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## 11. Consultation and 'Othman

According to Saif it is recorded in Tabari, vol.3, p.292 among the events of the year 23 Hejri from Saif that 'Omar said, " I am sure that the most popular men amongst the Muslims are these two ('Ali and 'Othman) — The Prophet of God used to dictate to them, that which Gabriel revealed from God to Him." On pages 266 and 305, about the events of the year 24 Hejri it reads, "On the third day of Moharram 'Othman won the votes of the consultants in the afternoon.

While the call for prayer went on, 'Othman came out of the conference room and led the prayer." Tabari records from Saif also on page 305 that when the consultant members voted in favor of 'Othman, he came out of the conference room looking- most sad and climbed the pulpit of the Prophet, and" delivered a sermon.

After praising God and paying homage to the Prophet he said, "O people, you are in a house which has a very weak foundation, passing the remainder of your lifetime. Before death befalls you, do good work, because death comes suddenly in daytime or at night. Let not Satan deceive you, do not take life for granted. Take heed from those who passed away before you. Do not pass your time in vain. Try your best. You will not be forgotten (in the sight of God). Where are your fathers and brothers who cultivated the land before you, and left it? Your aim must be your salvation. God has given an example for this present life and said, "Give them an example about this life, it is like rain that the green herbs flourish as a result of rain." He then recited to the end of the verse. Then the people came forward to shake his hand as his supporters.

## The story of consultation by others apart from Saif

('Omar the second Caliph nominated six persons to consult and elect the third Caliph amongst themselves).

Ibn Hesham in his book Alsirah, vol.4, pp.334–337 has recorded from Abdulrahman Bin 'Auf that during the pilgrim– age at Mena a man said to 'Omar that someone told him," If 'Omar dies he would 'vote for such and such person as Caliph, also the election of Abu Bakr was hasty and a mistake although successful." 'Omar replied angrily, " I will see about this matter tonight, and warn those who want to

usurp the successorship of the Prophet, God willing." Abdul Rahman advised 'Omar to postpone his decision until they returned to Medina, because there were all sorts of people at the pilgrimage, but the dignitaries and scholars lived in Medina.

'Omar agreed and when they arrived at Medina on the first Friday 'Omar delivered a sermon and said, " I understood that someone said that if 'Omar dies he will vote for such and such a person as Caliph. Do not let the saying 'Abu Bakr's election was hasty and a mistake but successful deceive you. Yes it was so, but God protected us. Remember there is no one as popular among you as Abu Bakr. Anyone who shakes the hand of allegiance with someone else without first consulting the Muslims, shows his allegiance to be of no value, and both persons must be killed."

A part of the above story, and 'Omar's opinion, have been mentioned previously where we described, "The people sought refuge at Fatimah's house." Ibn Abil Hadid, vol.2, p. 123, recorded from Jahez that 'Ammar Bin Yasir said that after 'Omar he will vote for 'Ali. This caused 'Omar to address the people in Medina.

Some people say Talha Bin 'Obaidullah was the candidate. It makes no difference who the candidate was, but what matters is that the Prophet did not order his people to elect the Caliph, and the first Caliph too, according to 'Omar came to power through a hasty ill considered occasion. Abu Bakr nominated 'Omar. In one word the election of a Caliph was not customary in Islam. Only 'Omar decided to select six persons who elected the third Caliph amongst themselves.

'Omar's decision was planned prior to his being stabbed, as a result of which he died later. We shall see later if 'Omar had someone in mind as his successor or not.

## **Consultation and 'Omar**

It is written in Ansabul Ashraf by Baladhori, pp. 15–16 and Tabaqat by Ibn Sa'd, vol.3, p.243, that 'Omar delivered a sermon on a Friday, and after praising God, and making homage to the Prophet said: "I have dreamed about a cockerel pecking me. I think my death is drawing near. People ask me to nominate a successor. God will not neglect his religion, or the Caliph and the purpose of His sending the Prophet. After I die the Caliph will be chosen by six consulting members.

The Prophet was pleased with them before he passed away. I know some people will blame me for taking this decision. They will be those whom I persuaded to embrace Islam. Those who object are the enemy of God.

