

Saqifa: The First Manifestations of the Emergence of the Shi'i Viewpoint

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In any attempt to determine the origins of Shi'i feelings in Islam, one must try to examine in detail the earliest incident in which such feelings manifest themselves. The history of a people in every branch, be it political, cultural, religious, or constitutional, is an unbroken continuity. No religious or political organization nor any particular viewpoint within a religious tradition can be properly understood without due reference to its first tangible appearance.

Historically the event of the Saqifa is inextricably connected with the emergence of the Shi'i viewpoint. The Saqifa, after which the event is named, was an old assembly hall in Medina where the people used to discuss and resolve their crucial problems. It was there that, as soon as the news of the Prophet's death came out, the people of Medina gathered together to choose their leader.

It was there that a group of Muhajirun forced on the Ansar their wish for the acceptance of Abu Bakr as the sole leader of the community. In this meeting at the Saqifa, some voices were raised in support of 'Ali's claims to the caliphate; thus "Saqifa" should be taken as a generic name for the first split among the Muslims.

To ignore it in tracing out Shi'i history and subsequent development in Islam would certainly lead to misunderstanding and wrong conclusions. It is thus an historical imperative to examine the proceedings of the Saqifa and attempt to ascertain the points raised therein which ultimately found expression in the establishment of the Shi'i discipline in Islam.

A characteristic historiographical problem has to be seriously taken into consideration before any attempt can be made to outline the Saqifa incident. One may well question the authenticity of the reports in ascertaining the exact details of what occurred in the selection of the first successor of the Prophet. The controversial nature of the subject itself and the difficulty inherent in the source material make the task of this investigation far from easy.

This difficulty becomes still more serious when we note that the earliest extant report on the event was committed to systematic writing not before the first half of the second century of Islam, and during the reign of the first two 'Abbasid caliphs. This was the time when the division of the Muslim community into Shi'i and Sunni groupings had set deep into the hearts of Muslims, and both camps were accusing each other of deviation from the true path of Islam. In these circumstances it seems quite possible that the different reports describing the

proceedings of Abu Bakr's selection would have been circulated from different quarters according to their respective interests. One might, therefore, suspect the reports of the historians of Shi'i sympathies such as Ibn Ishaq, Ya'qubi, and Mas'udi as being biased in favour of the Shi'is; and similarly the writings of Ibn Sa'd, Baladhuri, and even Tabari as reporting in Sunni colour.

Nevertheless, a close scrutiny of all early sources named above shows that the event of the Saqifa is reported, in its broad outline and essential points, in very similar ways, with of course some differences in details, in treatment of the material, and in emphasis on one report or the other. These differences are clearly indicative of the inclinations of the respective writers or their informants towards one side or the other, and can be discerned, though not without some difficulty. Similarly those reports of the very few writers who take extreme positions to support one particular view can also be easily distinguished when compared with other accounts.

For a study of this nature, it would be most appropriate to extract and examine the earliest known coherent tradition as a basis for comparison with accounts recorded by other writers. The earliest extant work which reports the Saqifa episode is that of Muhammad b. Ishaq b. Yasar (born 85/704, died 151/768), whose *Sirat Rasul Allah* was the first comprehensive biography of the Prophet. His report, though concise and brief, gives almost all the essential information of the event without dwelling on many of the details and different reports given by the writers who immediately followed him.

The shortness of Ibn Ishaq's account of the Saqifa is easily understandable in that his work deals mainly with the life and career of the Prophet. The event of the Saqifa in all its details is thus beyond the scope of his work; that the incident is mentioned at all is probably due to the fact that it took place before the burial of the Prophet. This is evident from the arrangement of the closing chapters of his biography, which deal with: **1: The illness of the Prophet, 2: His death, 3: The affair of the Saqifa of Bani Sa'ida, 4: Funeral preparations and burial of the Prophet.**

Ibn Ishaq first introduces the event in only a few lines and without citing his authorities.¹ It is Ibn Ishaq's usual technique to introduce first a collective tradition by combining different reports into a simple narrative which serves as an introduction to the detailed account which follows. In this he proves himself to be a loyal pupil of his master Az-Zuhri, who was the first to introduce collective traditions.² Thus what appears to be simply an introductory paragraph in Ibn Ishaq's narrative of the Saqifa is given by others with different isnads (chain of transmitters) and with slightly varying words and lengths. After this brief introduction Ibn Ishaq relates the whole event in one single tradition of considerable length, which runs to about three

and a half pages³ and covers almost all the essential points of the event. This tradition deserves a few observations. Firstly, the whole story is related in the very words of the second caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattab, from one of his Friday sermons in the mosque of Medina. 'Umar being a strict disciplinarian in observance of religious formalism, Friday prayers must have been attended by a great number of people in Medina, and his exposition must have had such a wide circulation among both the Muhajirun and the Ansar that it could not be a later fabrication attributed to him. Secondly, this speech is reported almost unanimously by the majority of the historians who followed Ibn Ishaq, such as Tabari and even Baladhuri, who often wrote selectively to support the Sunni viewpoint of his day. Thirdly, it is beyond any doubt true that 'Umar b. al-Khattab himself played the most important role at that crucial moment, took the initiative in the fateful event of the Saqifa, and indeed was the moving spirit in the selection of Abu Bakr. A unanimously accepted report in his own

words is therefore of the greatest historical importance. Fourthly, Ibn Ishaq begins the tradition by prefixing the words "in connection with these events (Saqifa) 'Abd Allah b. Abi Bakr told me..." This indicates that, besides 'Umar's account, Ibn Ishaq was aware of other reports and detailed accounts, but for the sake of brevity picked out the one which he considered the most reliable and at the same time comprehensive enough to cover the entire event.

The isnad of this tradition in Ibn Ishaq is direct, short, based solely on Medinese informants, and prefixed with the verb of certainty and personal contact, haddathani, "he told me". The isnad reads: "'Abd Allah b. Abu Bakr told me from (1) Ibn Shihab Az-Zuhri (2) from 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud (3) from 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas." Both 'Abd Allah b. Abi Bakr⁽⁴⁾ (born ca. 60/679-80, died ca. 130/747-8) and Zuhri⁴ (born ca. 51/671, died 124/742) belonged to the third generation (Tab'i Tabi'un) after the Prophet, and to the second generation of traditionists. Both were pioneers of Muslim historiography, and both received their material from the Tabi'un, who in turn were either eye-witnesses to the events while in their early youth or had received the information from the Companions of the Prophet.

With the recent researches in Islamic historiography by Nabia Abbott⁵ and others, it is now established beyond any doubt that the life, wars, and career of the Prophet, collectively known as Sira, along with subsequent events, became an object of historical research beginning with the generation that followed Muhammad.

In this connection there appear names such as Aban⁶ (born ca. 20/641, died ca. 100/718-19), the son of the Caliph 'Uthman; 'Urwa b. az-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam⁷ (born 23/644, died

94/712-13); Wahb b. Munabbih⁸ (born 34/654-5, died 110/728-9); and others. This interest in historical research gathered great momentum by the third generation and reached its climax in the Sira or Maghazi works of two of Ibn Ishaq's most prominent teachers, Zuhri and 'Abd Allah b. Abi Bakr. It is reasonable to assume that these two pioneers of historical writing in Islam must have interested themselves in the event of the Saqifa, which was certainly the most important event that took place at the time of the death of the founder of Islam.

It is equally reasonable to assume that Ibn Ishaq preferred to narrate the event as it was handed down to him from his two most intimate and respected teachers rather than to quote from other sources, especially when his interest in the Saqifa was limited to the events related to the death of the Prophet. It is also important to note that these two authorities, especially Zuhri, appear in almost all the later works which describe the Saqifa incident.

Baladhuri and Tabari, whose interest in the event is not confined to the events connected with the death of the Prophet, quote these two sources in their accounts of what they consider to be one of the most important historical events in Islamic history.

