowledge victims or Girard's 'truth of Christianity'. Yet, I concur that the 'unveiling of mimetic violence had a powerful influence on history' and modernity (Girard, 1987:220). Ali did not claim to bring peace, he was the master of the forked blade Zulfikar, but he suggested to his community that they seek to embrace negotiation rather than confrontation.

The life and death of Ali demonstrates that the body of inherited myths in an important element of literature and in turn literature is a means of extending mythology. Myth is the story of a lynch-death told from perspective of the persecutors and the central element of myth is the 'blindness' of the participants. The belief in the victim's guilt persists. Ali, just as Jesus, recognized that entire cultures were founded on a lie related to a murder. The victims point it out to the community that God is on the side of the victims and not party to the self-deception of the group. In the Shi'ite texts we observe the full revelation of the innocent victim and while we witness the scapegoat in

all myths, the difference is that the story is told from the perspective of the victim. The victim reveals his innocence, he is hated without a cause and his punishment is unjust and that his death will not result in peace.

Ali exposed the double standard; while he was alive the community considered him a bad influence but in death he was reinterpreted as a divine being fulfilling God's instructions. The community argued that Ali was never a victim that his divine position presented a personality that could only take the right path. Ali had understood exactly what would lead to his death. It has been argued by Kohlberg (1975) that he prepared his followers to distance themselves from him, encouraging them to participate in movements that rejected Ali's caliph. This position of taqiyya aligned his followers, while passive in their involvement, led to his murder. We see the blame shifting away from the community to the victim, where he soils his own hands with his blood. It is easier to recognise the negative behaviour of scapegoating in others rather than in ourselves because we believe that our actions and behaviours are justified. Regardless of the manner in which the abuse manifests, the belief is that the violence is always legitimate. The individual that first brought luck and morality to the community is now considered to be manifesting the opposite and his presence is associated with disaster. The only manner by which to purge the community of his powers is to kill him.

We have applied Girard's theory in understanding mimesis, firstly that of the mimesis of the imitative triangular desire, secondly the theory of the scapegoat and the victim mechanism where the conflict was resolved all be it temporarily by the expulsion of an innocent victim. The third and final aspect is the unmasking theory where the victim died revealing the founding lie. Ali stands apart, he is not just another victim crushed by violence and is then resurrected. While Ali does not experience resurrection as Jesus had, the three days after his fatal stabbing revealed his rejection of the tomb. Ali claimed to be an authentic witness to God through his teachings and in his writings. The reason for killing Ali was part of a mechanism to murder people that have nothing to do with God but more to do with human violence. Ali's last will and testament to his sons Hassan and Husayn meant that Ali's knowledge would be assured. In his divine position, Ali revealed that his resurrection in Heaven overcame death. Although there is a shared structure of the prized victim, Girard maintains that clergy have gotten it

wrong. For Ayoub (1978), the comparison lay not with Jesus but with Simon Peter, who was the 'prince of apostles' and the 'keeper of the keys of the kingdom'.

Without Ali, the entire theological system could not exist because 'to love Ali is to love God and to hate him is to hate God'. Ali is the redeemer and the hope of salvation of the Shi'ites. He is venerated throughout the Middle East and although it may be argued that this veneration and deification is limited to small 'extremist' groups, yet many of these groups are socially introverted but share this adoration of Ali.

When old political, social and mythological ideas no longer benefit the community there is a need to create new ideas and legends. Although many of the political and economic structures remain, society erodes, as the populace no longer feels the need or the ability to protest against disintegration. So for Girard to assume that religion no longer plays a central role in our political advancement is to reduce the human identity and knowledge of God. The cycle of violence will always exist and anger and resentment replaces apathy. This is generated by a dependence on judicial systems and an inability to focus and participate within the present environment (Weiner & Weiner, 1990:58-62). Established belief systems promise the populace that the politico-religious authority are accountable in the afterlife and those that have been unjustly treated, such as the voiceless populace, will receive their rewards. However, the apathy reverts back to anger and rather than entertain exclusion, demands are placed on the fraternity of sons for the symbols to be accessed now and for a new political socialisation to be incorporated. For a population that experiences depression and fatigue, the need to unite around a common theme of understanding is very important for communal survival. For violence to be effective there needs to be an understanding amongst the perpetrators. It can easily become chaotic and erratic, that demonstrates powerful vulgarity.

To enact the memories individuals will often flay and punish themselves to empathise with the victim. These emotive gestures define the nature of this community and its solidarity lay in these concepts of rituals, duties and obligations to create and maintain a difference from other communities (Weiner & Weiner, 1996:53). To prevent random violence and random victims from happening again in a society once harmony has been restored the patriarchal establishment introduces the notion of ritual re-enactments. The symbols and narratives of the culture/society become enshrined in the

death of the male so that violence does not consume the society again. It is important to remind the community of how this man died and every detail of his humiliation is played out with dramatic precision as a reminder to followers of what happened. Portrayed as gods on earth here to guide and inform people, these victims demonstrate their knowledge suggesting innocence and purity.

The scapegoat mechanism revealed that Ali is what Girard called the 'God of victims' because he shared 'in their lot' while emerging as the defender of victims. Although this might depict a populist interpretation and therefore be considered an unfairly limited reduction of Ali's historical significance, it should be noted that the theoretical framework of the scapegoat has revealed that the complex system of religion is the sum of its parts. Certainly, there are limitations to the reductionist method of analysis, but it does explain many questionable aspects of Ali that qualify as populist. The scapegoat mechanism has revealed that Ali's death meets many of the requirements contained within Girard's theory, although Girard himself maintained that the presence of only one aspect was sufficient to prove its validity. While this dissertation should be construed as a work in progress related to establishing the social reality of innocent victims, it offers a point of departure that can challenge the Girardian defense of Christianity as being the only religion to reveal the scapegoat mechanism and to possess knowledge of its innocent victims. Shi'ite Islam stands as a worthy competitor to Girard's Christian dominance.

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