It is written in "Eqdolfarid, vol.3, p.73, that when 'Omar was stabbed, people asked him to nominate a successor. He said, "Someone better than me did not nominate one and another one better than me did nominate one (He meant the Prophet and Abu Bakr). Had Abu'obaidah not died, I would have nominated him for he was a man to be trusted as the Prophet said. Also if Salem the freed slave of Abu

Hodhaifa, was alive I would nominate him because he loved God so much that he never thought of committing a sin, even without fear from God."

'Omar was asked to nominate his son. He said that it is enough that one of Khattab is responsible to God. He wished if he could be free in the presence of God, breaking even with goods and bads. Then he said that he wanted to nominate someone to guide them along the right path and he pointed at 'Ali, but he said that he had better not, because he did not want to take the responsibility in this life, and the next.

Baladhori has recorded in Ansabol Ashraf, vol.5, p. 16, that 'Amr Bin Maimoun said that he actually saw 'Omar being stabbed, and heard Omar saying, "Fetch me 'Ali, 'Othman, Talha, Zubair, Abdul Rahman Bin 'Auf and Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas." He said to 'Ali, "People may realize that you are a cousin of the Prophet, and his son–in–law, and you are as knowledgeable in Islam. Should you rule these people have fear of God." He said to 'Othman, "People may realize that you are the son–in–law of the Prophet, and you are an old man. Should you rule these people fear God, and do not let (your relatives) the Moait family master the people."

Then he called Sohaib, and said to him that he should lead the prayer for three days and let these (six) persons be locked in a conference room for consultation. If they unanimously elect a Caliph, anyone who did not support him must be beheaded. When they (the six, and Sohaib) left, 'Omar said, that if they let the bald (he meant 'Ali who had no hair on the front of his head) rule he would guide the people properly. His son (Bin 'Omar) said to him, "Then nominate him." He replied but Ire did not want to take the responsibility.

In Riadolnadera, vol.2, p.72, after the above saying of 'Omar about 'Ali, it is written that 'Omar said, "If people let the one with the long forehead (he meant 'Ali) lead them on the right path, he would do so even by the sword." He was asked, "Why do you not nominate him." He said, "The one who was better than I did not nominate (his successor)." Baladhori has recorded in Ansabol Ashraf, vol.5, p.17, that Waqedi has said that when 'Omar was speaking of a successor, the people suggested 'Othman, Zubair, Talha, Sa'd or Abdul Rahman. He said that 'Othman would give high position to his relatives,

Zubair was a believer when at peace and an unbeliever when angry. Talha was an extremist, Sa'd is good to head the arms but could not even rule a village, and Abdul Rahman might only just manage his house. Bin Maimoon said that 'Omar left his successor to be elected from amongst six persons, and asked that his son Abdullah Bin 'Omar be with the six, but should not be elected. Baladhori has recorded in Ansabol Ashraf that Abi Mekhnaf said that when 'Omar was stabbed, he ordered Sohaib Bin Abdullah Jod'an to fetch the leading front Muhajirs and Ansars.

When they came 'Omar said, "I have left your affairs in the hands of six people who were pioneers in Islam, and the Prophet was pleased with them when he passed away. They will elect one amongst them-selves to be your leader (Caliph)." Then he named these six people. He ordered Abi-Talha Ziad

Bin Sahl Khazraji to have fifty soldiers ready to press the matter to support the new Caliph. He ordered that the election should be finished in three days. He told Sohaib to lead the prayers until the Caliph was elected. Talha, one of the six nominees was not in Medina, 'Omar said that they should not wait for him after three days, and that whoever was elected was to be the Caliph, and anyone who rejected him was to be beheaded. Then 'Omar sent someone to inform Talha. But when Talha came to Medina the Caliph 'Omar was dead, and 'Othman was elected as the new . Caliph. Talha remained in his house in protest.

'Othman went to him, Talha said, "Would you give up the Caliphate should I not agree." 'Othman replied in the affirmative, then Talha also shook 'Othman's hand as Caliph. It is written in 'Eqdolfarid page 20 that Talha said to 'Othman that he was prepared to shake his hand, in the mosque or in public.