In Ibn Ishaq's narrative, Zuhri's authority is 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud,⁹ one of Zuhri's four most trusted and esteemed teachers. These four were Sa'id b. al-Musayyib¹⁰ (died 94/712-13), under whom Zuhri sat for ten years as a faithful student, 'Urwa b. az-Zubayr, Aban b. 'Uthman, and 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah. All four are among the most distinguished and recognized authorities on Fiqh, Sira, and Maghazi. Zuhri is frequently quoted as expressing his highest regard for them, and described them as the "four seas of knowledge" and "the four seas of the Quraysh".¹¹

Three of them, with the exception of Aban, are also among the famous illustrious seven lawyers of Medina. All these four have been credited with leaving written works for the following generations in addition to what they had transmitted orally to their pupils.

Our interest in these four celebrated scholars of Islamic history is due not only to the fact that one of them appears in Ibn Ishaq's isnad, but also to the fact that their names frequently appear in many of the isnads of the Saqifa event recorded by other writers.

A word must be said concerning 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas¹² (born three years before the Hijra, died 68/687-8), who appears as the last authority in Ibn Ishaq and in many other Saqifa accounts written by the historians and traditionists who followed Ibn Ishaq. It will suffice to say that he has always been respected as one of the most trustworthy authorities in all periods and among all schools of thought in Islam, not only in Qur'anic exegesis but in other branches of learning cultivated at Medina.

Re was in fact one of the distinguished founders of the Medinese school of learning and scholarship, which devoted itself mainly to religious sciences. Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i, Ibn Maja, followed by many others, unanimously accepted his traditions. In the scholarly research for which he was well known, he gathered information concerning the life of the Prophet by questioning senior companions.¹³

Not only did he witness the event of the Saqifa as a young man, but he also must have carefully preserved the information received from his father Al-'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, who was undoubtedly involved in the controversy which engulfed Medina immediately after the death of the Prophet. It is not surprising therefore that 'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas appears in almost all the sources describing the Saqifa.

The second author of note who deals with the Saqifa is Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Sa'd (born ca. 168/784-5), who wrote the first systematic and comprehensive biographical work, Kitab at-Tabaqat al-Kabir (The Book of Classes), dealing with important personalities from the Prophet down to the time of his own death in 230/844-5.

In arranging his material he deals in detail with the lives and careers of the first generation of Muslims, especially the Companions and close associates of the Prophet. One would have expected that Ibn Sa'd, while writing a long forty-one page¹⁴ biography of Abu Bakr, would have discussed the event of Saqifa in much greater detail than his predecessor Ibn Ishaq. As it was perhaps one of the most important and most crucial events in the entire career of Abu Bakr, it is surprising that Ibn Sa'd does not seem to be interested in the proceedings as such. He clearly attempts to hush up all those reports which might reflect on the controversial character of the selection of Abu Bakr, and carefully selects only those traditions which exalt Abu Bakr's undisputed excellence and qualifications for the leadership of the community at the death of the Prophet.

He makes every effort to praise and glorify the first caliph's virtues, his services to Islam, and the qualities which befitted him for immediate succession to Muhammad. Indeed he uses the same technique in writing 'Ali's biography to show that he was the best candidate for the office in his time. In this he proves himself the true representative of the Sunni tradition in Islam of the early third century and of the piety of the Medinese school, both of which were built on the Murji'a doctrine.

This doctrine, in its more refined and developed form in the third century, required a Muslim to refrain from any discussion which might tarnish the respect and honour with which the early personalities of Islam, especially the Companions, were regarded. Anyone reading Ibn Sa'd's biography of Abu Bakr will immediately notice that the writer is interested in presenting only

the best qualities and virtues of his subject. A brief summary of Ibn Sa'd's arrangement of the material will help in understanding how he wishes his reader to look at Saqifa. Ibn Sa'd begins by writing two pages on the clan, family name, and title of Abu Bakr.¹⁵ Even in this biographical data his main emphasis is on his title of As-Siddiq, the truthful. He inserts a tradition to the effect that after Muhammad's ascent to heaven (Mi'raj), which he feared people would not accept, the angel Gabriel assured him that Abu Bakr would do so since he was a Siddiq.

The second section, entitled "Abu Bakr's Conversion to Islam",¹⁶ contains five traditions all to the effect that Abu Bakr was the first among men to believe in Muhammad's Prophethood and completely ignores many traditions which describe 'Ali as the first man to become Muslim.¹⁷ This is followed by the third section, with the heading, "Description of the Cave and the Migration to Medina",¹⁸ in which Ibn Sa'd records twenty-six traditions.

These traditions emphasize Abu Bakr's close friendship with Muhammad, that he was "only one of the two" when Muhammad took refuge in the cave on his way to Medina, and that his services were invaluable at that critical moment.

Then, after a few traditions about Abu Bakr's abode at Medina, he immediately records Abu Bakr's brotherhood in faith with 'Umar b. al-Khattab and the Prophet's declaration that Abu Bakr and 'Umar were the leaders or Lords of the adults of Paradise of all times, with the exception of the Prophets and the apostles.

This is followed by the traditions which describe Muhammad's special favour to Abu Bakr when he ordered the latter's house to be built adjoining the mosque in Medina while others were denied this honour, that Abu Bakr defended Muhammad in all the battles, and that the Prophet appointed him as his standard-bearer at Tabuk. The last five traditions in this section describe Muhammad's statements that if he was to choose a friend (Khalil) for himself he could name no one other than Abu Bakr, that "No one is more beloved to me in my entire community than Abu Bakr," and that "The most zealous and vigilant after me in my community is Abu Bakr."

The fourth section, entitled "Description of the Prayer which the Prophet Ordered Abu Bakr [to lead] before his Death",¹⁹ is perhaps the most indicative of Ibn Sa'd's attitude. Here he gives ten traditions, the first five of which describe the Prophet's insistence that only Abu Bakr must lead the prayer while Muhammad was sick.

The following three traditions describe Muhammad's request for writing material to write down his will and command to the effect that Abu Bakr should succeed him, so that people should not doubt or disagree on this question. When 'Abd ar-Rahman, the son of Abu Bakr, went out

to bring the writing material, people said, "Sit down. Who could dispute over Abu Bakr?" In the ninth tradition, 'A'isha the widow of the Prophet is reported to have replied when she was asked: "O mother of the faithful, who did the Prophet appoint to succeed him?" "Abu Bakr," she replied. "Who after Abu Bakr?" she was asked. "'Umar," she answered. "Who after 'Umar?" again she was asked. "Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah," she answered, on which the enquirer kept silent. The section closes on the tenth tradition, coming back to the topic given to the heading, saying, "The Prophet was sick for thirteen days; whenever he felt better he led the prayer, but whenever his condition was not so well Abu Bakr led the prayer."

It is interesting to note here that except for two rather unimportant reports, all of these traditions are reported from 'A'isha, the daughter of Abu Bakr, whose rivalry with and dislike for both 'Ali and Fatima are well known.

Anyone who reads this section of Ibn Sa'd will immediately feel that the author has a specific task set before him. The entire section is carefully planned to show that Abu Bakr, by the special favours and indications shown by the Prophet, was beyond any doubt the only deserving candidate to succeed the dying Prophet. The author becomes so impatient that he even abandons the main theme of the section, and in the second tradition, which would have otherwise been under the event of the Saqifa, describes 'Umar's argument against the Ansar in favour of Abu Bakr, based on the latter's being the leader of the prayer.

The tradition reads: "When the Prophet died, and the Ansar suggested [in the assembly of the Saqifa], 'Let us have a leader from among ourselves and a leader from among yourselves (Muhajirun),' 'Umar said, 'Did not you know, O people of Ansar, that the Prophet appointed Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer?' The Ansar said 'Yes.' 'Then would you like to prefer yourselves to Abu Bakr?' 'We take refuge in God, to prefer ourselves over Abu Bakr,' said the Ansar.²⁰

Immediately after this section, Ibn Sa'd comes to the event of the Saqifa. Unlike other writers before and after him, he does not name this section "Affair (amr) of the Saqifa", but gives the heading, "Description of the Homage [paid] to Abu Bakr" (Dhikr bay 'at Abi Bakr).

