

A Review of Abu Talib's entry in the Encyclopedia of Islam published by Leiden

Mohammad Mahmoodpoor

Assistant Professor of Islamic Encyclopedia Foundation

April.2022

Abstract: *Abu Talib is one of the most pivotal figures in the history of Islam, who was influential in many events of the Prophet's (PBUH) era, especially during the period of the Prophet's mission. It seems that knowing his role in the developments of the time of Bi'that is a measure to know the position of the family of the Prophet (PBUH) in the fruition of the mission. The main focus of the research is that what image do the authors of the Leiden edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam, which is the most famous and complete encyclopedia about Islam depict about Abu Talib? In this article, by examining the contents of the three articles of Abu Talib written by Buhl, Watt and Rubin, it was shown that none of these three articles are encyclopedic type as they should be. These articles not only did not use the proper sources and researches of Muslims, especially Shiites, but they do not even reflect the works and researches of Westerners about Abu Talib. These articles are clearly inclined to*

the thoughts and opinions of Sunnis; While the main purpose of encyclopedia articles is to avoid sectarian biases and organize and reflect the latest and most important information available from that entry in the researches.

Key words: Abu Talib, Uri Rubin, Encyclopaedia of Islam, Frants Buhl, Montgomery Watt.

Introduction:

Encyclopaedias are one of the types of reference books that were written after the development of human knowledge to organize and quickly and effectively retrieve knowledge. Encyclopaedias are generally divided into two general and specialized fields, and in both cases, they are designed and organized for quick and effective access of the audience to the latest and most accurate information. Specializing in the field of Islam, *the Leiden Encyclopaedia of Islam*, which is abbreviated as "EI" is the most important and the only complete encyclopedia in the field of Islam. Basically, the encyclopedia and especially this encyclopedia in terms

of content , methods and sources have had a great impact on Islamic studies. In addition, "EI" has been influential on the flow of encyclopedia writing in the Islamic world, especially in Iran, Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan, because the first efforts of Muslims in the field of the encyclopedia writing in a new style has been done with a look at "EI". Of course, considering that the general Muslims are not very optimistic about Western research on Islam, the first efforts in the Islamic world have been made with translation along with the correction and completion of "EI" entries.

The idea of compiling "EI" was first proposed and approved at the 9th International Conference of Orientalists in London. After many years of discussions, this collection

was finally published for the first time in the city of Leiden in the Netherlands between 1913 and 1936 simultaneously in English and French and a little later in German. This collection, which later became known as the first edition of Islam (EI), has 8 volumes and contains about 5000 main entries. the first edition of "EI" was actually the result of the systematic gathering of Western Islamic studies until that time. Due to the shortcomings of the first edition and the growth of Islamic Studies in the West, in 1948, at the 21st International Conference of Orientalists, it was approved that a new edition of it be done. This new edition, later known as "EI"¹, was published between 1960 and 2002 in eleven volumes and a supplementary volume in 2004, containing 9,500 original entries in Leiden, the Netherlands, in both English and French. In this edition, the number of interventions increased by 100%. However, some of the entries of the first edition were translated exactly and some were printed with

additions. In fact, the difference between the two editions was more quantitative than qualitative. Of course, in this edition, unlike the first edition, some entries are also written by Iranian, Arab and Turkish Muslim authors. In any case, the first two editions are completely reflective of the goals of Western Islamology, which for us was based on Christianity and with colonial goals. Therefore, in the first two editions, more entries have been devoted to Turkish speaking nations as well as North Africa, which shows the cultural and colonial aspects of Islamic studies at that time. The third edition of (EI)² started in 2007 and continues. Acknowledging the explosive growth of Islamic studies and with the aim of effective communication with audiences outside the scientific and academic environment, Brill Publications has started a new edition of "EI". Therefore, instead of transliterating Islamic concepts and terms, their English equivalents have been entered, for example, instead of the entry

"*Irtidad*" (apostasy) in editions one and two, its English equivalent, Apostasy, has been determined. In this new edition, in addition to the change of approach, the Islamic world of the 20th century, especially the lesser-known lands such as Southeast Asia and the African Sahara, and the issues related to the rights of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries are emphasized. (Safari, 1399:361-366)

Abu Talib is one of the most central figures in the history of Islam, who had a significant and influential presence in many events of the Prophet's (PBUH) era, especially during the period of the Prophet's Bi'that. It seems that a detailed and comprehensive knowledge of him, in addition to showing his position and role in the developments of the period, the Bi'that, can be a suitable example and standard for understanding the position of the family of the Prophet (PBUH) in the fruition of the Bi'that. Also, a detailed knowledge of the life

and performance of Abu Talib compared to its counterparts in other clans and families of Mecca can provide a practical example of the place of the tribal system in the historical developments of early Islam.

3- Research background

About the criticism and review of "EL", especially in the field of Shia studies, good works have been done, one of the most important of which is the book *Image of Shia Imams in the Encyclopedia of Islam*, which was done under the supervision of Taghizadeh Davari (2008). Of course, this review was only done on the second edition of "EL" and did not deal with the evolution of the relevant entries in the three editions. However, no study has been done on the translation or criticism of Abu Talib's entries in "EL". However, two studies have been conducted in the study of Western studies about Abu Talib, which are also used in this article.

Seyed Alireza Tabatabai Yazdi (2019) in the article “*Descriptive-analytical bibliography of Hazrat Abu Talib in European languages*” classified and offered critical introduction of studies Westerners discussing about Abu Talib.

Mohammad Reza Fakhr Rouhani (2014) also in his article “*Hazrat Abu Talib from the perspective of Orientalists*”, while examining the studies of Westerners, clarified the point why they did not talk about the faith of Abu Talib. Of course, in his article, he did not examine any of Abu Talib's entries in the three editions of “EL”, however, his style and method have been used in this article.

