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Home > The Brother of the Prophet Muhammad: Imam 'Ali > Part 2: The Imam During The Era Of The Three Caliphs > 21. Uthman's Reign > And So the Medinites

21. Uthman's Reign

The Electoral Convention produced its expected conclusion. Uthman became the Third Caliph. As a companion Uthman was not less than his two predecessors: Abu Bakr and 'Umar. He was a member of the fourth ten of the early Muslims (among the first 40 muslims).

His Islam was earlier than that of 'Umar and before his conversion he was not as violent as 'Umar in opposing Islam. He had a distinction which neither of his two predecessors had: being the son-in-law of the Messenger twice.

He married Ruqayah one of the daughters of the Prophet. The fruit of this marriage was a son named Abdullah who died at the age of six after the death of his mother. After Ruqayah Uthman married her sister Om Kulthoom. She also did not live long with him. She died during the life of her Holy father.

Non-Combatant

Uthman did not attend the Battle of Badr. He was in Medinah helping his sick wife Ruqayah who died before the return of her Holy father from the battlefield. Uthman attended the Battle of Uhud and other battles.

History does not record any physical participation on his part in a fight at any battle. Like the majority of the companions he deserted the Prophet during the Battle of Uhud. He returned to the Prophet after the battle ended and he was one of the companions who were forgiven by the Almighty according to the Holy Qur'an.

"Those who turned their back on the day the two hosts met it was Satan who caused them to fall because of some evil they have done. But God has blotted out their sin. For God is Most-Forgiving Most Forbearing." The Holy Quran Chapter 3 verse 155.

Uthman was not a warrior but he was charitable. He participated effectively in funding the army of Tabuk. It is reported that he brought to the Messenger a thousand dinars (equivalent to ten thousand

dollars) to be spent in financing the military mission. He did other charities.

Uthman came to power at the end of the twenty-third year after the Hijrah (644 A.D.). His reign started after he passed seventy and continued for twelve years.

During the first six years of his reign the affairs of his administration went well. The Muslims achieved many victories during this period. They were still in a state of war with the two prominent Empires of that time: The Persian and Byzantine Empires. What was left of the Persian Empire during the reign of 'Umar came into the Islamic Dominion. North Africa was also detached from the Roman Empire to become a part of the Muslim State. The Third Caliph lifted the ban against military use of the seaways. An important Islamic fleet was built in the Mediterranean.

The last six years of the reign of the Third Caliph were full of ugly events. The class struggle between the over–paid and the under–paid started to grow rapidly until it exploded with a revolution whose first victim was the Third Caliph. The events which took place during the last six years were germinated before this period. The seeds of these events were born at the beginning of his reign of during the reigns of his predecessors.

A Bridging Personality

Uthman possessed neither the wisdom nor the determination of his predecessors. Nor did he have their non-materialistic attitude. In fact his personality had two sides opposed to each other. On the one hand he was an early Muslim. He accompanied the Messenger for a long time acquired the honor of marrying two daughters of the Messenger and was charitable for the cause of Islam.

On the other hand he was a member of the Umayyad clan. His love to them was unbounded in spite of their dark past towards the faith of Islam and its Prophet. These two sides of his personality made the outstanding companions foresee the Third Caliph's potential as a bridge over which the caliphate might pass from the righteous reign of the early companions of Muhammad to the despotic and unjust reign of the members of the clan of Umayyad.

The reader may remember that when 'Umar issued his instructions concerning the selection of his successor 'Ali said to his uncle Al-Abbas: "I know that they will select Uthman and if he is killed or dies the members of the Umayyad clan will make the caliphate rotate among themselves and if I am alive they will find me where they dislike.".

It is amazing that Quraish refused to give the leadership to the Imam 'Ali fearing that the leadership might rest in the House of the Prophet because of their unequaled religious honor yet Quraish chose to make the caliphate rest in the House of Umayyad which was noted for its hostility towards the Messenger and his religion.

Early Opposition

This was probably one of the reasons which made two outstanding companions Ammar Ibn Yasir and Al-Maqdad Ibn Al-Aswad start their opposition to Uthman at the very beginning of his reign. They loudly objected to his coming to power in spite of what they knew of his righteousness.

History recorded that Ammar came out shouting after Uthman's election: "Announcer of death come forward and announce the death of Islam. Justice has died and evil emerged. By God if I find supporters I will fight the Qureshites. By God if I find one person ready to fight them I will be his second."1

He came to the Imam 'Ali and called upon him to start war against the Qureshites. But the Imam reminded him of the lack of support. He said to him and others: "I do not like to endanger you or burden you with what is beyond your ability."

Al-Miqdad came out on the day following Uthman's elction. While he was walking he met Abdul Rahman Ibn Ouf the king-maker who was responsible for Uthman's selection. A confrontation between the two companions took place and went as follows: Al-Miqdad: "Abdul-Rahman may God reward you in this world and the Hereafter if you have sought to please God by what you did. May He increase your wealth if you have sought by what you did a worldly gain."

Abdul-Rahman: "May God have mercy upon you; listen to me.".

Al-Miqdad: "By God I will not listen." He pulled his hand from Abdul-Rahman's hand and left.

The two companions had another confrontation at another occasion:

Al-Miqdad: By God I have never seen anything similar to what was done to the members of this House (of the Prophet)

Abdul-Rahman: Migdad why are you concerned with this?

Al-Miqdad: By God I love them for the love of the Messenger of God. I am amazed by the Qureshites who claim superiority over other people because of their relationship to the Prophet then allow themselves to take the authority of the Prophet away from the members of his House.

Abdul-Rahman: By God I have tried to do what is best for the interest of the people.

Al-Miqdad: By God you have left a man who is capable of leading the nation to the right road and maintaining truth and executing justice. By God if I have supporters against the Qureshites I will fight them as I fought them at Badr and Uhud.".

Abdul-Rahman: May your mother be bereaved by your death. Let no one hear those words from you. I am afraid that you may have become revisionist and devisive.