One cannot fail to see that in the four preceding chapters Ibn Sa'd has carefully prepared a psychological background for his reader to accept his account of the undisputed selection of Abu Bakr on the basis of his merits and qualities so far enumerated.

On the Saqifa he records a total of fifteen traditions²¹ of which only six directly or indirectly are related to the Saqifa. The first tradition reports that when the Prophet died 'Umar came to Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah and said, "Open your hand and I will pay homage to you (Li ubaya'uka) because the Prophet declared you trustworthy of this community."

Abu 'Ubayda replied, "O 'Umar, I never found you so misled since you accepted Islam. Would you do me fealty while there is among you As-Siddiq only second of the two [in the cave]?" The second tradition is almost identical.

The third tradition is a peculiar example of Ibn Sa'd's treatment of the subject. In this report he extracted a small sentence from the lengthy three-page tradition reported by Ibn Ishaq and others in the form of 'Umar's speech in the mosque of Medina. Ibn Sa'd's fragment reads: "Ibn 'Abbas said, 'I heard 'Umar saying, while describing Abu Bakr's bay'a, "There is none among you to whom people would devote themselves as they did to Abu Bakr." ' ' "

In the fourth tradition Ibn Sa'd can no longer completely ignore the controversy which arose on the question, but even this is presented as an argument in favour of Abu Bakr. It reads: "When people held back from Abu Bakr, he said, 'Who could be more deserving for this thing (amr) than I? Was I not the first to pray with the Prophet?' Then he mentioned those good deeds [lit. attributes] which he performed with the Prophet."

The fifth tradition is, in fact, the only one which, on the authority of Abu Bakr's grandson, Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr,²² refers to the debate of the Saqifa. It is hurriedly hushed up in only seven lines; the rest of the tradition deals with the distribution of some goods by Abu Bakr. The rest of the ten traditions have hardly anything to do with the Saqifa event as such, and are mainly devoted to Abu Bakr's excellence, frugality, simplicity, devotion, and piety. There is hardly any need for further comments on Ibn Sa'd's treatment of the Saqifa. It should suffice here to note that an historical investigation into the controversial nature of the subject was outside the scope of his work. Nevertheless, his importance as an early writer cannot be overemphasized.

He is one of the foremost authorities of his time and represents a school of biographer-traditionists of great importance; in any study of the Saqifa he cannot be ignored. Ibn Sa'd becomes much more important when we notice his adherence to the "pious" traditional technique and the adoption of many a tradition given by him in this subject by those who followed him.

He represents a school which came to dominate the development of the Sunni point of view in Islam. His presentation of the Saqifa leads his reader to believe that Abu Bakr's selection went smoothly, without any noticeable opposition or controversy, and that it was readily and instantly accepted by everyone, including 'Ali who himself admitted the former's superior claims and merits.

We now must turn to Ibn Sa'd's younger contemporary Ahmad b. Yahya b. Jabir al-Baladhuri²³ (died 279/892-3), whose voluminous *Ansab al-Ashraf* is perhaps the most important

historico-biographical work of the third century.

On the one hand, he follows Ibn Sa'd in technique and incorporates much of his material; on the other, he goes much deeper and collects every possible report and version of the Saqifa event from divergent sources and different schools. While Ibn Sa'd depends mainly on Medinese informants, Baladhuri finds them unsatisfactory; he goes further and frequently quotes Mada'ini; who takes up a kind of middle position between Kufan and Medinese traditionists. He also narrates from Ibn al-Kalbi, Abu Ma'shar, 'Awana, and, in at least two cases, even from the Shi'i Abu Mikhnaf.²⁴

He thereby demonstrates not only his keen historical interest in investigating the event of the Saqifa but also its great importance in the annals of early Islam. The pietistic attitude which was a dominant characteristic of the Medinese schools, especially when dealing with the differences among the prominent companions, was not so prominent with the more historically-minded authors of the Kufan and Basran schools. Baladhuri's preservation of the latter tradition is this of considerable importance for the present discussion.

In Baladhuri's scheme, the Saqifa is treated in a manner similar to that of Ibn Ishaq, with the events connected with the death of the Prophet. In the chapter entitled "Affair of the Saqifa", Baladhuri records a total of thirty-three traditions,²⁵ seven of which are exactly identical to material in Ibn Sa'd.

In this Baladhuri shows his great respect for his elder contemporary, whom he always quotes with the direct verb, haddathani (he told me), indicating that he took Ibn Sa'd's material not from the Tabaqat but by direct dictation from Ibn Sa'd himself.²⁶

The rest of the twenty-six traditions deal with the controversy over the question of succession, the heated debates which took place in the Saqifa, rival claims of the Ansar and the Muhajirun, 'Ali's protest over the selection, the opposition of Banu Hashim and some of the Ansar to Abu Bakr, and Abu Bakr's own statement that though he was not the best candidate, he accepted the caliphate to save the community from dissension.

Eleven of these twenty-six traditions are taken from Mada'ini, who frequently quotes Zuhri, whose own isnads often go back to the sources of the "four seas of the Quraysh" discussed above.²⁷

The most revealing point here is that four of these twenty-six traditions (1: a complete description of the controversial debate in the Saqifa; 2: Abu Sufyan's offer of help to 'Ali; 3: Abu Bakr's statement that though he was not the best candidate, he accepted the caliphate only to avoid dissension; and 4: a small part of 'Umar's speech that even if Abu Bakr's selection was a hasty affair, it did save the community from evil) are narrated by Baladhuri from Ibn Sa'd with

the verb "he told me". Ibn Sa'd knew these traditions and found them important enough to transmit them orally to Baladhuri but he himself shrank from including them in his *Tabaqat*. The long speech of 'Umar which describes the Saqifa in full and comprises the comprehensive account in Ibn Ishaq, as we have seen above, is reported by Baladhuri three times; first (No.1173) from Ibn Sa'd, where only a small sentence justifying Abu Bakr's merits (as in *Tabaqat*) is reported; a second time (No. 1176) when only the first part of it is given; then finally the full text (No. 1181), as in Ibn Ishaq, is recorded.

In all three places the final three authorities are the same as in the *Sira*: Zuhri, 'Ubayd Allah, and Ibn 'Abbas, though the first authorities change in all three instances. In No.1173 Zuhri's narrator is salih b. Kaysan;²⁸ in No.1176 it is Mu'ammār b. Rashid²⁹ and in No.1181, the full text is taken by Baladhuri from Mada'ini through Ibn Ju'daba.³⁰

There are a few differences between the text of Mada'ini quoted by Baladhuri and that of 'Abd Allah b. Abi Bakr quoted by Ibn Ishaq. To conclude it will suffice to say that although Baladhuri displays a tendency in favour of Abu Bakr's excellence for the office, as is evident from the order of preference in the arrangement of the material, he does not suppress many traditions which show the inclination of some of the important companions towards 'Ali.

The picture of the Saqifa still remains rather incomplete until one takes into consideration Baladhuri's younger contemporary Ibn Wadih al-Ya'qubi (died 284/897). Anyone reading Ya'qubi's rendering of the Saqifa immediately after Ibn Sa'd and Baladhuri will notice a sharp contrast both in substance and in emphasis.

Whereas Ibn Sa'd would have us believe that Abu Bakr faced hardly any opposition from those who favoured 'Ali, Ya'qubi would impress upon his reader that there was rather serious opposition to Abu Bakr from a group which supported 'Ali's rights to the caliphate. Unlike Ibn Sa'd and Baladhuri, Ya'qubi does not give separate traditions prefixed by *isnad*, nor does he follow his sources verbally except in quotations and direct speeches.

This is his method throughout his history, the Saqifa being no exception. Opening with the heading, "Information (khabar) of the Saqifa of Banu Sa'ida and the Fealty to Abu Bakr", he writes a cohesive, uninterrupted four-page narrative from all the sources available to him.³¹ It of course paraphrases many traditions into one continuous account, but all the quotations and speeches are faithfully preserved without any transformation. This is evident from comparisons with other sources before and after him.