Abdullah Bin Saad Abisarh has said that before Talha gave his pledge people were worried in case he disagreed. 'Othman always respected Talha, until he was besieged in his house before he was murdered. Then Talha showed more opposition to 'Othman than anybody else. Baladhori has written in Ansabol Ashraf page 18 that 'Omar said, "The minority should obey the majority, and anyone who opposes you, behead him."

It is also written on page 19 that 'Omar ordered the consultant members to confer for three days, and if two people voted in favor of someone, and two others voted in favor of someone else, then the vote must be taken again. If four people were on the side of one person, and only one against, then the four were in the right. If three and three, the three agreeing with Abdul Rahman would be in the right, because what he chooses for Muslims is safer.

Baladhori in Ansabol Ashraf, vol.5, p. 15 has written that 'Omar said, "Some people say Abu Bakr's election was a hasty error, God saved us the harm of it, and 'Omar did not come to power by voting, but I have decided that my successor will be chosen by discussion. If four are on one side, and one on the other side, side with the four. If there was three against three, agree with the three that has Abdul Rahman among them. If Abdul Rahman (shook his two hands) together follow him." Mottaqi also has recorded in Kanzol–Ommal, vol.3, p. 160 that 'Omar said, "Should Abdul Rahman shake his two hands together you will then take him as Caliph." Mottaqi has also recorded from Aslam that 'Omar said, "Should Abdul Rahman name any of them as Caliph you will have to obey him, and any– body who refrains from allegiance must be beheaded."

The above stories explain that 'Omar left the affairs of Muslims in the hands of Abdul Rahman, and the discussion of the six whom he nominated to elect as Caliph was only as a security measure to ensure that his heir came to the throne. 'Ali was aware of 'Omar's plan as is recorded in Ansabol Ashraf, vol.5, p. 19 that 'Ali heard 'Omar recommending Abdul Rahman's approval for the election to Caliph. He said to his uncle 'Abbas "By God, we have lost the election." 'Abbas asked him "How did you know?" 'Ali said, "Saad is in favor of Abdul Rahman because they are cousins. Abdul Rahman is 'Othman's son-in-law, and his friend. These three are on one side, even if Zubair and Talha do vote for me they will win, and we shall loose because Abdul Rahman is among them." Almost the same conversation is recorded in

Eqdulfarid, vol. 13, p.74.

Baladhori has recorded in Ansabol Ashraf, vol.5, p.20 from Abi Mekhnaf that 'Ali was concerned in case Sa'd Abdul Rahman and 'Othman agreed together. Therefore he took Hasan and Husain with him to Sa'd and said to Sa'd, "O Aba Is'haq, I did not come to ask you to vote for me in spite of Abdul Rahman. But if Abdul Rahman asked you to take 'Othman's part please do not, because I am a nearer relative to you than 'Othman."

'Ali mentioned this to Sa'd and reminded him of his relation, Hasan and Hosein's relation and Amena the Prophet's mother's relation with Sa'd. Sa'd said to 'Ali "You are given what you asked for." When Abdul Rahman asked Sa'd for consultation, Sa'd said, "I vote in your favor, but not in 'Othman's favor, because 'Ali deserves this position more than 'Othman." Abu Talha (the chief guard) came to the conference room to urge them to reach a decision and said to the consulting members, "You show avidity for discussion, but you delay the discussion.

It seems that each of you is yearning to be the Caliph." Abu Talha seeing the situation shed tears and said, "I expected them not to have desire for the position, and I was afraid that none of them would accept the responsibility of being the Caliph, and each would trig to pass it to another." 'Omar appointed his son as a member of the consultation without having a vote, but his son did not join the conference as recorded in Ansabol Ashraf, vol.5, p.21.

Abi Mekhnaf said that 'Omar was buried on Sunday and Sohaib led the funeral prayer, and Abu Talha led the daily congregational prayer. The consultants did not start their work that evening, and the following morning they supervised the treasury at Abu Talha, the chief guard's request. Abdul Rahman realized that the consultants were whispering to one another to discourage candidates then he said, "Sa'd and I withdrew our claims as candidates provided I choose the Caliph, because the people were waiting for the result and they wanted to return to their home towns.