Al-Miqdad: A person that invites people to follow the truth and right leadership is not revisionist. But the one who drives people to the falsehood and prefers his own interest above the truth is the man of revision and division..."2

Neither Ammar nor Al-Maqdad had any political ambitions and neither of them was seeking through his endeavor any material gain. These companions were highly commended by the Messenger.

Ibn Majah reported in his Sunan that the Messenger said: "God has commanded me to love four persons and informed me that He loves them." When he was asked who they were he said "'Ali is of them (repeating that three times) Abu Dharr Salman and Al-Migdad."3

Al-Tirmidhi reported in his Sunan that the Messenger said: "Every Prophet was given distinguished companions but I was given fourteen." Then he counted Ammar and Al-Miqdad among the fourteen.4

Al-Tirmidhi also reported that the Prophet said when Ammar Ibn Yasir asked permission to enter the house of the Prophet: "Admit him. Welcome the good the purified."5

He also recorded that Ayshah reported that the Messenger said: "Whenever Ammar is given the choice between two alternatives he chooses the more righteous of the two."6

Al-Tirmidhi reported also that the Messenger said to Ammar: "Ammar be cheerful the aggressor party will kill you."7

Implementation Of The Umayyad's Plan

What these good companions had seen through their intuition was becoming true. The signs of the future started to emerge quickly.

The members of the Umayyad clan met at the house of Uthman after he was elected. Abu Sufyan their old man who had lost his sight through aging asked them: "Are there any outsiders among you?"

When they assured him that there were none he said: "Children of Umayyad rotate it (the caliphate) among you as boys rotate a football. By the one in whose name Abu Sufyan swears there shall be neither a punishment nor requirement of account. Nor will there be a paradise or a hell or resurrection or a Day of Judgement."8

The Caliph of course chided him but this did not change the attitude of Abu Sufyan. He asked a man to lead him to the grave of Al-Hamzah uncle of the Prophet Muhammad and the prince of the martyrs.

When he stood on the grave he said addressing Al-Hamzah: "Abu Imarah (a code name of Al-Hamzah) the matter for which we gladiated with each other has become a play in the hands of our youth." Then he kicked the grave with his foot.9

He meant that the Umayyads and the Prophet Muhammad and his family fought each other for authority. Now the authority had come into the hands of Umayyads and the members of the House of the Prophet were deprived of it.

It did not take long before these words were translated into a reality. The members of the Umayyad clan exploited the simplicity of the Third Caliph and his extreme love for them. Within the first few years of his reign they put their hands on the two sources of power: The authority of the important provinces of the Islamic state and their treasuries.

The main power and wealth of the Islamic state were in three provinces: Syria Iraq and Egypt. During the first few years of the reign of Uthman these vast areas became Umayyad princedoms.

Muawiya and Syria

We have mentioned (Chapter 19) that 'Umar appointed Muawiya governor of Damascus then he added Jordan to his authority after the death of Yazeed (Muawiya's brother). 'Umar also appointed Omair Ibn Saad (a Medinite) the governor of Homs and Quinnisrine and Abdul– Rahman Ibn Alqamah the governor of Palestine. When 'Umar died these two men were still in their posts. But Abdul–Rahman Ibn Alqamah died at the beginning of the reign of Uthman and Omair resigned because of ailment.

Uthman added Palestine Homs and Qinnisrine to the authority of Muawiya. 10 Thus within two years from the beginning of the reign of Uthman Muawiya became the governor of what is called today the Greater Syria.

Muawiya's influence started to grow during the days of 'Umar. Yet it remained relatively limited in size and heavily supervised by 'Umar. The size of his area was more than doubled during the reign of Uthman and his influence became almost absolute and free of any supervision.

Within a few years Syria became an autonomous state within the Islamic state and Muawiya became the strong man of the Muslim world. Within a few years he was able to put in the battlefield a huge army containing one hundred thousand soldiers. It is worthy to note that Muawiya was no more righteous than his father Abu Sufyan.

Ibn Abu Sarh In Egypt

'Umar died while Amr Ibn Al-Aws was the governor of Egypt. Uthman dismissed him during the first two years of his reign. He replaced him with his foster brother Abdullah Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarh who remained in his position until the end of Uthman's reign.

Ibn Abu Sarh was one of the enemies of the Holy Prophet. He professed Islam during the time of the Messenger then deserted the faith. He used to ridicule the Holy Qur'an saying: "I shall reveal equal to what God has revealed to Muhammad."

Ibn Hisham reported that Ibn Abu Sarh embraced Islam and became a recorder of the revelation for the Prophet. Then he deserted the faith and went back to Quraish. When the Messenger entered Mecca he ordered his execution. Ibn Abu Sarh took refuge at Uthman's house who was his foster brother and Uthman hid him. When the situation calmed down Uthman brought him to the Messenger asking clemency for Abdullah.

The Messenger kept silent for a good while then said: yes. When Uthman and his foster brother left the Messenger said to the companions around him: "I kept silent for a while hoping that one of you would kill him." A Medinite companion asked: "Prophet of God why did you not give me a signal?" The Messenger replied: "A Prophet does not kill by signal."11

Iraq there were two important cities in Iraq: Kufah and Basra. 'Umar appointed Saad Ibn Abu Waqass to be governor of Kufah. Then he dismissed him and replaced him by Al-Mughirah Ibn Shubah.

When Uthman came to power he dismissed Al-Mughirah and replaced him by Saad Ibn Abu Waqass in response to a recommendation by 'Umar before his death.

Saad was a highly respected companion and gained a prominent position when 'Umar made him a member of the Electoral Convention. In spite of this Uthman kept him in the gubernatorial post for only one year. He replaced him with Walid Ibn Agabah a cousin and a half-brother of the Third Caliph.

Walid was a transgressor by the testimony of the Holy Qur'an. He embraced Islam after the year of the Hudeibeyah truce. The Messenger sent him to the tribe of Banu Al-Mustaliq to collect their Zakat.