As regards his sources, we know that, as a general rule and perhaps for the sake of a literary cohesive text, he rarely cites his authorities. Nevertheless, it is usually not difficult to ascertain their identity.³² In the case of the Saqifa, some of his sources, such as Mada'ini and Abu

Mikhnaf, are the same as those used by Tabari. Here we must point out that it is beyond any doubt an historical fact that the event of the Saqifa became an object of keen historical interest right from the very beginnings of historical writing in Islam.

This is evident from Ibn Nadim's and Tusi's Fihrist, Najashi's Rijal and other bibliographical works which list numerous treatises on the Saqifa under the names of a great many writers beginning from the early second century onward.

For example, both Abu Mikhnaf³³ and Mada'ini³⁴ are reported to have written independent treatises on the subject, and when we read the Saqifa account in Tabari, Baladhuri, and others, we find a number of traditions on their authority.

Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid (died ca. 656/1258) in his voluminous Sharh Nahj al-Balagha, a mine of valuable historical material composed with the help of a rich library of rare manuscripts in his possession, writes forty pages on the Saqifa³⁵ that incorporate some of these rare treatises which survived until his time.

Among these is a text by Abu Bakr Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Aziz al-Jawhari³⁶ (died 298/910-11), who cites many early authorities in his treatise on the Saqifa. A modern scholar of note, Agha Buzurg at-Tehrani, records in his exhaustive work on Shi'i literature a great number of treatises written down on the Saqifa in the early centuries of Islam.³⁷ Many of them considerably pre-date Ya'qubi; a few of them even originate from the circle of traditionists who gathered around the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (died 148/765-6).

By the time Ibn Sa'd, Baladhuri, and other Sunni writers set out to write, Sunni Islam had already defined and fixed its attitudes and loyalties based on the Murji'i principles of synthesis and tolerance. It was, therefore, natural for these writers to suppress or ignore any report that might clash with the accepted norms of the day. Most of that material which could support the Shi'i position in favour of 'Ali was thus either suppressed or conveniently suspected of being fabricated. This was exactly what happened to Ya'qubi.

There is a common tendency to suspect his accounts, which could support the Shi'i cause, mainly because he himself was a Shi'i, but quite logically, if Ya'qubi can be suspected of bias in favour of the Shi'i position, why cannot other historians of the opposite affiliation be equally suspected of suppressing those reports which serve the Shi'i purpose?

In this situation, we feel that Ya'qubi's history should be considered a valuable compendium of historical documents which survived the tendentious efforts of the historians of the majority party. The argument for the overall authenticity of his material is enhanced by the fact that most of his Saqifa material is also reported in fragmentary fashion by his non-Shi'i successors. We may thus conclude that certain data handed down to us by Ya'qubi, but omitted by his three

predecessors, are of immense historical importance for the reconstruction of the Saqifa event. These four writers cover every point of view and leave little to be added by the encyclopaedic annalist Muhammad b. Jarir at-Tabari (died 311/9234). He generally displays a remarkably unbiased and uncommitted attitude in his history, undoubtedly the most comprehensive that has survived to us.

He does not base his selection of sources on religious affiliations, but uses them according to his own historical judgement in relation to each event. He builds his narrative by recording several parallel and co-ordinated traditions or, wherever necessary, by giving divergent reports coming to him from different sources.

In the latter case he gives his own historical opinion either by explaining how each event is to be placed and interpreted or by arranging his material in order of preference. This second method he uses when reporting on the Saqifa. He completely ignores Ibn Sa'd's account of the event, incorporates most of the material of Ibn Ishaq, Ya'qubi, and Baladhuri through his own sources, and makes some additions of his own.

He reports 'U mar's speech on the Saqifa in full, exactly as did Ibn Ishaq, but the former's authority is 'Abbad b. 'Abbad³⁸ (Al-Muhallabi) from 'Abbad b. Rashid,⁽⁴⁰⁾ while the last three authorities are the same as in Ibn Ishaq. He is also the one who, alone among all the historians of Islam, preserves Abu Mikhnaf's treatise on the Saqifa.³⁹ On the whole, Tabari's history presents a balanced and unbiased account of the Saqifa. He makes it absolutely clear that there⁴⁰ was a strong body of support for 'Ali, but on the other hand, emphasizes that Abu Bakr was duly elected by the majority of the people.

There is little need to examine in detail the works of those writers who followed these five early sources. Subsequent authors, such as Mas'udi⁴¹ (died 344/955-6), Ibn Athir⁴² (died 630/1232-3), Ibn 'Abd Rabbih⁴³ (died 327/938-9), and even Suyuti (died 911/1505-6) in his specialized work on the subject of the caliphate,⁴⁴ add hardly anything substantially important to our knowledge on the event. Later Shi'i works by authors such as at-Tabrasi⁴⁵ and al-Majlisi⁴⁶ are mainly polemic in nature and give a very tendentious pro-Shi'i account of no historical value.

In an attempt to reconstruct the events at the Saqifa, the best approach is to take, as a basis, Ibn Ishaq, who is not only the earliest authority, but also the one whose work has reached us in the recension of Ibn Hisham (died 218/833), himself a die-hard Sunni and earlier than the other four writers mentioned above. Moreover, Ibn Hisham never hesitates in his task of editing Ibn Ishaq's Sira to correct or comment on any point with which he disagrees, and he often inserts some additional information he thinks was overlooked or omitted by the author.⁴⁷

Ibn Hisham makes none of these comments, additions, or corrections in the account of the Saqifa, however. The tradition of the Saqifa in the Sira is thus an account recorded by a writer of Shii leaning,⁴⁸ approved by an editor-critic of Sunni belief, and also reported by the majority of the writers following Ibn Ishaq through different authorities, as we have seen above. For other necessary details not presented by Ibn Ishaq, we must draw from our other four authorities.

It is our intention here to base our reconstruction of the Saqifa on a translation of 'Umar's speech as recorded by Ibn Ishaq.⁴⁹ Since a speech of this sort naturally is not supposed to cover every detail, frequent breaks will be utilized to draw in other sources and attempt to form a complete picture of the proceedings. Sources of the additions filling the gaps will be given within the narrative so that the reader will be able to notice them immediately.

Before narrating 'Umar's speech, Ibn Ishaq opens with an introduction, without isnad, which can be found in Baladhri (I, p. 583) on the authority of Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ayyub⁵⁰ from Ibrahim b. Sa'd⁵¹ from Ibn Ishaq from Zuhri. It reads as follows:

"When the Apostle died, this clan of the Ansar gathered round Sa'd b. 'Ubada in the hall of Banu Sa'ida; and 'Ali and az-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam and Talha 'Ubayd Allah separated themselves in Fatima's house while the rest of the Muhajirun gathered round Abu Bakr accompanied by Usayd b. Hudayr with the Banu 'Abdu'l-Ashhal. Then someone came to Abu Bakr and 'Umar telling them that this clan of the Ansar had gathered round Sa'd in the hall (Saqifa) of Banu Sa'ida: 'If you want to have command of the people, then take it before their action becomes serious.

Now [the dead body of] the Apostle was still in his house, the burial arrangements not having been completed, and his family had locked the door of the house. 'Umar said, 'I said to Abu Bakr "Let us go to these our brothers of the Ansar to see what they are doing."⁵²

After this Ibn Ishaq records 'Umar's famous speech, for which the chain of transmitters has been examined in each of our sources above. Passing over those parts which do not deal with the Saqifa, it reads: "In connection with these events [selection of Abu Bakr] 'Abd Allah b. Abu Bakr told me from Ibn Shihab Az-Zuhri from 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud from 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas who said, 'I was waiting for 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Awf in his station in Mini while he was with 'Umar in the last pilgrimage which 'Umar performed.

When he ['Abd ar-Rahman] returned he found me ['Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas] waiting, for I was teaching him to read the Qur'an. 'Abd ar-Rahman said to me: "I wish you could have seen a man who came to the Commander of the Faithful ['Umar] and said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, would you like a man who said, "By God, if 'Umar were dead I would do fealty to so-

and-so."? Fealty given to Abu Bakr was an unpre-meditated affair (falta) and was ratified." ' ' "

Here we must point out that this speech, though recorded by the vast majority of writers, includes neither the name of the person who talked to 'Umar nor the name of the one to whom he wished to pay fealty, except in Baladhuri, I, pp. 581, 582.