3. Introducing the authors of Abu Talib's trilogy

The entry of Abu Talib in the first edition of “EL” was written by Frants Buhl, in the second edition by Montgomery Watt, and in the third

edition by Uri Rubin. We will introduce them in the following:

3.1 Frants Peter William Mir Buhl

Mir Buhl (1932 - 1850) is a Danish orientalist and linguist. He studied in Denmark and Germany and completed his studies in theology, philosophy and Semitic languages at the University of Copenhagen in 1874. He studied oriental languages, especially Arabic, by Michel Mehren (1822-1902), a famous Danish scientist and he learned Arabic language, philosophy and Islamic sciences. After that, he traveled to Vienna and Leipzig, and from 1876 he attended the lessons of Fleischer (1801 - 1888), a famous German orientalist, and other masters of his time in Europe, and he mastered the Arabic language and its literature. He received his doctorate in 1787 and wrote his academic thesis entitled “*Arabic Grammar and History of the Arabic Language*”. From 1880 to 1890 he was a lecturer in the Old Testament at the University of Copenhagen. From 1890 to 1898 at the University of Leipzig and from 1898 to 1932,

Buhl was a professor of Semitic languages at the University of Copenhagen and was a member of the Damascus Arab Scientific Assembly.

With a high mastery over Hebrew, Aramaic and Phoenician languages, he authored a large and valuable collection of Semitic languages called Gesenius (1895) in which he compared the mentioned languages. Some of Buhl's works are about the history of Islam and the Prophet (PBUH), the most important of which is the biography of Muhammad³ (1955 AD). This book was translated into German by Schaeder⁴ in 1930. In some of his letters, Buhl discussed the state of the Alawites and their politics, and wrote numerous articles about Islamic men and celebrities, the history of their homeland, and their biographies in the Islamic Encyclopedia of Leiden. His studies and works have made a great impact on spreading Islam and learning Arabic eloquence and literature. The book "*Life of Muhammad*" written by Frants Buhl is

one of the works of the first half of the 20th century, which to a certain extent, contrary to the skeptical view of other Orientalists, only examined the historical sources of the Prophet's biography with a critical perspective. Among his other works, we can mention "the religious invitation of Prophet Muhammad in the Qur'an"⁵ "about metaphors and similes in the Qur'an"⁶, "about the interpretation of the Qur'an"⁷ and "calligraphy and its relationship with the Qur'an"⁸.

3.2 William Montogomery Watt (1909 - 2006) was a contemporary Christian thinker and a professor of Arabic language and Islamic studies at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Montgomery Watt was considered one of the most prominent Western Islamic scholars and had a huge impact on the field of Islamic studies. His specialized field of study was the thoughts of Muhammad Ghazali. From 1947 to 1964, he was the senior instructor of Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of

Edinburgh and researched in moral philosophy, ancient philosophy, and Arabic studies. He spent many years at the University of Edinburgh. He taught and trained many students in the field of Islamic studies, due to his empathy with Muslims in his books, his name is respected by many Muslims around the world. He assumed the presidency of the university in 1964 and retired in 1979. Watt's works on the biography of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) are considered classics in this field, the two books *Muhammad in Mecca* and *Muhammad in Medina* are among the most successful works of the first half of the 20th century in the biography of the Messenger of God (pbuh), which is somewhat contrary to the view of other skeptics of orientalists have only dealt with the history of the Prophet (PBUH) with a critical view and by examining historical sources.

He received his doctorate in philosophy with a treatise on "*predestination and free will in early Islam*", and then studied Islamology

and Quranic studies in connection with the Protestant Church of England in Jerusalem. Since 1947, he became the head of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Watt has numerous works, some of which have played a large role in Western Islamic studies. His most important books on Quran studies are: 1- *Introduction to the Quran*⁹; In this book, he criticizes the radicalism of some Orientalists towards the adaptation of the Quran from the soul of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and has a milder tone than others. 2- *Muhammad at Mecca*¹⁰ 3- *Muhammad at Medina*¹¹ 4- *Muhammad: prophet and Statesman*¹², which is a summary of the previous two works. (Badavi, 1375: 2/43).

3-3- **Uri Rubin**, born in 1944, Jewish origin, retired professor of Tel Aviv University from the Department of Islamic and Arabic Studies in Occupied Palestine has discussed his tendencies and beliefs in the fields of Quranic and Hadith sciences through several articles and books. His field of

study is mostly focused on the Holy Qur'an, Tafsir, Hadith, Sirah, and early history of Islam. He wrote sixteen entries of the Quran encyclopedia, which was published in Leiden under the supervision of Mrs. McAuliffe. Also, he wrote a total of eighteen entries of the Encyclopaedia of Islam in the second and third editions. University Uri Rubin is a famous contemporary scholar of Quran and Sunnah. He was born in a suburb of Tel Aviv, Israel. After completing his bachelor's degree, he entered the Arabic Language and Literature Center in Tel Aviv and continued until his doctoral degree. He presented his doctoral dissertation in 1975 on the biography and tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) at the beginning of Islam. After completing his doctorate, he started teaching at the Arabic language faculty of Tel Aviv University and after some time he was appointed as a full professor. Rubin was also a member of the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Rubin's research areas are

events at the beginning of Islam with a special emphasis on the Qur'an, interpretation of the Qur'an and Islamic tradition and hadith. Rubin is one of the scientific advisors of the Encyclopaedia of the Quran Leiden Publications (Braille), some of its entries including the entry "Muhammad (PBUH)" were written by him.