Expecting his arrival Banu Al-Mustaliq rode their horses to receive him. Beholding their coming toward him he was frightened and went back to the Prophet before meeting them. He told the Prophet that Banu Al-Mustaliq wanted to kill him. Relying upon his information the Muslims considered a punitive action against the Mustaliqites.

But the Mustaliqites came to the Prophet and informed him that their intention was to receive and honor Walid rather than to kill him. A revelation concerning Walid and the Mustaliqites came down prohibiting the believers from reliance on information of unrighteous persons such as Walid because a transgressor is unworthy of reliance. Thus we read in the Chapter of Al-Hujorat the following:

"O you who believe if a transgressor comes to you with news try to verify it lest you harm people unwittingly and afterward you would regret what you have done. And know that among you is God's Apostle:

Were he in many matters to follow your opinions you would have certainly got into misfortune; but God has endeared the faith to you and made it beautiful in your hearts and He has made hateful to you the unbelief wickedness and rebellion. Such indeed are those who walk in righteousness."12

It is evident that Walid had kept his pre-Islamic mentality for the rest of his life. He remained in the

governorship of Kufah for five years until witnesses from the people of Kufah testified that he took intoxicants.

He was given the prescribed punishment and the Caliph was required to dismiss him. The situation of Walid was not unknown to Uthman and to the good Muslims especially after the Holy Qur'an called him a transgressor.

It is reported that when Walid came to replace Saad Saad asked him: "Have you become wise or have we become fools?" Walid replied: "Abu Is-Haq (the code name of Saad) neither of this is the case. It is the royal authority which some people take as lunch and then others take it as supper." Saad replied: "You (Umayyad) evidently have made the caliphate a kingdom." Abdullah Ibn Masud also said to Walid: "I do not know whether you have become good or people have became bad." 13

As the Caliph was required to dismiss his foster brother after he was scandalized by his own deeds the Caliph was expected to replace him by a companion such as Saad Ibn Abu Waqass or Ammar Ibn Yasir or Abdullah Ibn Masud. But the Caliph did not do any of these. He replaced him by Sa-eed Ibn Al-Aws another Umayyad.

Although Sa-eed did not have a record as bad as that of Walid he was only one of the Umayyad youths whose governorship did not inspire people of Kufah with confidence nor rectify what needed to be rectified. We shall see later that the events took a turn from bad to worse during the days of Sa-eed.

In Basra When 'Umar died Abu Musa Al-Ashari was the governor of Basra. He remained in his post for three or five years during the reign of Uthman. A delegation from Basra came to the Caliph complaining of Abu Musa's misuse of public funds.

Abu Musa was not from the good companions. He once was accused by 'Umar of enriching himself at the expense of the Muslims and 'Umar took from him the surplus of his wealth and put it back in the Islamic treasury. Yet he kept him in his post because of his extreme loyalty to the Second Caliph.

The Third Caliph was expected to investigate the complaint of the Basra's delegation and replace Abu Musa (if proven guilty) by a better companion. But Uthman did not do that. Instead he took the word of the complainers dismissed him and replaced him with Abdullah Ibn Amir another Umayyad youth.

Thus within a few years of Uthman's reign the three important provinces of the Muslim state became Umayyad princedoms. The majority of their rulers were enemies of the Prophet and condemned by him or by the Holy Qur'an.

The ugly impact of their appointment to such high offices could have been minimized by a firm supervision on the part of the Caliph. It was easy for the Caliph to surround himself with righteous and intelligent advisors from among the companions. He could delegate to such advisors the authority of investigating and supervising the administrations of these provinces.

Unfortunately supervision was completely absent. The chief advisor of the Caliph was his cousin Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam another unscrupulous Umayyad. The power which was given to this Umayyad youth is not available to any prime minister of our time. As a matter of fact Marwan was the actual caliph and Uthman was only a figurehead.

Thus the caliphate was transformed actually into an Umayyad kingdom. To prepare the Muslim world psychologically for the Umayyad rule the Umayyad officials advocated the superiority of the Qureshites over the rest of the Arabs and the superiority of their clan over the rest of the Qureshites. They imposed a complete silence on the distinctions of the members of the House of the Prophet in general and 'Ali in particular. They informed their subjects of the close relationship of the Umayyad to the Messenger.

Their historical hostility to him and to the members of his House was not to be mentioned to these subjects who were new Muslims unaware of the history of Islam.

Muawiya one time met Ammar Ibn Yasir in Medina. In a heated argument he told Ammar: "There are in Damascus one hundred thousands plus an equal number of their sons and servants. They receive their annual salaries and they do not know 'Ali and his kinship (to the Prophet) or Ammar and his early Islam nor Al–Zubayr and his companionship."14

Jundub Ibn Abdullah Al-Azdi once tried to inform the people of Kufah about the distinctions of the Imam 'Ali.

When he was reported to Walid Ibn Aqabah governor of Kufah he jailed him and did not free him until some important people mediated for his freedom. 15

The Third Caliph And His Two Predecessors

You may remember that Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf offered 'Ali and Uthman the caliphate stipulating that the third caliph had to follow the path of the first two Caliphs.

'Ali lost the caliphate because he rejected the stipulation. Uthman won the caliphate because he accepted it.

Let us see if he fulfilled his pledge to Abdul-Rahman and to the rest of the Muslims.

Neither of the two Caliphs appointed any of their relatives for any post in the Islamic provinces or cities. Uthman on the contrary put his relatives in the gubernatorial posts of all the key provinces. Was he by doing this in accord with the way of the two Caliphs?

The Third Caliph did not appear to believe that this was inconsistent with the way of his two predecessors. He vindicated the appointment of his relatives by the fact that 'Umar appointed Muawiya and men like Muawiya such as Amr Ibn Al-Aws and Mughirah Ibn Shubah for the governorship of

Damascus Egypt and Kufah. 'Umar did not choose for these posts the best companions of the Prophet.