In tradition No.1176 Baladhuri quotes 'Umar as saying that the person speaking to 'Umar was Zubayr, and that the person Zubayr wanted to hail as caliph was 'Ali. In tradition No. 1181, Baladhuri gives only one name: "'Umar delivered a sermon in which he said that 'so-and-so says if 'Umar dies we Will pay our homage (baya'na) to 'Ali. "

'Baladhuri's report can be confirmed by later writers such as Ibn Abi '1-Hadid, who gives the name of 'Ali on the authority of al-Jahiz⁵³ It is, however, of great importance to note that it was 'Ali's name which caused 'Umar to deliver such an important and fiery speech.

"'Umar was angry [when he heard this) and said, 'God willing, I shall get up among the men tonight and warn them against those who desire to usurp power over them. 'I ('Abd ar-Rahman) said, 'Do not do it, Commander of the Faithful, for the festival brings together the riff-raff and the lowest of the people; they are the ones who will be in the majority in your proximity [assembly] when you stand among the people.

I fear lest you should stand and say something which they will repeat everywhere, not understanding what you say or interpreting it correctly; so wait until you come to Medina, for it is the home of the Sunna and you can confer privately with the jurists (fuqaha') and the nobles of the people. You can say what you like and the jurists will understand what you say and interpret it properly.' 'Umar replied, 'By God, if He wills, I will do so as soon as I reach Medina...' "We came to Medina at the end of Dhu'l-Hijja and on the Friday I (Ibn 'Abbas) returned [to the mosque] quickly when the sun had set ... 'Umar sat on the pulpit, and when the muezzins were silent he praised God, as was fitting, and said: 'Today I am about to say to you something which God has willed that I should say and I do not know whether perhaps it is my last utterance. He who understands and heeds it let him take it with him wherever he goes; and as for him who fears that he will not understand it, he may not deny that I said it.'

"... I have heard that someone [Zubayr as in Baladhuri said, 'If 'Umar were dead I would do fealty to so-and-so ['Ali]. Do not let a man deceive himself by saying that acceptance of Abu Bakr was a hasty mistake (falta) which was ratified. Admittedly it was that, but God averted the evil of it. There is none among you to whom people would devote themselves as they did to Abu Bakr. He who accepts a man as ruler without consulting the Muslims, uch acceptance has no validity for either of them: and they are subject to death [punishment.]

"What happened was that when God took away His Prophet [from among us], the Ansar

opposed us and gathered with their leaders in the Saqifa [hall] of Banu Sa'ida, and 'Ali and az-Zubayr and their companions [and those who were their supporters] withdrew from us, while the Muhajirun gathered to Abu Bakr."

From 'Umar's own statement, it is clear that there was serious opposition to Abu Bakr's candidacy not only from the Ansar, but also from 'Ali and his supporters. Thus, no sooner had the news of Muhammad's death come out than the Ansar of Medina, undoubtedly fearful of Meccan domination and perhaps aware of their designs, hastily assembled in the Saqifa Banu Sa'ida to elect a leader from among themselves. 'Umar b. al-Khattab, upon hearing people saying that Muhammad was dead, stood and furiously remonstrated that the Prophet could not die. Claiming that Muhammad had simply disappeared for a time, he threatened he would kill anyone who claimed that Muhammad was dead.⁵⁴ Abu Bakr, who had been at his house in Sunh, a suburb of Medina, then arrived on the scene. Hearing 'Umar's altercations, he went straight into the Prophet's house. Discovering that Muhammad had passed away, Abu Bakr came back and confirmed his death to the people gathered around 'Umar.

At this point we have three different versions. The first reports that when Abu Bakr was addressing the people, an informant came and told him and 'Umar about the Ansar's meeting in the Saqifa. Both Abu Bakr and 'Umar, along with those around them, then rushed to the Saqifa. This version must be rejected on the simple grounds that Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah does not appear anywhere in this tradition, contradicting all other reports, where he is one of the three most important persons in the whole drama.

The second version reports that after confirming the death of the Prophet to the people, Abu Bakr and 'Umar went to the house of the Prophet and joined his relatives, who were busy with the burial preparations. Two informants then came and told them about the Saqifa, whereupon the three—Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda—ran to the Saqifa.

This version also does not appear to be correct because: 1: it presupposes that these three most important companions were completely unaware of both the serious tension, often conflict, which had been developing over the last few years between the Muhajirun and the Ansar, and the gravity of the situation under the circumstances; 2: it contradicts 'Umar's statement that 'Ali and his supporters separated themselves from the others and locked the door of the house; 3: it is a tradition recorded only by Baladhuri (I, p. 581), and on a rather weak isnad.

The third version, which is repeatedly narrated by all of our sources with the exception of Ibn Sa'd, reports that after addressing the people regarding Muhammad's death, Abu Bakr, along with 'Umar and Abu 'Ubayda, went to the house of; most probably, Abu 'Ubayda.

There they met to deliberate on the critical leadership crisis which had arisen owing to the death of the Prophet, and certainly keeping in view the resentful feelings of the Ansar which had been developing for quite some time.⁵⁵ It was there that the council of the Muhajirun was interrupted by an informant who rushed in to tell them what the Ansar were doing. Hearing that, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda rushed to the Saqifa to prevent any unexpected development.

Returning again to 'Umar's speech, we are told:

"I told Abu Bakr that we should go to our brothers the Ansar, so we went off to go to them when two honest fellows ['Uwaym b. Sa'ida⁵⁶ and Ma'n b. 'Adi⁵⁷] met us and told us of the conclusion the people had come to. They asked us where we were going, and when we told them they said that there was no need for us to approach them and we must make our own decision. I said, 'By God, we will go to them.'

And [when we arrived] we found them [the Ansar] in the hall of Banu Sa'ida. In their midst was a man wrapped up. In answer to my inquiries, they said that he was Sa'd b. 'Ubada and that he was sick. When we sat down there, a speaker pronounced the Shahada and praised God as was fitting and then continued: 'We are God's Helpers and the squadron of Islam. You, O Muhajirun, are a family of ours and a company of your people have come to settle down [among us].' I [at this point 'Umar interrupted and] said: 'And look, they were trying to cut us off from our origin and wrest authority from us.

When the Ansar's speaker finished, I wanted to speak, for I had prepared a speech in my mind which pleased me much. I wanted to produce it before Abu Bakr and to repulse the roughness and asperity of the speaker of the Ansar. But Abu Bakr said, 'Gently, 'Umar!' I did not like to anger him and so he spoke.

He was a man with more knowledge and dignity than I, and by God he did not omit a single word which I had thought of and he uttered it in his inimitable way better than I could have done. Abu Bakr said: 'Ali the good that you have said about yourselves you duly deserve. But the Arabs will not recognize authority except in this tribe [lit. clan] of Quraysh. They are the best and the noblest of the Arabs in descent, blood, and country [i.e. settled in the centre].'"

An addition from Baladhuri (I, p.582) completes Abu Bakr's speech and shows further how he argued against the Ansar: "We are the first people in Islam; and among the Muslims, our abode is in the centre, our descent is noblest, and we are nearer to the Prophet in relation; and you [Ansar] are our brothers in Islam and our partners in religion; you helped us, protected us and supported us, may God reward you His best.

So we are the rulers (umara') and you are the deputies (wuzara'). The Arabs will not submit

themselves except to this clan of the Quraysh. Certainly a group from among you [present] knows well that the Prophet said, 'The leaders are from the Quraysh (al-a'immat-u min al-Quraysh), therefore, do not compete with your Muhajir brothers in what God has bestowed upon them.'"

Now we return again to 'Umar's speech.

"[Abu Bakr said,] 'So I offer you one of two men; accept whichever you please.' Thus saying he took hold of my hand and that of Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah, who was sitting between us. Nothing he ever said displeased me more than that. By God, I would rather have come forward and have had my head struck off—if that were no sin—than rule over a people of whom Abu Bakr was one..."