Among his other works, except for the book of "*The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims*"¹³, which was used in the writing of the third article of Abu Talib, we can mention "*the life of Muhammad (pbuh), the formation of the world of Islam* (4 volumes)¹⁴, "*The Shrouded Messenger on the Interpretation of al-muzzammil and al-mudaththir*"¹⁵; "*Apes, Pigs and the Islamic identity*"¹⁶; "*Prophets and Caliphs: The biblical foundation of the Umayyad authority*"¹⁷ "*Prophets and prophethood*"¹⁸, "*Children of Israel*"¹⁹, and "*Prophets and progenitors in the early Shia tradition*"²⁰

4- Translation of the three articles of Abu Talib in the Islamic Encyclopaedia

In this section, in order to respect trust and scientific fairness, the translation of the three articles of the Leiden edition of the Encyclopedia of Islam will be published so that the respected reader can see the original of the authors' words in the article review section, although the volume of all three articles is almost short, the informed readers will notice that there have been other criticisms on these articles, which were not included in this article due to various reasons, and only it has been tried to briefly introduce and review the most important cases.

1. The first article in the first edition of the Leiden Encyclopedia of Islam (E) in the first volume, pages 108-109, is written by Buhl.

Abu Talib, 'Abd Manaf bin Abdul Muttalib, uncle of Muhammad (pbuh). When 'Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of Muhammad (pbuh)

died, Abu Talib took responsibility for his orphaned nephew. According to family tradition, Muhammad (pbuh) accompanied Abu Talib on business trips. Abu Talib was poor and had many children; Therefore, it is said that Muhammad (pbuh) took care of his son Ali (pbuh) in his house to thank Abu Talib. But this may be just a fabricated legend because it is not compatible with Abu Talib's behavior. For example, when the people of Mecca started to persecute Muhammad (PBUH) because of his opposition to their religion, Abu Talib as the head of the family supported Muhammad (pbuh) and despite Mecca people repeated protests, he did not refuse to perform the duty of the head of the family. As after the social boycott of the Quraysh, they were isolated together with Abu Talib in one of the neighborhoods of Mecca city called She'b Abi Talib and lived oppressed there for a long time. The death of his loyal uncle in the tenth year of Bi'that and three years before Migration to Medina was a heavy

blow for Muhammad (PBUH). It is not surprising that the tradition took all the credit of this man, a man who was closely related to the Prophet and there is little information about him. In that tradition, he was the Sayyid of Quraish. Some odes were composed and attributed to him. This question is especially raised about Abu Talib, did he change his religion before his death or did he die as a disbeliever? Sectarian trends are influential in this regard; The general theory, and certainly the correct one, is that, while remaining completely loyal to his nephew, he also persisted in his position. This issue was very unpleasant for the Alawite; Therefore, they made several weak and strong narrations contrary to popular belief. Against the Alawite narratives, the opponents mention the Prophet's lamentations for his uncle's not-so-severe torments in hell.²¹

2. The second article in the second edition of "EL" is written by

Montgomery Watt in the first volume, pages 153-12.

"Abu Talib, the son of Abd al-Muttalib bin Hashem and Fatimah, the daughter of 'Umar and Makhzoumi, and the brother of the father of Muhammad (PBUH). His name was 'Abd Manaf, it is said that Abu Talib had inherited the positions of Saqayeh and Rafadeh, providing water and food for the pilgrims of God's house, from his father, but it seems that his brother Zubair was the prominent leader of Bani Hashem in Halfa al-Fuzul and the battle of Fajjar.

Abu Talib got into debt and to deal with that, he handed over the posts of Saqayeh and Rafadeh to 'Abbas. However, it seems that he remained the head of the Bani Hashem tribe and their residence was called She'b Abi Talib. After the death of Abd al-Muttalib, Abu Talib became the guardian of Muhammad. It is said that Abu Talib took him on business trips to Syria. Abu Talib continued to support Muhammad (pbuh) at the beginning of the mission and even

after the boycott of the Hashem and Muttalib families by the Quraysh leaders. It seems that the boycott of Hashem's family and its content also had economic reasons.

He died shortly after the end of the boycott around 619. It seems that his brother from Abu Talib had become the head of Hashem's family, from his sons by Fatima Abulhab, then the daughter of Asad bin Hashim Ali, who is said to have been raised by Muhammad (PBUH), and Jafar became Muslims while Talib fought with Muhammad in the Battle of Badr.

Although Abu Talib supported Muhammad (pbuh), it is clear that he did not become a Muslim. But this issue was discussed a lot and different opinions have been raised about the fate of those who lived before the mission of Muhammad (PBUH).²²

3. The third article in the third edition of the Encyclopedia of Islam

published by Leiden (EIT) was written by Rubin.

Abu Talib (deceased (619) (A.D.) was the son of Abdul Muttalib bin Hashem and Fatima bint 'Umar Makhzoumi Qurayshi and brother of Abdullah, the father of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is reported that he was born thirty-five years before Muhammad (PBUH). His name was 'Abd Manaf. His sons Talib, 'Aqil, Ja'far and 'Ali were born from his wife Fatima bint Asad from Bani Hashim. After the death of Abd al-Muttalib, Abu Talib inherited from him the positions of Saqayeh and Rafadeh (providing water and food for the pilgrims). It is reported that his eldest son Talib participated in the Battle of Badr (624/2) on the side of the Quraysh and disappeared there (Ibn Sa'd, 1957: 1/121). However, it is also reported that when Abu Talib died, his sons Talib and 'Aqil inherited from him (Ibn Sa'ad, 1957: 1/124).