All the candidates agreed except 'Ali who said, "I will think about it." Abu Talha met them and Abdul Rahman told him what he proposed, and of 'Ali's disagreement. Abu Talha said to 'Ali, "You trust Abdul Rahman as well as other Muslims. He is not himself a candidate because he does not like the responsibility, why do you not agree with him?" Then 'Ali asked Abdul Rahman to swear that he would be impartial and would give the welfare of Muslims priority to his own fancy desires, Abdul Rahman gave his word. Then Abdul Rahman said to 'Ali, "Do not be in doubt."

This happened either in the treasury house or in the house of Meswar Bin Makhrama. By request of Abdul Rahman all members gave their word that anybody he chooses would be accepted. Abdul Rahman took 'Ali's hand and said, "Swear by God that should I choose you as Caliph you would not favor Bani Abdulmottaleb, and act according to the Prophet's instructions thoroughly." 'Ali said, "Who can agree to do exactly as the Prophet did? I can only agree to do my best."

Then Abdul Rahman took 'Othman's hand and said, "Swear by God that should I choose you as Caliph

you would not favor Bani Omayya and follow the Prophet, Abu Bakr and 'Omar." 'Othman swore to act accordingly, and gave his word. 'Ali said to 'Othman, "You got what you wanted." Then Abdul Rahman said the kind of thing to 'Ali. 'Ali said "I promise to follow the Prophet's instructions and to do that which I think is right according to Islamic Laws." Meanwhile 'Othman Kept saving, "I give my word, as the prophets gave their words to God, to act according to the instructions of the Prophet, Abu Bakr and 'Omar."

Then Abdul Rahman shook the hand of 'Othman and announced him as Caliph. All members of the consultation shook 'Othman's hand, to show their acceptance of him as Caliph, except 'Ali who remained sitting after the others had stood to acknowledge 'Othman. Abdul Rahman said to 'Ali, "Agree or else I will behead you." None of the members carried a sword except Abdul Rahman. It was said that 'Ali left the conference room angrily.

Other members went after him to agree or else they would fight him. Then 'Ali returned and shook the hand of allegiance with 'Othman. Baladhori has recorded in Ansabol Ashraf, vol.5, p.24 from Waqedi that after 'Othman came out of the conference room being Caliph, he went into the pulpit. He praised God, and paid homage to the Prophet, and said, "O people, the first mount is hard. We have plenty of time ahead. If I am spared I will prepare a sermon for you. I was not a speaker before, but God will teach me how to deliver a speech."

It is written in 'Eqdulfarid, vol.2, p. 140 that 'Othman was one of those people who found it difficult to deliver speeches. It is also written in Albayan–Wat–Tabyeen that

'Othman made some mistakes in the pulpit when he said "O people, Abu Bakr and 'Omar used to prepare their speeches in advance." Abi Mekhnaf says that 'Othman in the pulpit said, "I have not prepared a speech and have never delivered one. By the will of God I shall return soon and speak to you." It is also narrated that 'Othman went into the pulpit and said, "We are not familiar with addressing people, if we are spared, God willing, you will hear a good speech. I have to tell you now that by God's decree, 'Obaidullah son of 'Omar has killed Hormozan.

Hormozan was a Muslim but he had no heir, I the leader and the Caliph will forgive the murderer. Do you forgive him?" All answered in the affirmative, except 'Ali who suggested capital punishment for the murderer and pointed to 'Obaidullah, saying "O you hypocrite, if I got hold of you I would kill you in retaliation for killing Hormozan."

Tabari in his book vol.3, pp.292–302, has made one story from all the above narratives, and has condensed some parts of it so much that the events are not properly described. He has recorded the speech of 'Othman from Saif only. We have written here a little about the 'Consultation' to show the difference between Saif and others in recording the events. We shall 3xplain more about the discussion of consulting members in the conference room later. Saif has not manipulated the above event, but he has invented hundreds of narratives to defend the then rulers, and influential men. Tabari has shown a

special desire to record from Saif. Should anybody read the events of the years 11—37 Hejri from Tabari's book, he would realize how much the events have been invented and/or converted.

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