In Ya'qubi's account (II, p.123), "[Abu Bakr said] The Quraysh are closer to Muhammad than you, so here is 'Umar b. al-Khattab, for whom the Prophet prayed, "O God, confirm his faith," and the other is Abu 'Ubayda, whom the Prophet declared "a trustee of this Umma"; choose either one whom you like and pay homage to him.' But both of them refused and said, 'We cannot take preference over you, you are the companion of the Prophet and only second of the two [in the cave at the time of the Hijra].'"

In one of Baladhuri's accounts (I, p.582), when Abu Bakr suggested the name of 'Umar, the latter exclaimed: "And while you are alive? Who could set you aside from your place in which the Prophet had installed you?" Ya'qubi (II, p.123) describes Abu 'Ubayda as saying: "O people of Ansar, you were the first to help [Islam] so do not be the first to differ and change."

Ya'qubi continues: "Then 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Awf stood and said: 'You have your merits, but you do not have [any one among you] like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Ali.' On this, one of the Ansar, Al-Mundhir b. Arqam, ⁵⁸ sharply replied: 'We do not reject the merits you have mentioned; indeed there is among you one with whom no one can dispute, if he seeks this authority, and that man is 'Ali b. Abi Talib.'"

It was at this stage of suggestions and counter suggestions by Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda for each other that Al-Hubbab b. Mundhir ⁵⁹ from the Ansar offered a compromise solution. Thus continues 'Umar:

"One of the Ansar said, 'I am the rubbing post and the fruitful propped-up palm [i.e. a man who can cure people's ills and is held in high esteem because of his great experience]. Let us have one ruler from among ourselves, and another ruler from among yourselves, O Quraysh.' Altercations waxed hotter and voices were raised until, when a complete breach was to be feared, I said, 'Stretch forth your hand, Abu Bakr.' He did so and I paid him homage; the Muhajirun followed and then the Ansar. [In doing so] we jumped on Sa'd b. 'Ubayda and

someone said that we had killed him. I said, 'God kill him.'"

Here ends 'Umar's historic speech, accepted by almost all of those who wrote on the Saqifa. Before we proceed further it might be of interest to note 'Umar's reply to Hubbab's suggestion as it is recorded by Tabari (I, p.1841) in a separate account narrated by Abu Mikhnaf: "'Umar said: 'How preposterous; two swords cannot be in one sheath. By God, the Arabs will never agree to your authority while their Prophet is from others [i.e. from ourselves].'"

It is also Tabari (I, p. 1818) who records for us from one of his most trusted and frequently cited authorities, Abu Ma'shar, that even after 'Umar's homage to Abu Bakr, there were still some of the Ansar who protested against the decision and exclaimed: "We will not pay our homage to anyone except 'Ali." But this and some other similar voices were lost in the tumult and, following the examples of 'Umar and Abu 'Ubayda, those of the Muhajirun present paid homage to Abu Bakr, and were followed by the. Ansar for one reason or another, as we shall see presently.

Before we describe the events which followed the assembly of Saqifa, it would be helpful to examine briefly the complex situation and unique circumstances which made Abu Bakr's⁶⁰ selection possible. Firstly, clan rivalries among the Quraysh, or among the Muhajirun in particular, made it easier for them to accept the leadership of Abu Bakr- a man of an insignificant branch, Banu Taym b. Murra.⁶¹

Because of its inconspicuous place among Meccan ruling clans, Banu Taym had never been involved in the power struggle and political conflicts that had plagued the rival clans of the Quraysh.

Secondly, the Muhajirun, as a whole, were also fearful of the possibility of Medinan domination should the' Muhajirun involve themselves in their own clannish rivalries and internecine fighting. To them Abu Bakr was thus the best compromise candidate.

Thirdly, as far as the Ansar were concerned, we should take note of the deep-rooted and old enmity between the Banu Aws and the Banu Khazraj. Sa'd b. 'Ubada was the chief of the Khazraj; the Banu Aws accordingly found it much more tolerable and profitable to submit themselves to a Qurayshite leader than to allow a chief of the rival tribe to rule over them. This is evident from the fact that the first among the Ansar to pay homage to Abu Bakr was one of the chiefs of the Banu Aws, Usayd b. Hudayr.⁶²

According to Tabari (I, p.1843), "Some of the Aws, among them Usayd b. Hudayr, spoke among themselves, saying, 'By God, if the Khazraj become rulers over you once, they will continue to maintain this superiority over you and will never let you have any share in it, so stand up and pay homage to Abu Bakr.' Then they [the Aws] stood and paid homage to Abu

Bakr.” We may also recall that this Usayd '0. Hudayr was the only one from the Ansar who took part if' the deliberations of the Muhajirun, certainly knowing of Sa'd b. 'Ubada's candidacy and thus acting against him and the Khazraj.

As for the Banu Khazraj, they realized that their position was far too weak to face a united front of the Muhajirun and the Banu Aws, their old rivals, or rather enemies, in the city politics of Medina. The constant wars and deadly feuds between the Aws and the Khazraj are commonplace stories of the *ayyam al-'Arab* (“Battle Days”) literature.

Thus the Khazraj found it unwise to lag behind in giving support to and gaining the favour of the ruling authority upon which agreement had very nearly been reached. Moreover, Sa'd b. 'Ubada was envied by some of his own cousins or clansmen, as was a common feature of the Arab clans; and according to some the first who paid homage to Abu Bakr was Sa'd's own cousin Bashir b. Sa'd.⁶³ It is thus clear that as a result of group politics, clan rivalries, and personal jealousies, Abu Bakr was able to exact homage from most of the people.

To these factors must be added the overall impression in the sources that Abu Bakr did enjoy a certain prestige and was held in high esteem for his sobriety, old age, his close association with and support of Muhammad, and his valuable services to Islam from the very advent of the Prophet's mission.

Thus the impact of his personality, which grew over the years under the Prophet, should not be ignored in analysing the results of the Saqifa. The material preserved in the sources also strongly suggests that Abu Bakr and 'Umar had formed an alliance long before, possibly with Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah as a third member, and that these three did carry considerable weight and influence in the newly emerging Islamic nobility, as well as in group politics against the old Meccan aristocracy.⁶⁴

Finally, it must also be noted that Abu Bakr's succession was realized neither through a free election in any sense of the term nor through a free choice of the community. It was simply a decision by a particular group from among the Muhajirun which was hastily forced or thrust upon all others. Its success was due only to the delicate existing group conflicts in Medina. This is obvious from 'Umar's own statement quoted above that, “Admittedly it was a hasty affair (*falta*) but God averted the evil of it”

The arguments advanced by 'Umar and Abu 'Ubayda in favour of Abu Bakr-lineage in the Quraysh, early conversion to Islam, long companionship to the Prophet, services to the cause of Islam, and lastly his close relationship to and the esteem in which he was held by Muhammad—are in effect of the same nature as those advanced in favour of 'Ali against Abu Bakr, and they certainly lend more strength to 'Ali's claims than to those of Abu Bakr. Abu

Bakr's only exclusive claim to the succession- his leadership of the prayer during the Prophet's illness reflects later theological colour, and the traditions pertaining to it are often confused and contradictory.

Keeping in view the arguments and counter-arguments at the Saqifa, the choice of Abu Bakr seems to have been an accident of circumstances. The conflict between the supporters and the opponents of Abu Bakr centred on considerations of what is necessary under the circumstances, and what ought to be. The former principle soon resulted in the establishment of a mighty and sweeping caliphate-empire. The latter principle of what ought to be led a group of the community, though small, to develop its own interpretation of Islamic ideals and polity. The task of consolidation of Abu Bakr's authority as the successor to the Prophet, however, was still far from complete after the Saqifa meeting. 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the most important candidate from the Prophet's family, as is unanimously attested by Sunni and Shi'i sources alike, along with his Close associates and the family of Hashim, was not even aware of the decision taken in the Saqifa. They came to hear about it only when, after securing homage at the Saqifa, Abu Bakr, along with his supporters, came to the mosque of the Prophet and an unusual tumult arose from the gathered mob.