Abu Talib's idolatrous behavior and his request to his nephew Muhammad (pbuh) to worship the

idols of Quraish are reflected in several narrations (Ibn Sa'ad 1957-68: 1/158). It is also said that he objected to the Islamic way of prayer (sajdah) and stated that he dislikes the position where his back is higher than his head. (Ibn Hajar, 1970: 2357). However, most of the narrations revolve around his support for his nephew because he was Muhammad's closest relative and guardian after the death of Muhammad's parents, Abdullah and Ameneh, and his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib. It is said that Abu Talib was present when 12-year Muhammad met a Christian monk Bahira, who introduced Muhammad as the future prophet of the Arabs. This meeting took place during one of Abu Talib's business trips to Syria, and following the advice of the monk, Abu Talib undertook this duty to protect his nephew as much as possible. It is said that after Muhammad received the revelations, Abu Talib supported his nephew against the persecution of the Meccan infidels of the Quraysh, although according to most of his

sources he never accepted Islam. Prosecution of a part of Quraysh led to put sanction on all Quraysh and they had to take refugee in She'b Abi Talib. This embargo occurred seven years after receiving Muhammad's first revelation and continued until the tenth year. Many poems in support of Muhammad have been attributed to Abu Talib. And it is said that Quraysh as long as his uncle was alive did not harm Prophet (ibn Sa'ad, 1957: 124/1)

As it was reported he loved Muhammad. The narrations say that Abu Talib could not separate himself from the tribal heritage of Quraysh. The obvious distress of these conflicting loyalties is reported in the narrations related to his death. It is said that the Prophet encouraged him to say shahadatayn before his death and accepted Islam, but the leaders of Quraysh, who were also present at his deathbed, prevented him from doing so. However, some narrations claim that he was heard to say shahadatayn just before his death. It is reported that

Abu Talib died ten years after the first revelation at the age of more than eighty. He was buried in the Mecca cemetery in Hujjun (Belazuri, 1996: 2 791). Some say that his death was a month before the death of Khadija and others say a month later.

His fate in the other world, often closely related to the fate of Muhammad's parents and grandfather, is widely discussed in the sources. Ibn Sa'ad (1957: 1/122) says in a narration that Muhammad wanted to ask God to forgive his uncle, but this verse was revealed and forbade the believers from asking forgiveness for the sins of any of the polytheists, even their closest relatives (Qur'an 9:113). Despite this, it is said that Muhammad asked God to move Abu Talib's position in hell from the bottom of hell to a shallow level (Ibn Sa'ad, 1957: 1/124). The view that he actually gained access to heaven due to the intercession of Muhammad (pbuh) or even died as a perfect Muslim is found

in some Shiite sources. According to Ibn Abi al-Hadid, this idea is in common with some schools of thought of Mu'tazila but he was never fully convinced by their arguments.²³

5. Evaluation of the three articles concerning Abu Talib

5-1- Criticism of sources

The first article uses six sources, Tabari, Ibn Hisham, Ibn Hajar, Kaytani, Goldzihar and Noldeke.

In the second article, the three sources of Ibn Sa'ad, Buhl, and Watt have been added to the previous six and a total of nine sources are used. The third article only in the use of two sources, Ibn Sa'ad and Ibn Hajar, is in common with the first two articles. The third article, apart from Ibn Sa'ad and Ibn Hajar, has used eight other sources, namely the Qur'an, Balazuri, Kulayni, Ibn Manzoor, Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Qurtubi, Gulbarg and Rubin. In total, by removing duplicate and similar sources, seventeen sources have been used in these articles. More than half of the sources used are

Islamic classics and the rest are from late Western studies.

Ten Islamic sources have been used in Abu Talib's three entries. The Qur'an as a divine book and the most important source of Islamic research is only used by the author of the third article. The two sources *Tabaqat al-Kubra* by Ibn Sa'ad and *al-Isabah* by Ibn Hajar Asqalani are common in all three articles. *Tabaqat al-Kubra* is the most important and the oldest book on the biography of the Prophet (PBUH), his Companions and followers and hadith narrators up to the beginning of the third century AH.

Ibn Sa'ad is one of the historians who achieved the title of "Hafiz" due to his skill and mastery in hadith. Basically, Ibn Sa'ad wrote the book *Tabaqat* to introduce the narrators of hadith; therefore, his approach and method in writing this book is very close to the hadith writer²⁴. *Al-Isabah Fi Tamiz Al-Sahabah* by Shahabuddin Ahmed Bin Ali, known as Ibn Hajar Asqalani (died in 852 A.H.) is one of the great Shafi'i scholars in jurisprudence,

hadith and history. *Al-Isabah* is one of the most famous books in Ilm al-Rijal.

Sharh-e Nahj al-Balaghah by Ibn Abi al-Hadid (died (656 AH)) from Shafi'i and Usuli Mu'tazili jurists. This book is in 20 volumes and contains a huge collection of Islamic literature, history and theology, which is written by focusing on a commentary on *Nahj al-Balaghah*. Although, due to Ibn Abi al-Hadid being a Mu'tazili, some of the theological topics raised in this book are close to the Shia beliefs, in historical topics and also regarding the principle of Imamate, he is far away from Shia culture and views.

The two books of *Sirah Ibn Hisham* and *Tarikh Tabari* are also common in the first two articles. *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah* by Abu Muhammad 'Abdul Malik bin Hisham (died 218 AH) is one of the first and most famous sources about the biography of the Prophet (PBUH). *Tarikh Al-Umam va Al-Rusul val Muluk* known as *Tarikh al-Tabari* wrote by Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Al-Tabari (died

310 AH). These two works are the most important and famous sources in the researches related to the history of early Islam.