The Third Caliph could have said also that 'Umar commissioned Walid Ibn Aqabah as a collector of the Zakat in the land of Jazirah. Probably 'Umar also appointed Abdullah Ibn Abu Sarh for a minor position. The Third Caliph was right in saying this. But the fact remained that 'Umar did not appoint any of his relatives to any high or minor post. Uthman appointed his relatives to high offices and gave them authorities without any appreciable supervision.

It is justifiable to say that Uthman was not out of tune with his two predecessors by choosing his relatives to high offices for the Umayyad influence began and grew to a noticeable degree during the time of 'Umar.

It was only natural for that influence to be escalated during the reign of Uthman by the factor of time and the membership of Uthman to the Umayyad clan. Had 'Umar been unwilling to see the Umayyad influence grow to that height he should have kept the Umayyads away from his regime.

He should not have formed the Electoral Convention or at least should have excluded Uthman from the Convention. 'Umar was well aware of Uthman's extreme love for the members of his clan.

Therefore we cannot say positively that Uthman by promoting his relatives was inconsistent with the policy of 'Umar for 'Umar is the one who started the Umayyads on the road to authority and enhanced their influence by indirectly putting their relative Uthman in the highest office.

Loose Fiscal Policy the aspect in which the Third Caliph was clearly inconsistent with his predecessors was his loose fiscal policy. It is a well-known fact that the first two Caliphs had led a very simple and rugged life for themselves and their families.

Whenever 'Umar ordered people to do something he expected his relatives to be the example to the rest of the Muslims in following the order. The Third Caliph on the contrary led a very luxurious life and he was constantly showering his relatives with gifts from the public funds. He privileged his relatives with huge grants while they were less adherent to the Islamic teaching than the rest of the Muslims.

Honoring Exile of the Prophet Al-Baladhuri reported that Uthman gave his uncle Al- Hakam Ibn Abu Al- Aws three hundred thousand dirhams (equivalent to 300 000 dollars) after he brought him to Medina. 16

This man was one of the worst enemies of the Messenger before he became a Muslim. After the Messenger conquered Mecca Al-Hakam came to Medina declaring Islam hypocritically and only for saving his life. Yet he continued harassing the Messenger.

He used to ridicule him by imitating his motions. The Messenger one time saw him peeping into his room from a slit in a door. The Messenger came out angrily and when he recognized him he said: "Should anyone blame me for punishing this cursed insect?" Then he exiled him and his family to Ta-if forbidding him and his children from dwelling in Medina.

By permitting Al-Hakam and his children to come back to Medina Uthman was in clear discord with the Messenger and the first two Caliphs who did not allow Al-Hakam to come back to Medina in spite of Uthman's mediation for him.

Uthman granted his foster brother Abdullah Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarh the fifth of the spoils from the first expedition which Abdullah led in North Africa. Marwan Ibn Al– Hakam purchased the fifth of the spoils of the second expedition in North Africa for five hundred thousand dinars (equivalent to five million dollars). Then the Caliph allowed him the whole amount 17

Khalid Ibn Abdullah Ibn Oseid (another Umayyad) received from the treasury three hundred thousand dirhams when he visited the Caliph while accompanying the delegation. The Caliph also ordered one hundred thousand for each member of the delegation.

When the treasurer Abdullah Ibn Arqam refused to pay these huge sums the Caliph proudly asked him: "Who are you to interfere with my order? You are only my treasurer." But Abdullah retorted saying: "I did not believe that I was your treasurer. Your treasurer is one of your servants. I am the treasurer of the Muslims." Then he came with the keys of the treasury and hung them on the pulpit of the Prophet at the Mosque resigning from his post.

The Caliph ordered three hundred thousand dirhams for Abdullah Ibn Arqam after he resigned; but out of pity Abdullah did not accept the grant. 18

Uthman also gave Sa-eed Ibn Al-Aws one hundred thousand dirhams. And when he married three or four of his daughters to men from Quraish he gave each one of them one hundred thousand dinars. He gave his cousin Al- Harith Ibn Al-Hakam (exile of the Prophet) three hundred thousand dirhams. He appointed him as a collector of the Zakat of Qud-ah. When he brought the Zakat the Caliph allowed him what he collected. 19

We ought not to forget that Abu Sufyan the old man of Umayyad also received from the Caliph two hundred thousand dirhams yet the old man fought the Prophet for twenty-one years and professed Islam only to save his neck after he and the rest of the Meccans were completely defeated.

He rejoiced on the defeat of the Muslims by the pagans of Hawazin in Hunain saying: "Their retreat will not end before they reach the sea."20

The Third Caliph did not only shower his relatives with public funds but he also granted them vast pieces of lands from the public properties.

Fadak a land of orchards (which came to the ownership of the Holy Prophet because it was acquired by the Muslims without war) also was granted by Uthman to some of his relatives. Fadak was supposed to be inherited totally or partly by Fatimah daughter of the Prophet but was nationalized by Abu Bakr because of a Hadith in which he reported that the Prophet said that what is left by the Prophets would be

charity. However Uthman granted Fadak to Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam the exile of the Prophet!21

Uthman did not follow the policy of his two predecessors concerning the public funds. He used to think that he had the right to spend out of the Muslims' funds as he liked.

He was the Imam of the Muslims and he had the right to do with their funds as he pleased. This is opposite of the precise and strict policy of the Second Caliph who used to exact from his appointees a full account concerning the public funds and ask whoever acquired a wealth among them: "How did you get this?" And he used to return the surplus of their wealth to the Islamic treasury.

'Umar and Abu Hurairah

'Umar appointed Abu Hurairah to collect the taxes of Al-Bahrain. When he knew that Abu Hurairah had prospered he said to him: "I sent you to Al-Bahrain while you were barefooted unable to acquire shoes for your feet. I have been informed that you have sold horses for sixteen hundred dinars.".

Abu Hurairah: "I had horses which multiplied by reproduction.".

'Umar: "I shall withhold your salary and what you used to receive of food allotment or you will bring me the surplus of your wealth.".