Though the timing of the events which followed is confused,⁶⁵ it is perhaps at this point that 'Ali and a number of his supporters both from the Ansar and the Muhajirun assembled in Fatima's house and started deliberating on what was to be done. Besides numerous references to this effect, it is also supported by the first part of 'Umar's speech when he said, "And 'Ali and Zubayr with their companions withdrew from us."

Abu Bakr and 'Umar, fully aware of 'Ali's claims and also of the respect he commanded in a certain group of the companions, and fearing lest there be some serious reaction on his and his partisans' part, summoned them to the mosque to pay homage. They refused to come.

'Umar, with his cut-and-thrust policy, advised Abu Bakr to act promptly before it was too late. The two men marched to 'Ali's house with an armed party, surrounded the house, and threatened to set it on fire if 'Ali and his supporters would not come out and pay homage to the elected caliph. 'Ali came out and attempted to remonstrate, putting forward his own claims and rights and refusing to honour Abu Bakr and 'Umar's demands.

The scene soon grew violent, the swords flashed from their scabbards, and 'Umar with his band tried to pass on through the gate. Suddenly Fatima appeared before them in a furious temper and reproachfully cried: "You have left the body of the Apostle of God with us and you have decided among yourselves without consulting us, and without respecting our rights. Before God, I say, either you get out of here at once, or with my hair dishevelled I will make my

appeal to God.”

This made the situation most critical, and Abu Bakr's band was obliged to leave the house without securing 'Ali's homage.⁶⁶ He could not, however, resist for long and had to yield before the growing pressure. The traditions vary and are often contradictory as to when he was reconciled with Abu Bakr. According to one or two very weak and isolated traditions, which clearly reflect later theological tendency, 'Ali paid homage to Abu Bakr instantly, only complaining that he had not been consulted; according to some others he did so the same day

but under compulsion and with the conviction that he had better claims to the office.

But according to the most commonly reported traditions, which must be accepted as authentic because of overwhelming historical evidence and other circumstantial reasons, 'Ali held himself apart until the death of Fatima six months later.⁶⁷ Insisting that 'Ali should have been chosen, a number of his partisans from among both the Ansar and the Muhajirun who had

delayed for some time in accepting Abu Bakr's succession were fain to yield, however.

They gradually, one after the other, were reconciled to the situation and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. Their names and number vary in different sources, but the most distinguished

among them and most commonly recorded by the majority of the sources are as follows.⁶⁸

1 Hudhayfa b. al-Yaman,⁶⁹ a Medinese halif of the Aws and a most distinguished Companion of the Prophet. Known as a great warrior who fought at Uhud and served the Prophet as a special counsellor at Khandaq, his personal loyalty and attachment to 'Ali remained unchanged even after his allegiance to Abu Bakr. Before his death, he asked his two sons to support 'Ali, which they did until they were killed at the battle of Siffin while fighting for 'Ali against

Mu'awiya.

2 Khuzayma b. Thabit,⁷⁰ from the tribe of Aws, whom the Prophet called “Dhu'sh-Shahadatayn”, the one whose testimony was worth that of two men. He fought alongside 'Ali

at (52) the battles of Al-Jamal and Siffin and was killed in the latter by Mu'awiya's army.

3 Abu Ayyub al-Ansari,⁷¹ whose father, Khalid b. Kulayb, belonged to Banu Najjar and whose mother was from the Khazraj. He was one of the most important Companions among the Ansar and was the host of the Prophet in Medina until his house was built. He fought for the

cause of 'Ali in the battles of Al-Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan.

4 Sahl b. Hunayf,⁷² from the tribe of Aws, who fought for the Prophet at Badr and other battles. He was a great friend of 'Ali, came with him from Medina to Basra, and fought at

Siffin. 'Ali appointed him governor of Persia.

5 'Uthman b. Hunayf,⁷³ brother of Sahl and a great favourite of 'Ali, who appointed him governor of Basra.

6 Al-Bara'a b. 'Azib al-Ansari ,⁷⁴ from the tribe of Khazraj and one of the aristocrats of Medina representing pro-'Alid Ansar.

He came with 'Ali to Kufa and fought for him at Al-Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan.

7 Ubayy b. Ka'b,⁷⁵ from a branch of the Banu Khazraj and one of the leading jurists and Qur'an readers among the Ansar.

8 Abu Dharr b. Jundab al-Ghifari,⁷⁶ one of the earliest followers of Muhammad, an ascetic, and extremely devoted to piety. He had always been a most vocal supporter of 'Ali and is one of the four pillars of the first Shi'a. The Caliph 'Uthman exiled him to his birthplace, a small village known as Rabdha, where he died.

9 'Ammar b. Yasir,⁷⁷ a south Arabian affiliated with the clan of Makhzum of the Quraysh, an early convert to Islam, and one of the four pillars of the first Shi'a.

10 Al-Miqdad b. 'Amr,⁷⁸ a south Arabian either from Kinda or Bahra, adopted by a certain Aswad b. 'Abd Yathuth of the Banu Makhzum. He was one of the seven early converts to Islam and one of the four pillars of the first Shi'a.

11 Salman al-Farisi,⁷⁹ a Persian by origin and an ardent follower and companion of the Prophet, who ransomed him from slavery and adopted him as his mawla and member of the Ahl al-Bayt. He had always been an ardent supporter of 'Ali, and his support to 'Ali at the time of Abu Bakr's selection has been mentioned distinctly even by Baladhuri.

12 Az-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam,⁸⁰ one of the most distinguished Companions of the Prophet from the Quraysh. He was the most energetic supporter of 'Ali and no doubt sincere in his enthusiastic attitude. He came out of the house of Fatima, sword in hand, when 'Umar arrived there and tried to force those in the house to pay homage to Abu Bakr.

A serious encounter between him and 'Umar is recorded by almost all of our historians. It was, however, only twenty-five years later that ambition made him strive for the caliphate, which resulted in the battle of al-Jamal between him and 'Ali. Khalid b. Sa'id,⁸¹ from the clan of Umayya, only third or fourth after Abu Bakr to become Muslim, and the only one from this clan who seriously resisted Abu Bakr's succession in favour of 'Ali.

As the representative of the Prophet, he was at San'a' when Muhammad died. When he reached Medina a few days after Abu Bakr's selection, he offered his allegiance to 'Ali saying, "By God, no one among all the men is more entitled to take the place of Muhammad than you." Though 'Ali declined to accept his homage, Khalid refused to recognize Abu Bakr for three months.

The seriousness of their opposition to or resentment of Abu Bakr before they become reconciled to him is almost impossible to ascertain, since the Shi'i sources exaggerate this to

the extreme⁸² whereas the Sunni sources try to ignore or minimize it as much as possible.⁸³ Historically it cannot be denied, however, that these men formed the nucleus of the first 'Alid party, or the Shi'a. It cannot be claimed that all were equally enthusiastic and warm supporters; some of them were lukewarm supporters who recognized 'Ali's position as the most worthy for the office of the caliphate because of his personal merits, but nevertheless paid homage to Abu Bakr without much resentment. The attitude of 'Ammar, Miqdad, Abu Dharr, and Salman must have been different from that of the others. These four companions are regarded by all the Shi'is as "the Four Pillars" (al-arkan al-arba'a) who formed the first Shi'a of 'Ali. After 'Ali's compromise with Abu Bakr, however, reasons for further opposition on the part of his supporters ceased to exist and this elite of the first Shi'a dwindled away physically. But can ideas, once introduced, ever die out? The later years in the history of the development of Islamic thought provide an answer to this question

Notes

1. Ibn Hisham, IV, pp. 306 f.

2. 'Abd al-'Aziz ad-Duri, "Al-Zuhri, A Study on the Beginnings of History Writing in Islam", BSOAS, XIX (1957), p.8

3. Ibn Hisham, IV, pp 307-10

4. Wafayat, IV, pp.177 f.; Tahdhib, IX, p.445

5. Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri (Chicago, 1957-72), I, pp. 5-31; II, pp. 5-64

6. Tahdhib, I, p.97

7. Wafayat, III, pp.255 ff.

8. ibid., VI, pp. 35 f.