The other four books, i.e. *brief history of Damascus*, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, *Sharh-e Nahj al-Balaghah*, and *Usul and Furu' Kafi*, were used only by Rubin, the author of the third article. *Mukhtasar Tarikh Damascus* wrote by Jamal al-Din Muhammad Ibn Mukarram Ibn Manzoor (died 711 A.H.), one of the famous Egyptian jurisprudents, writers and judges. Ibn Manzoor is the writer of *Lisan al-Arab* - one of the most famous dictionaries in the Arabic language. Apart from this dictionary, he has summarized some works, the most famous of which is *Tarikh Damascus* by Ibn 'Asaker (died 571 AH). *Ansab al-Ashraf* wrote by Ahmed bin Yahya bin Jaber Balazuri (died 279 AH) one of the prominent historians of the third century. This book is in the field of history and biographies of the prominent figures of early Islam, the overall volume of which is more

detailed than Ibn Sa'd's *Al-Tabaqaat* and less than Tabari's *Tarikh*, and in this respect, it is in the middle of these two works. *Ansab al-Ashraf* as one of the most important historical works of the 3rd century, contains valuable narratives about the events of early Islam. The connection between Belazari and the Abbasid court as "companion" and "writer" is also visible in presenting a positive image of Bani Abbas and selecting some narrations. *Tadzkirah Fi Ahwal Al-Muti wa Umur Al-Ukhera* by Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Qurtubi (died 671 AH) is one of the commentators and jurists of Maliki who wrote this book on ethics, prayer and preaching. Among these books only *Usul va Furu' Kafi* by Abu Ja'afar Muhammad bin Yaqub Kulayni (died in 329 AH) belongs to Shia. *Usul* in the religious traditions and *Furu'* in the jurisprudential traditions are among the most important Shia hadith books.

Among the researches of orientalists, the book *History of Islam* by Leone Caetani (died 1935 AD) is more

important than the rest. Caetani, an Italian politician and historical scholar, is one of the founders of Islamology in the West. Caetani's thought, method and works are so trusted that are used by later orientalists usually without criticism. Ignaz Goldziher (died in 1921) is one of the prominent Jewish orientalists from Hungary, who has written more than 60 works in the field of Islamology and Arabic linguistics. His most famous and complete work is discourses about Islam. (Badawi, 1375: 328-334) Goldziher in a work in 1889, criticizing the historical narratives, considered Abu Talib's faith to be fabricated by the Umayyads. Theodor Noldeke (died 1931) is one of the great German orientalists whose most important and famous work is the *History of the Qur'an*. More of his researches have been in the field of Arabic language, literature and poetry.(Badawi, 1375: 422-419) Ethan Kohlberg is one of the contemporary orientalists and Shia scholars who has written many works on the history and beliefs of Shia and

in the third article, Mr. Rubin has benefited from his article on *Taqiyya in Shia beliefs*. About the next three authors, namely Buhl, Watt and Rubin, each of whom is the author of one of the three articles, some material have already written and we will avoid repeating it in this section.

5-2- Criticism of the contents of the three entries

Similarly, as being written in the introduction of the first edition of "EL", all entries in the first edition were written by Westerners. Therefore, this collection is undoubtedly a reflection of Western studies in the field of Islam. All three entries of Abu Talib in the three editions of "EL" is also written by Westerners and non-Muslims. And as Fakhr Rouhani (1394: 10699) has shown in his review of the works of Orientalists, the most important point that all of them have not considered and addressed about Abu Talib is the the issue of Islam and his faith.

1-2-5- Islam and the faith of Abu Talib

All three entries have dealt with the issue of Abu Talib's Islam and faith with a skeptical and very superficial view. This doubt has been raised in two ways as mentioned in the three articles. There are famous and frequent reports of Abu Talib's support of the Prophet after the beginning of the invitation. Apart from unhesitatingly supporting the Prophet (pbuh), Abu Talib also encouraged his children to accept the call and follow Islam, and at the same time, he used all the strength and credit of Bani Hashim to support the Prophet (pbuh) and deal with harassment and persecution. Quraysh had put Abu Talib's performance was so clearly effective that it has been acknowledged in these articles as well. On the other hand, historical narratives corresponding to theoretical issues being presented in some historical and narrative sources indicate Abu Talib's lack of faith in Islam. Every fair and accurate researcher knows that

historical narratives related to social action are not comparable to theoretical narratives; therefore, in the first reading, one can easily doubt this as historical distortions and falsification of hadiths in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras have been pointed out by westerns and Muslim orientalists. For example, some orientalists, including Sprenger (d. 1893) and Goldzihar in 1889, have noticed in their criticism of these traditions that the issue of Abu Talib's faith in the Umayyad era and especially the Abbasid era has been distorted. In 1987, in his article about the death of Abu Talib, Fred McGraw Donner has criticized the historical narratives and showed that the narratives of Abu Talib's blasphemy were made during the Abbasid period. To reduce the high position of Abu Talib, Abbasids fabricated narratives to put Abu Talib on the same level of 'Abbas who had not become a Muslim until the conquest of Mecca, and even participated in the Battle of Badr against the Prophet (PBUH). Even

considering the death of Abu Talib before the emigration, they created a fake character called "Talib" and introduced him as the eldest son of Abu Talib and placed him on the same line with 'Abbas in the Battle of Badr against the Prophet (PBUH) in order to avoid the burden of not accompanying 'Abbas with Prophet. To prove that Talib's character is fake it is enough to say that there is no other report about him and even how he died. This is why Rubin writes in the third article that he disappeared in the Battle of Badr! Another point worth noting is that concerning the conversion of early Muslims, do we have historical reports about their saying Shahadatayn? How can we put aside and neglect all efforts of Abu Talib and hid practical support from Prophet and doubt about his Islam and his faith?