Abu Hurairah: "You have no right to do that." 'Umar: "Yes by God and I will hurt your back." Then he hit him with his rod until his back bled and ordered him to bring him the surplus fund.

When Abu Rurairah brought the demanded amount he said: "I hope that God will compensate me for this." 'Umar said: "That would be true if you had earned it legitimately and paid it willingly. By God your mother did not beget you to reach the position of collector of tax revenues from Hajar Al-Yamamah and the remote area of Al-Bahrain and to collect all that for yourself and not for God or for the Muslims. She begot you only to be a shepherd of donkeys." Then he dismissed him.22

There is a world of difference between this strict policy and that of Uthman who used to give his relatives hundreds of thousands and sometimes millions of dirhams seeing no wrong in doing that.

Other Grants to Other People The generosity of the Caliph was not limited to his relatives. It was extended to others whom he used to pay heavily either as a reward for their loyalty or as an appearament to some potential opponents. He gave Zaid Ibn Thabit one hundred thousand dirhams. He gave Al–Zubayr six hundred thousand dirhams and Talhah Ibn Ubaydullah two hundred thousand dirhams.23

These two companions were members of the Electoral Convention which brought Uthman to power. Neither of these two companions was in need of financial assistance. Both were wealthy with big holdings and big business. They had a great deal of real estate and of liquid funds.

It is worthy to note that history does not mention that the generosity of the Caliph was extended to the members of the House of the Prophet to whom the Holy Qur'an allotted at the least the sixth of the fifth of the spoils.

The Provincial Governors' Policy The governors of the provinces did what they were expected by adopting a policy similar to that of the Caliph in handling the Muslims' funds. It is reported that Walid Ibn Aqabah took a loan from the treasury of Kufah while he was the governor of the city. When the loan matured the treasurer Adbullah Ibn Masud asked him to pay it back but Walid did not pay it.

When the treasurer demanded the payment the governor wrote to the Caliph complaining about the treasurer. The Caliph wrote to the treasurer ordering him to leave Walid alone with the loan and telling him that he was only the treasurer of the Caliph. Upon this Ibn Masud angrily resigned.24

The Muslims of Kufah were lucky enough to find a man like Abdullah Ibn Masud who had the courage to stand up to Walid and require him to pay a loan. The Muslims of Syria were not so fortunate. Muawiya was an absolute ruler of Syria with no limit to his power.

He was living like a king handling the public funds of Syria as he was handling his own funds free of supervision. He used the public funds for purchasing loyalty and support of the chiefs of the Syrian tribes and men of influence. He was preparing himself to succeed Uthman and he had sufficient time for such a preparation.

As a matter of fact Muawiya started his preparation for his goal during the days of 'Umar. His extravagancy was evident to 'Umar himself. When the Second Caliph went to the Syrian front he was angered by the high standard of Muawiya's luxurious life. But Muawiya convinced the Caliph of the soundness of his policy using his proximity to the Roman Empire as an excuse for his extravagance.

It is amazing that the Caliph required Abu Hurairah to give a serious account for sixteen hundred dinars but he failed to ask Muawiya how he could maintain his lavish way of life.

Muawiya was not the only governor who used the public funds for his own interest. The rest of Uthman's appointed officials followed the same method in proportion to their authority and lack of supervision. All were working for the goal of transforming the caliphate into a despotic rule and the Muslim World into an Umayyad kingdom.

This unscrupulous policy had many consequences:

(1) The growth of the wealth of the wealthy class in the Islamic society Many of the lucky individuals who received generous gifts from the Caliph and his appointed officials invested what they received of funds or portions of it in real estate and business. This yielded them enormous profits.

Many of the companions who were highly paid during the days of 'Umar became considerably wealthy through investing the surplus of their salaries in real estate and trades. The wealth of these companions

was expected to grow by the passage of time. When Uthman allowed the companions to live outside Medina (ending the ban which was imposed by 'Umar on the companions) many of the prosperous companions found new avenues for multiplying their fortunes. They purchased buildings orchards and lands in Iraq and other provinces. The Third Caliph also gave vast public lands in Hijaz to many of his relatives friends and supporters.

Transactions and exchanges of real estates between wealthy owners living in Iraq and their counterparts in Hijaz and Yemen continued and the Caliph encouraged these transactions. 25 Thus many deals were made and the fortunes of these enterprisers were increased rapidly.

Many of the companions and others became multi-millionaires. The fortune of Al-Zubayr amounted to forty million dirhams26 and that of Talhah to thirty millions27 and that of Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf to about three millions.28

(2) The other result of the Third Caliph's handling of public funds was the increase of the pressure on the tax payers of the conquered countries. The generosity of the Caliph and his appointed officials in handling the public funds and their gifts to the individuals required liquid funds which could not come but through overtaxation of the conquered nations. This aspect is not mentioned clearly in our history because the conquered nations did not have political power or voice.

A dialogue between the Caliph and Amr Ibn Al-Aws (who was once the governor of Egypt and was replaced by Abdullah Ibo Abu Sarh) reveals the mounting pressure on the conquered nations. The Caliph said to Amr: "The camels are giving much more milk after you left." (He meant that more funds were coming from Egypt after his dismissal.)

And Amr replied: "yes but their babies have perished!" (He meant that by exacting more taxes from the Egyptians the Egyptians were being impoverished.)29

The Growth Of Opposition

Early opposition to the Third Caliph had started at the beginning of his reign by Ammar Ibn Yasir and Al–Miqdad Ibn Al–Aswad who were outstanding companions and free of any political or material ambitions. That opposition was calmed during the first few years of the Third Caliph's reign due to the lack of support by the public and because what they expected to happen did not happen during the early period of his reign.

However the events which took place later contributed to the rapid growth of the opposition. The motive behind the oppositions was either religious or political and sometimes it was both.

Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf the one who selected Uthman and brought him to power was one of the early critics of the Caliph. He was displeased to see his selected Caliph following a policy opposed to that of the first two Caliphs in spite of his pledge at the time of his selection to follow their policy.