9. Tahdhib, VII, p. 382; Aghani IX, pp. 135 ff.

10. Ibn Sa'd, II, pp.379 ff.

11. Ibn Sa'd, II, p. 382; Aghani; IX, p.137

12. Ibn Sa'd, II, pp.365 ff.

13. See W. Montgomery Watt, "'Abd Allah b. al-'Abbas", EI2

14. Ibn Sa'd, III, pp. 169-213

15. ibid., pp. 169-71

16. ibid., pp.171-2

17. See Ch. 1, footnote 51

18. Ibn Sa'd, III, pp. 172-8

19. *ibid.*, pp.178-81
20. *ibid.*, p.179
21. *ibid.*, pp. 181-5
22. Ibn Sa'd, V, p.187; Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib, VIII, p.333; Wafayat, IV, pp.59 f.
23. For the life and work of Baladhuri, see Goitein's introduction to Volume V of the *Ansab*, pp. 9-32
24. On these early writers, see, respectively, Ibn Nadim, *Fihrist*, pp.100 if., 95, 277, 91, 93
25. *Ansab al-Ashraf* ed. Muhammad Hamidullah (Cairo, 1960), I, pp. 579-91
26. Goitein, *op. cit.*, p. 18
27. See footnote 12
28. Dhahabi, *Mizan*, II, p.299
29. *ibid.*, IV, p.154
30. *ibid.*, p. 436
31. *Ta'rikh* (Beirut, 1960), II, pp. 123-6
32. E. L. Petersen, 'Ali And Mu'awiya In Early Arabic Tradition (Copenhagen 1964), pp.169 ff.
33. Najashi, *Rijal*, p.245
34. Ibn Nadim, *Fihrist*, p.101
35. *Sharh Nahj al-Balagha*, ed. Muhammad Abu'l-Fadl Ibrahim, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1965), II, pp. 21-60
36. *ibid.*, pp. 44-60. For Al-Jawhari see *Adh-Dhari'a*, XII, p.206
37. *Adh-Dhari'a ila Tasanif ash-Shi'a*, 24 volumes, Najaf, *passim*
38. Dhahabi; *Mizan*, II, p.367
39. *ibid.*, p.365
40. Tabari, I, pp.1837-45
41. *Muruj adh-Dhahab*, ed. Daghir (Beirut 1965), II, p.301, and *at-Tanbih wa'l-Ishraf* (Beirut 1965), p. 284, in both of which he mentions Saqifa only in passing, referring his reader to his exclusive work on the subject, which unfortunately is lost.
42. *Al-Kamil fi't-Ta'rikh*, II, pp.221 ff in which his account of Saqifa is almost the same as that of Tabari
43. *A1-'Iqd al-Farid*, IV, pp.257 ff.
44. *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, ed. 'Abd al-Hamid, (Cairo, 1964), pp.61-72
45. *Al-Ihtijaj*, ed. Muhammad Baqir al-Khursan (Najaf 1966), I, pp. 89-118
46. *Bihar al-Anwar*
47. A. Guillaume, translating the *Sira*, collected all the assertions and comments of Ibn Hisham

- and arranged them separately at the end of the book under the heading, "Ibn Hisham's Notes". There are 922 notes of various length, some of them are as long as a page or more. See A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 690-798
48. This is a common accusation levelled against Ibn Ishaq. See, however, Nabia Abbott's comments on this subject in *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* (Chicago, 1957-72), I, p. 97. The remarkable lack of any partiality in a fragment of the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'* leads Abbott to question the accuracy of such accusations.
49. For the translation of Ibn Ishaq's account, I have largely drawn on Guillaume's translation of the *Sira*.
50. Dhahabi; *Mizan*, I, p.133
51. *ibid.*, p.33
52. Ibn Hisham, IV, pp.306 f.
53. Hadid, *Sharh*, II, p.25
54. Later he explained to Ibn 'Abbas that he wrongly understood the Qur'anic verse (11, 143) which says, "Thus we have made you a middle people that you may be a witness against men, and that the Apostle may be a witness against you." Ibn Hisham, IV, pp.311 f.
55. e.g. Tabari, I, p.1683
56. *Isti'ab*, III, p.1248
57. *ibid.*, IV, p.1441
58. *ibid.*, p.1449. His father's name must be 'Arfaja.
59. *ibid.*, I., p. 316
60. On these rivalries, see Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, pp. 4-8, 16-20, 141-4; *idem*, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956), pp.151-91
61. *Isti'ab*, II, p. 594
62. *ibid.*, I., pp.92 if. Ya'qubi's description of him (II, p.124) as a Khazraji leader must be a scribal error.
63. *Isti'ab*, I., pp.172 if. Our sources are not clear on who paid homage first. Ya'qubi, *loc. cit.*, says it was Bashir b. Sa'd, while according to Baladhuri, I, p. 582, it was Usayd b. Hudayr.
64. See Henri Lammens, "Le 'triumvirat' Abou Bakr, 'Omar, et Abo 'Obaida", *Melanges de la Faculte Orientale de l'Universite St Joseph de Beyrouth*, IV (1910), pp.113-44
65. From here on, our sources are utterly confused about the timing of the sequence of events, since each tradition is recorded separately. We are not, therefore, sure whether the demand of homage from 'Ali and his supporters was made immediately after they came to the mosque from the Saqifa, or after the burial of the Prophet on the following day when general homage

was being paid to Abu Bakr. A careful reading of the sources (e.g. Baladhuri, I, p. 582) strongly suggests, however, that it was demanded as soon as they came to the mosque from the Saqifa.

66. Many versions of this tradition may be found in Baladhuri, I, pp. 585 f.; Ya'qubi, II, p. 126; Tabari, I, p. 1818; Abu Bakr al-Jawhari in Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balagha*, II, pp.47, 50, 56 f.; 'Iqd, IV, pp.259 f. *Al-Imama Wa's-Siyasa*, I, pp.12-13, (though its attribution to Ibn Qutayba is incorrect, it is certainly a very early work extremely rich in sources) gives a very detailed account of the episode of 'Umar and Abu Bakr's attack on the house of Fatima and the force used to secure 'Ali's homage. Also L. V. Vaglieri, EP article "Fatima", who, commenting on these events, says "Even if they have been expanded by invented details, they are based on facts."

67. Ya'qubi, II, p. 126; Baladhuri, I, p. 586; Tabari, I, p. 1825; 'Iqd, IV, p.260; Hadid, II, p.22

68. For the details and certain differences in names see Ya'qubi, loc. cit.; Baladhuri, I, p. 588; 'Iqd, IV, p.259; Hadid, II, pp. 50 ff.

69. Ibn Sa'd, VI, p.15; Isti'ab, I, p.334

70. Ibn Sa'd, IV, pp. 378 ff.; Isti'ab, II, p.448

71. Ibn Sa'd, III, pp 484 ff.; Isti'ab, II, p.424; IV, p. 1606

72. Ibn Sa'd, III, pp.471 f.; Isti'ab, II, p.662

73. Isti'ab, III, p.1033

74. Ibn Sa'd, IV, p.364; Isti'ab, I, pp.155 f

75. Ibn Sa'd, III, p. 498; Isti'ab, I, pp. 65 f.

76. Ibn Sa'd, IV, p.219; Isti'ab, IV, pp.1652 f.

77. Ibn Sa'd, III, p. 246; Isti'ab, III, pp.1135 ff

78. Isti'ab, IV, pp.1480 ff

79. Ibn Sa'd, IV, p.75; Isti'ab, II, p.634

80. Isti'ab, II, p.510

81. Ibn Sa'd, IV, p.97 Isti'ab, II, pp.420 ff For his support to 'A1i, see Baladhuri, I, p.588; Ya'qubi, p. 126; Hadid, II, p.58

82. e.g. see Tabarsi, *Ihtijaj*, I, pp.118-89

83. e.g. see Ibn Sa'd, III, pp. 181-5