Many works have been written about the faith of Abu Talib in the advanced Shia and Sunni sources, among them are *Bughyat al-Talib lel Iman Abi Talib va Husne Khatimat* by 'Allameh

Suyuti and *Asna al-Matalib fi Najah Abi Talib* by Shafi'i Mufti of Mecca , Seyyed Ahmad bin Zaini Dahlan Shafi'i. (died 1304 AH). The book *Iman Abu Talib* authored by Sheikh Mufid (died 413 AH) is one of the most important advanced sources of Shia about the faith of Abu Talib. Also, Abdullah Khanizi has published a book entitled *Abu Talib Mu'mine Quraysh*, which according to Ayati is the best book ever written about Abu Talib's faith (Ayati, 1369: 170-196). In recent years many scientific articles have been published, among the most important of which we can mention Mirza Ibrahim bin Abi al-Fath Zanjani (died (1351)) who wrote the 'Aqd al-Anamil in the proof of Abu Talib's faith. He studied this issue by old mathematical calculations to study narratives in this regard and by approach has tried to prove the faith of Abu Talib. This study was published in the Safinah quarterly with the research of Hamid Salim Gandomi (1394). Mohtaram Shekariyan and Ihteram Shekariyan (2009) also in the

article "*A rereading of the faith of the Qurayshi believer, Hazrat Abu Talib, peace be upon him*", while explaining the existing historical reports about the faith of Abu Talib, have also dealt with the doubts of this area. Seyyed Mohammad Kazem Tabatabai et al. review and review (1394 (Sh) in the article "*Three Points and Needs of Research on Hazrat Abu Talib, peace be upon him*", with an examination of the viewpoints of Sunni historians have criticized the traditions of Sahih Muslim and Bukhari with the method of Ihtijaj and with the traditional approach of hadith sciences. Mohammad Fakir Meybodi (2013) also criticized the interpretations of Sunnis in his article "*Documental Criticism of descendant of the Quranic Verses in blasphemy of Abu Talib*". Some Sunnis had tried to interpret some verses of the Qur'an as the blasphemy of Hazrat Abu Talib.

5.2.2 Abu Talib family

One aspect of Abu Talib's personality is his family, especially his wife. The

names of all children of Abu Talib are not introduced in any of the three articles. There are also conflicting information about his eldest son, Talib, especially that in the third article, Rubin reports about Talib's presence in the Battle of Badr and his disappearance in the same war; In his criticism, he writes that sources have reported that Talib inherited from Abu Talib after his death. This is despite the fact that Abu Talib's death occurred in the tenth year of Bi'that, i.e. five years before the Battle of Badr.

Also, in the three entries under review, only the conversion of Abu Talib's two children to Islam, Ali (a.s.) and Ja'far, is mentioned, and there is no mention of other children's conversion to Islam, especially Abu Talib's wife, Fatima bint Asad. While, according to most historical sources, Fatima bint Asad was the 11th person and the second Muslim woman (Ibn Abi al-Hadid 1378: 1/14). It is interesting that in the three editions of "EL", an entry

with the name "Fatima Bint Asad" has not been set.

5.2.3 Poems of Abu Talib

In the first and third editions, Buhl and Rubin tried to undermine one of the most important sources which help to know Abu Talib by regarding Abu Talib's poems be fake. Watt, in the third edition, does not point out to Abu Talib being a poet at all. This is despite the fact that apart from the advanced sources and the later researches of Muslims and especially Shiites about the poems of Abu Talib, the authors of the three entries did not even pay serious attention to the Western researches about the poems of Abu Talib and only put forward the same old claim that is in line with the point of view of Ahl al-Sunni. For example, Noldeke (died in 1864), who is also among the sources of these entries, discussed about Abu Talib's poems and considered some of them correct.

Abu Talib's poems, which are completely frank in his faith and

Islam, have been discussed in detail in the seventh volume of Al-Ghadir book, and after that, forty hadiths about the faith and virtues of that honorable man have been quoted from famous and reliable books. Among other things, it has been mentioned that Abu Talib's potries (a.s.) were collected by Abu Naim Ali bin Hamzah Busri Tamimi (died 375 A.H. in Sicily). (Ayati, 1369: 170-169)

5.2.4 Historical mistakes

First, the first trip of the Prophet (PBUH) with Abu Talib to Syria is narrated in detail in all three entries, especially in the third entry. In the third entry, Rubin has also mentioned the story of Abu Talib's encounter with Bahira the monk and his prediction of Muhammad's prophethood. By examining the existing narratives of this story in the old sources and the existence of many contradictions and mistakes in it, it is completely obvious that the origin of the story and the narration of its details are fictitious; As Zargari-nejad (192-

184: 1390) by critically examining two existing narratives and showing many content problems in these narratives has shown that these narratives were made to pretend that the Prophet (PBUH) taught his religion not through revelation but through Jewish and Christian scholars.

Second, in the first edition, Buhl considers the presence and upbringing of Imam Ali (a.s.) in the house of the Prophet (s.a.) as a myth and fiction without any historical document or witness and even without any logical argument. Watt also pointed out to the training of Imam Ali (a.s.) by the Prophet (a.s.) in the form of “it is said”! While, according to most of the historical sources, during the famine and drought in Mecca and for the help and appreciation of Abu Talib, the Prophet (PBUH) took the guardianship of his son Ali (AS) and this is why it is stated in most of the previous sources that Imam (a.s.) was the first person who converted to Islam; And this issue is so well-known that the Sunnis do not consider the conversion of Imam

Ali (a.s.) to Islam to be important because he was a teenager; they do so to mitigate this incident and give preference to Abu Bakr's Islam.

Thirdly, in the second edition of Abu Talib's article, without mentioning social and economic sanctions against Quraysh, Watt introduces She'b Abi Talib as the residence of Bani Hashem in Mecca. While She'b Abi Talib was the name of an area in the city of Mecca that was owned by Abu Talib, and in the seventh year of the Prophethood, in order to reduce the social pressures of the Quraysh, Bani Hashim had settled there for a limited period at the suggestion of Abu Talib, and since then that property became known as She'b Abi Talib.