No doubt many companions blamed Abdul– Rahman for selecting Uthman and depriving 'Ali of the caliphate. They held him responsible for the Caliph's policy in handling the public funds and imposing the authority of the Umayyads on the Muslims.

Abdul-Rahman changed his heart towards his man and turned 180 degrees from the Caliph's extreme supporter to the Caliph's hostile critic.

The road which Uthman took probably showed Abdul– Rahman that the caliphate would continue in the Umayyads after the death of Uthman. The relatives of the Caliph had become very powerful and capable of keeping the caliphate in their clan.

With their unlimited influence on the Caliph's mind they were in a position to convince him to make one of them his successor. Thus Abdul–Rahman belatedly discovered that he was maintaining a false hope of becoming Uthman's successor.

We may remember that 'Ali told Abdul-Rahman after he selected Uthman: "By God you gave him the leadership only to return it to you. May God plight you and him with a reciprocal and constant animosity!!!".

If Abdul–Rahman had a good memory he could recall the warning which he received in his dream during the days of the Electoral Convention. He dreamt of a green prairie into which a beautiful camel entered and passed through without touching it. It was followed by two camels one after another and they followed its behavior.

Then a fourth camel came and ate all he could from the grass of the prairie. Abdul-Rahman interpreted his dream by thinking that the fourth camel would be the third caliph who would not follow the precepts of the Prophet and the first two caliphs in handling the public funds.

Because of this dream Abdul-Rahman did not want to be the third caliph lest he would be the fourth camel. Had Abdul-Rahman remembered that vision he would have realized that he did not heed the warning which it contained. He would have realized that he had chosen the man whom he should have left out and left out the man whom he should have cbosen. Had he selected 'Ali he would have avoided the nation all the tragic events that took place later.

You may recall that 'Umar also saw in his dream that a man entered a garden and picked every fresh and ripe fruit taking them to himself and putting them under him. The two visions resembled each other and so did the responses of the two dreamers. Both chose the picker and the gluttonous eater.

Two Other Members of the Convention Talhah and Al–Zubayr who were also members of the Electoral Convention joined the opposition. Al–Zubayr was less violent in his opposition than Talhah.

It is difficult to believe that the two companions opposed Uthman because of his mishandling of the public funds. Of course the Caliph granted his relatives huge sums of money but the two companions

also had their big shares of his generosity. The share of Al–Zubayr was six hundred thousand dirhams and Talhah received two hundred thousand dirhams. They could not disallow the Caliph's grant to his relatives while legalizing it for themselves.

It seems that both men were aspirants to succeed Uthman. When 'Umar granted them candidacy to the high office in the Electoral Convention he actually qualified them for leadership. The enormous wealth of the two companions enhanced their importance in their own eyes and in the eyes of many Muslims. Tallah gained numerous supporters in Basra and so did Al–Zubayr in Kufah.

Like Abdul–Rahman the two companions were frightened by the rapid growth of the Umayyads' power which made them capable of competing with any companion for the leadership. It was disturbing to them to think that Uthman might appoint Muawiya or another Umayyad as a successor.

The turn of events indicated that the Umayyads would keep the caliphate in their clan blocking the road of other Qureshites to the high office. The two companions realized that silence would contribute to the Umayyads' success in achieving their goal. For this they decided to oppose the Caliph and try to end his reign before he chose an Umayyad successor. This would enable one of the two companions to succeed the Caliph.

Ayeshah Ayeshah wife of the Prophet also joined the opposition. She became an open critic of Uthman accusing him of taking a direction opposite to that of the Prophet. She occasionally displayed a garment of the Prophet saying that the garment of the Prophet had not yet deteriorated but Uthman had brought the precepts of the Prophet into deterioration. She used to call him Naathal (a heavily bearded Jew). The historians recorded that she used to say: "Kill Naathal because he deserted the faith."30

It seems that her motive was merely political rather than religious. She could not be angered by Uthman's violation of the Islamic Law because she allowed herself to commit a much bigger violation of God's commandments.

She opposed 'Ali who was the most adherent to the Book of God and the precepts of the Prophet. She was more violent in her opposition to the brother of the Messenger than in her opposition to Uthman.

She criticized Uthman because he injured some of the companions and mishandled the Muslims' funds yet she waged a war in which thousands of Muslims lost their lives. Killing the Muslims is a much bigger sin than injuring them or usurping some of their funds.

Her motive in opposing Uthman was identical to that of Talhah and Al–Zubayr. She wanted her cousin Talhah or her brother–in–law Al–Zubayr to succeed Uthman. The growth of Talhah's influence in his opposition to the Caliph was extremely pleasing to her.

Al-Tabari reported that Ayeshah said to Ibn Abbas: "You are a man of understanding wisdom and expression.

I ask you by God not to detract people from Talhah. The situation of Uthman has become obvious. People from various cities have gathered for a great event which is about to take place. I am informed that Talhah is already in control of the houses of the public funds and possesses their keys. I think that he God willing will follow the path of his cousin Abu Bakr." Ibn Abbas retorted saying:

"Mother if anything happens to Uthman people will resort to our man ('Ali)." Ayeshah of course did not agree with him but she said to him: "Ibn Abbas I do not want to antagonize you or argue with you."31

She was looking at the events with the eyes of Talhah and Al–Zubayr. Her hope that one of the two men would reach the caliphate through co-operation with Uthman was withering gradually by the rapid growth of the Umayyads' power and the continuation of Uthman in his office.

It became evident to her and the two companions that the Caliph would follow only the advice of people such as Marwan and Muawiya and that these advisers would counsel him to choose an Umayyad successor.

Ayeshah and the two companions thought that their silence would render assistance to the Umayyads in fulfilling their goal. For this the two companions raised their voices against the Caliph and Ayeshah called upon the Muslims to kill him.

Amr Ibn Al-Aws

Amr Ibn Al-Aws joined the opposition. This politician did not have the ambition to become a caliph. He was not from the early companions or a member of the Electoral Convention nor did he have the needed influence to make him ambitious to reach the high office. His opposition was motivated by the desire to avenge himself.