5.3. Criticism of the method and approach of Abu Talib's three articles entries in “EL”

First, the most important methodological flaw in writing entries of “EL”, especially what is evident in Abu Talib's three entries, is the disregard of Western researchers to the

advanced Shiite sources and new Shiite researches in Arabic and Persian languages. Therefore, it seems that the authors of the three mentioned entries have studied the life of Abu Talib by looking at Sunni sources. As in the first edition, Buhl uses the adverbial expressions "certainly" and "completely" in expressing Sunni opinions without any documents or even arguments. Almost all three entries, without paying attention or referring to the research heritage of orientalists in distorting history in Omavi and Abbasi era, state without any reason or logic that the Shia narrations about the faith of Abu Talib are fake. Or Watt in the second edition, like Buhl, without any proof writes a it is clear that he did not become a Muslim. Rubin, in the third edition, in most cases first brings the point of view of Ahl al-Sunni, and then very briefly gives the opinion of Shiites.

Second, Abu Talib's entry in the first two editions were written without any references, and it is not clear what material the authors have quoted or

taken from which book so that the contents of the two articles can not be reviewed from this point of view. It seems that they have quoted what they judge as famous, and mentioned a few sources at the end of the article. But in writing the third entry, Uri Rubin wrote the references to some of his material in the text; However, the number of references at the end of the article is more than the number of references in the text. This is despite the fact that the final sources of the article must correspond to the referenced items in the text, otherwise it will not be of scientific use, and in a more correct sense, the referencing and source writing of such articles cannot be verified because it is not clear exactly what article, which page or volume are used. Referring to a narration by Ibn Sa'd (1985: 1/158), Rubin erroneously writes that Abu Talib's idolatrous behavior is mentioned in several narrations. While Ibn Sa'd refers to only one narration and one behavior of Abu Talib and there is no repetition in it. Also, in Ibn

Sa'd and other earlier works, there are also narrations about Abu Talib being a believer and a Muslim, which the author did not pay attention to.

6- Conclusion

Most of the sources of Abu Talib's three entries, especially in the first two editions, belong to Orientalists, and they have not paid any attention to the researches of Muslims, both Iranian, Turkish and Arab, or paid attention only to some Islamic heritage, and of course in a selective and proportionate manner based on the model proposed in the researches of Orientalists. Abu Talib's three entries, especially in the first two editions, has dealt with the unbelief of Abu Talib very definitely. It seems that the authors of Abu Talib's three entries, regardless of some of the legacy of Western orientalists, still insist on Abu Talib's disbelief. Even the author of the third edition, Uri Rubin, who in his book, "*The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims*"²⁵ provides a technical and

detailed critique of the historical narratives about the issue of Abu Talib's faith, and in his article he also refers to the same book, surprisingly, he does not mention any critical discussions about this, and only suffices to the outline of two conflicting narratives about Abu Talib's faith. Of course, with the following discussions, including the opinion of the Sunnis in the interpretation of verse 113 of Surah Towba and the opinion of Ibn Abi al-Hadid about the uncertainty of the Shia's point of view, he still tilts the scale towards Abu Talib's infidelity.

In this study, it became clear that one of the disadvantages of Western studies in the field of Shia studies is their lack of familiarity with the Persian language and new researches that are conducted in Iran. What if Uri Rubin, who wrote the third edition of Abu Talib's entry in 2017, referred to one of the most important and serious Iranian studies in this field, namely the entry "Abu Talib" in the Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, he could have reached

the points of the opinions of contemporary Iranian Shia scholars, and solved many of his mistakes. The entry "Abu Talib" (Golshani, 1378: 5 (618-620) was published in the fifth volume of the Great Encyclopaedia of Islam in 1387, and a few years before Rubin's work.

If Abu Talib's entries in the three editions of "EL" is regarded as a project in three different periods of time, the influence of Shiite studies in Iran and its reflection in the West, especially in the third, is clearly defined. Although according to the examination of specialized works related to Abu Talib in Western studies as well as Shia studies in Arabic and Islamic languages, it seems that the authors of Abu Talib's three entries, instead of organizing the studies done on Abu Talib, which is the main and inherent task of encyclopedias, have focused more on presenting their own points of view.

References

Ayati M. I. (1369 Sh). **History of the Prophet of Islam**. Tehran: University of Tehran.

Badavi, 'Abdul Rahman (1375) **Farhang Kamel Khavarshasan**, translated by Shukrullah Khakrand. Qum: Daftar Tablighat Islami

Buhl, Frants. (1987). "Abu Talib ". **First Encyclopaedia of Islam** - edited by M. Th. Houtsma, et el, Leiden: Brill

Donner, Fred McGraw- (1987). "The Death of Abu Talib". in John H. Marks and Robert M. Good (eds.), *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East. Studies in Honor of Marvin H. Pope* (Guilford, CT : Four Quarters Press). pp. 237-450.

Faker Meibudi, Mohammad. (1399) Criticism of documents and reasons of revelation of Quranic verses concerning Abu Talib's disbelief. **Two quarterly Ilahiyat Qurani** (Theological approach). V.8,N.7:14. Spring and Summer, pp.13-38.

Fakhr Rouhani, Muhammadreza.(1394 Sh.). Hazrat Abutalib az negah barkhi Moshtashreghan. **Specialized Quarterly Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies**

Safineh. V.12. N.47. summer, pp. 97-106.

Golshani, 'Abdul Karim (1378), Abu Talib. **Islamic comprehensive Encyclopedia.** Under the supervision of Kazem Mousavi Bojnordi, Tehran: Markaz Dayeratul Maaref Bozorg Islami.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid.(1378). **Sharh Nahj al-Balagheh.** Researched by Muhammad Abulfadl Ibrahim, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabiyyah.