He was the governor of Egypt during the days of 'Umar. He wanted to stay in his post but Uthman dismissed him and replaced him by Adbullah Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarh. He came back to Medina waiting for the opportunity to jump the Caliph.

When Ayeshah and others started their campaign against Uthman Amr became a noted agitator. He used his intelligence and wiliness in instigating people against the Caliph.32

When Uthman was killed Amr joined the seekers of the revenge for Uthman's blood because Muawiya promised him the governorship of Egypt.

Opposition From Non-Qureshite Companions

The Qureshite companions were mostly politically motivated in their opposition to Uthman. The opposition that was religiously motivated came from outstanding non–Qureshite companions. Most noted among these in the history of that period was:

Abu Dharr

When the third Caliph granted his cousin Marwan five million dirhams and Zayd Ibn Thabit one hundred thousand dirhams and Harith Marwan's brother three hundred thousand dirhams Abu Dharr raised his voice repeatedly reciting the following Qur'anic verse: "Give the news of a painful punishment to those who treasure gold and silver and do not spend them in the way of God." Uthman sent his messengers to Abu Dharr prohibiting him from such a recital.

Abu Dharr protested saying: "Does Uthman want to prevent me from reciting the Book of God and denouncing those who disobey the commandment of God? By God it is more desirable to me and better for me to please God by displeasing Uthman rather than displeasing God by pleasing Uthman." This attitude angered Uthman.

It was not difficult for Uthman to solve the problem of Abu Dharr and all other critics and Abu Dharr himself prescribed to Uthman the solution of the problem. He told him one day: "Follow the path of your two predecessors and no one will criticize you."

But the Caliph was not of this opinion. He wanted to solve the problem by punishing whomever he could. Evidently he did not know that medicating the problem of sincere criticism by violence is bound to bring him bigger problems.

Abu Dharr in Exile It was difficult for the Caliph to punish the Qureshite critics. They were too powerful for him to punish. Abu Dharr and others like him in spite of their brilliant Islamic record were neither powerful nor wealthy.

The Caliph chose for these good companions a kind of punishment which was inappropriate and inapplicable to them. He chose for Abu Dharr punishment by exile which is prescribed by the Holy Qur'an for those who are at war with God and His Messenger and the makers of mischief in the land. Abu Dharr was not one of these. He was rather a righteous companion whose motives were prohibiting evil and enjoining good. He did not challenge the authority of the Caliph nor did he call for a revolt against him.

The Messenger of God was criticized by a hypocrite who told him: "You ought to be just in distributing the spoils among Muslims." The Prophet did not exile him nor did he punish him. He only said to him: "Woe to you. If I do not execute justice who will?"

Abu Bakr said to his electors: "Obey me as long as I obey God. If I do not obey Him you owe me no obedience."

'Umar used to say: "When you see a crookedness in me try to straighten me."

Abu Dharr and Muawiya Uthman did not take the attitude of his predecessors.

He exiled Abu Dharr to Syria placing him under the authority of Muawiya who was actually a government within the government. Seeing the extravagancy of Muawiya and his mishandling of the public funds Abu Dharr raised his voice against him.

When Muawiya built his famous palace called Al-Khadra Abu Dharr said to him: "If this is from the Muslims' fund it is a theft. If it is from your own fund it is an extravagancy." Abu Dharr used to shout at the door of Muawiya saying: "God may Thou curse those who enjoin good and do not do it. May Thou curse those who prohibit evil and do it.".

Permanent Exile This irritated Muawiya. He complained about Abu Dharr to the Caliph. The Caliph recalled Abu Dharr to Medina and he was returned to it in a very unmerciful way. 34When he arrived in Medina the Caliph found him persisting in his critical attitude towards his regime. For this he ordered him to leave Medina. Abu Dharr asked his permission to go back to Damascus or to go to Iraq or Egypt or to Mecca according to some reports. The Caliph did not permit him to do so. He ordered him to go to the desert of Najd saying to him: "Go in this direction and do not go beyond Al-Rabathah.".

The Caliph ordered people not to speak to Abu Dharr nor give him a send off. When Abu Dharr was departing Marwan went with him to prevent people from talking to him. No one dared to be with Abu Dharr at his departure except the Imam 'Ali his two sons Al–Hassan and Al– Hussein his brother Aqeel and Ammar Ibn Yasir. By doing this they actually defied the order of the Caliph. This added to the deterioration of the relation between the Imam and the Caliph. Of the Imam's valedictory words to Abu Dharr were the following:

"Abu Dharr you opposed the rulers because they disobeyed God. Put your hope in Him. The rulers feared you for personal interest and you feared they would compromise your religion. Leave in their hands what they want to protect and run away with what you want to protect. These rulers are in a great need for the things you tried to deprive them of and you are in no need for the things they deprived you of. You will know who has the happy fate and who is more enviable.

Should the heavens and the earth close in on a righteous servant of God He will grant him an exit. Let the truth be your only friend and falsehood be your only enemy.

Had you approved their way they would have loved you; and had you shared the spoils with them they would have trusted you."35

Some historians say that Abu Dharr left Medina to Rabathah willingly but it seems improbable that Abu Dharr had chosen to become bedouin living in the desert rather than being in the city of the Prophet. However it is certain that he was exiled to Damascus before he left to Rabathah then he was brought back to Medina. He was not consulted in his exile nor in his return.

Abu Dharr settled in Rabathah living constantly there in difficulty and intolerable poverty until he died. When he died there were not enough people to bury him. Had not Abdullah Ibn Masud with a few others

(including Malik Al-Ashtar) passed by Abu Dharr would not have been buried.

The exile of Abu Dharr to Rabathah was a big political mistake on the part of the Caliph. The good Muslims were shocked by the exile of this outstanding companion for he was of an indomitable spirit in his endeavors for the truth.