Ibn Sa'd. (1405 AH / 1985 AD). Al-Tabaqat Al-Kubra, Beirut: Dar Beirut

Rubin, Uri (2017). "Abu Talib". The Encyclopaedia of Islam. THREE. Edited by Kate Fleet, et el.(https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/en-tries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/*-COM22171)

Safari, Mehdi. (2019) **Encyclopedia and encyclopedia writing: History, methods, and examples.** under the supervision of Gholam Ali Haddad 'Adel :Tehran: Marja' book.

Salim Gandomi, Hamid (2014).Aqd al-An'amil in the proof of faith of Abu Talib. Mirza Ibrahim bin Abi al-Fath Zanjani (died 1351 AH)". **Specialized Quarterly**

Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies

Safineh: V.12. N.47. Summer pp. 165-184.

Shukriyan Muhtaram & Shukriyan Ihteram (1389, 1390). Reciting the faith of the Mu'min Quraysh, Hazrat Abu Talib (peace be upon him). **Two quarterly research Journal on the history of Islamic culture and civilization.** V.1 and N.1, 2: winter and spring pp. 169-190.

Tabatabaei Yazdi, 'Alireza. (1399). Descriptive-analytical bibliography of Hazrat Abu Talib in European languages, **Aeeneh Pazhohesh.** No. 182, Khordad and Tir, pp. 224-187.

Tabatabai, Seyyed Mohammad Kazem et al. (2014). Three points and research requirements about Hazrat Abu Talib (peace be upon him). **Specialized Quarterly Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies Safineh.** V.13. N.49. Winter, pp. 113-100

Taghizadeh Davari (2015) Mahmoud, **the image of Shiite imams in the Encyclopedia of Islam** (criticism and translation). Qum, Intisharat Shia Shenasi

Watt, W. Montogomery. (1986). "Abu Talib". The Encyclopaedia of Islam, edited by H.A. R. Gibb, et al, new ed. Leiden: Brill.

Zargari-nejad, Gholam-Hossein (1390).

Early History of Islam (Age of Prophethood). Tehran: Samt.

End notes:

¹ The Encyclopaedia of Islam. new ed. Leiden: Brill, 1960-2004.

² The Encyclopaedia of Islam: Three, Leiden: Brill, 2007.

³ Das Leben Muhammads, Quelle & Meyer, Heidelberg: 1955.

⁴ Hans Heinrich Schaeder

⁵ Muhammeds religiose Forkyndelse efter Quranen, Kobenhavn: J. H. Schultz, 1924.

⁶ "Uber Vergleichungen und Gleichniss im Quran", Reprinted from Acta orientalia 2, 1924.

⁷ "Zur Kuranexegesc", Ao3, 1925.

⁸ "Die Schrift und was damit Zusammenhangt im Quean", Oriental Studies Paul Haupt, 1926.

⁹ Introduction to the Qur'an, Edinburgh University Press, 1970.

¹⁰ Muhammad at Macca, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1953.

¹¹ Muhammad at Medina, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1956.

¹² Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman, Oxford University Press, London 1961.

¹³ The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims, a Textual Analysis, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, vol. 5, Princeton, N. J: The Darwin Press, Inc, 1995.

¹⁴ The life of Muhammad (the formation of the Classical Islamic World), Aldershot, 1998.

¹⁵ The Shrouded Messenger on the Interpretation of al-muzzammil and al-mudaththir, JSAI 16 (1993).

¹⁶ Apes, Pigs and the Islamic identity, IOS 17 (1997).

¹⁷ Prophets and Caliphs. The biblical foundation of the Umayyad authority, Method and Theology in the study of Islamic origins, Leiden, 2003.

¹⁸ «Prophets and prophethood», Encyclopaedia of the Quran, Leiden, Brill, 2004.

¹⁹ Children of Israel, in Encyclopaedia of the Quran, Leiden, Brill, 2001.

²⁰ Prophets and progenitors in the early Shia tradition, JSAI 1, 1979.

²¹ Tabari, v.1.p.1123,1174,1199; Ibn Hisham, v.1,p.115,167,172; Ibn Hajar, Isabah,v.4,p.211-219. Caetani ,annali dell islam .i. 308: Goldziher, Muhammad, Stud. ii,107; Nokleke,in the zeitschr. D. deutsh. Morgenl. Gesellsch, lii, 27 et seq.

²² Ibn Hisham, pp. 114-17, 147-77; Ibn Sa'd, vol. 1, p. 1, 75-9, 134-5, 139-41; Tabari, vol. 1, pp. 61123 85-1173; Ibn Hajar, Isabah, vol. 4, pp. 9-211; Noldeke, in ZDMG, p27-8; Goldziher, muh. Studien, v2, p107; Caetani, annali, v1, p158,298, 307; Buhl, das leben muhammads, p115-8; Montgomery watt, Muhammad at mecca.

²³ Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat al-Kubra, (Beirut, 1957-68), v.1,pp.25-117, 5-153, 3-201, 10-208; Belazuri, Min Ansab Al-Ashraf, (Beirut 1996),v.2,pp.9-790; Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Ya'qub Koleini; Usul val Furū', (Beirut 1980), vol.1,pp.9-446; Ibn Manzur, Muhammad bin Mukram, Mukhtasar Tarikh Dameshq Ibn 'Asakir, (Damascus 1984-8),pp.20-36; Ibn Abi al-

Hadid, (Beirut 1987),v.14,pp.65-84; Qurtubi, Tazkarah fi Ahval al-Muta va Umor al-Ukhra, (Beirut 1990), p.15; Ibn Hajar, al-Isabah fi Ma'refat al-Sahabah, (Quiro 1970-2),v.7,pp.244-235.

²⁴ One of the most important intellectual components of Ahl al-Hadith in historiography is their attention to the theory of "justice of companions". Ibn Sa'd also discussed this theory in many discussions of his book until the conclusion of the story of the Companions in such a way as not to harm the Companions.

²⁵ Rubin, Uri, The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims, a Textual Analysis, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, vol. 5, Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1995.