He was a beloved of the Messenger and the Messenger said about him: "There is no one under Heaven and above the earth that is truer than Abu Dharr." The righteous Muslims felt toward what happened to Abu Dharr as they felt towards the great martyrs of the truth whose souls were filled with dedication to high ideals for which they lived and died.

Abdullah Ibn Masud

Abdullah Ibn Masud another non-Qureshite outstanding companion also joined the opposition. Like Abu Dharr Abdullah had no political or material ambition. He was the treasurer of Kufah province and he resigned angrily when the Caliph wrote to him: "... You are only our treasurer leave Walid (the Umayyad governor of Kufah) alone with what he borrowed from the treasury."

It is reported that Abdullah Ibn Masud used to deliver a weekly sermon in which he included the following words: "Certainly the truest is the Book of God and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. And the worst deed is that which does not conform with the teaching of God and His Messenger. For every such deed is an innovation and every innovation is a heresy and every heresy leads to Hell."36

Walid informed the Caliph of Ibn Masud's insinuating speeches and the Caliph summoned him. When Ibn Masud entered the Mosque of the Prophet Uthman said to the congregation: "The one that entered the Mosque is an evil insect which causes a person to vomit and secrete when it walks on its food." Ibn Masud said: "I am not so but I was a companion of the Prophet at Badr Uhud Hudeibeyah the Moat and Hunain."

Uthman ordered one of his servants to throw Abdullah out of the Mosque. The servant carried him on his shoulders and violently threw him outside the Mosque.37

Some of his ribs were broken. Then the Caliph withheld his salary. Abdullah lived two or three years after that continuing his opposition to Uthman. When he died he willed that Uthman should not pray over him and Ammar Ibn Yasir was his executor. Ammar buried Abdullah without informing the Caliph of Abdullah's death.

Ammar Ibn Yasir

Ammar was a man of the earliest opposition to Uthman. He called upon the Muslims to fight the community of Quraish because it chose Uthman for leadership and left 'Ali out. Like 'Ali Ammar saw in

the personality of Uthman a potential bridge over which the caliphate would pass from the good companions of Muhammad to the Umayyads.

The sequence of the events was destined only to confirm to Ammar and others what they expected. What happened to Abu Dharr and Abdullah Ibn Masud made Ammar more serious in his opposition to Uthman. Ibn Yasir was not the kind of man who keeps silent when he sees what is in conflict with the Book of God and the teachings of the Prophet.

Such opposition was expected to put Ammar in danger of severe punishment from the Caliph. Uthman wanted to exile him as he had Abu Dharr but 'Ali and other companions raised strong objections which made him threaten to exile 'Ali himself. But 'Ali dared him to do that.

There were some gems of great value in the treasury and Uthman gave those gems to his ladies. People talked about that and Uthman was angered by their talk. He said while he was giving a sermon: "We shall take what we need from the treasury even if some people would be displeased." 'Ali replied: "Then you shall be prevented and stopped." And Ammar said: "I make God my witness that I am one of the first people who are displeased." Uthman retorted angrily: "Do you dare say that to me? Take him."

He was taken and Uthman went to the place where Ammar was confined. He beat him up until Ammar fainted and he stayed in swoon until he missed the noon afternoon and sunset prayers. When he came back from his swoon he made his ablution made up his prayers and said:

"Praise be to God. This is not the first time I was tortured for my endeavors in the way of God."38

It is reported that a group of companions (among them Talhah Al–Zubayr Al–Miqdad and Ammar) wrote to Uthman a letter in which they criticized a number of Uthman's deeds accused him of betraying his religion and warned him that they would fight him.

Ammar delivered the letter to Uthman. When Uthman read a portion of the letter he asked Ammar: "Are you the only audacious among them to confront me with this?" Ammar answered: "I am your best advisor among them." Uthman said to him: "Son of Sumayah (Ammar's mother) you have lied. Ammar retorted "I am by God son of Summayah and son of Yasir."

Uthman ordered his servants to lay Ammar on the floor and hold his hands and his legs. Then Uthman kicked him with his foot in the stomach. This caused him to have a hernia. Ammar was old and weak and he fainted. Ammar was the most outspoken and the highest voice against Uthman. His opposition to Uthman counted heavily because of his brilliant past and because of what the Holy Prophet said about him.

Opposition Outside Medina

The Qureshite Aristocracy in the Islamic society began at the beginning of the reign of the First Caliph.

In his argument for the Qureshite leadership at the "Saqifat" conference Abu Bakr said to the natives of Medinah that the Arabs would not accept a non–Qureshite leadership. For Quraish was the highest community among the Arabs and the community of the most honorable city.

Upon this the Medinites conceded the leadership to the Qureshites. Thus the majority of the Meccan and Medinite companions conceived it as tribal superiority. By this the Qureshite supremacy was established though the Faith of Islam the religion of equality denies any form of aristocracy.

This aristocracy grew during the reign of the Second Caliph and peaked during the reign of the Third Caliph.

The notion of Qureshite superiority evolved during Uthman's reign and went far enough to view the Muslim world as a Qureshite Kingdom. This was destined to have a negative reaction on the part of the enlightened men who knew that Islam is a religion of equality and brotherhood. The Message of Islam aims at elevating every Muslim and dignifying all believers in God rather than dignifying a minority at the expense of millions. The notion of Qureshite superiority evolved during Uthman's reign and went far enough to view the Muslim world as a Qureshite Kingdom. This was destined to have a negative reaction on the part of the enlightened men who knew that Islam is a religion of equality and brotherhood. The Message of Islam aims at elevating every Muslim and dignifying all believers in God rather than dignifying a minority at the expense of millions.

The righteous Muslims were disturbed by Quraish's claim of superiority in the name of religion while the Umayyads who became the leaders of the Qureshites were of the least righteous among the Muslims.

The spark of opposition outside Medina started in Kufah. Most of its people were Yemenites. It is reported that the beginning of this opposition took place during the time of Sa-eed Ibn Al-Aws who succeeded Walid Ibn Aqabah in the gubernatorial office of Kufa. Historians disagree on the details of this event.

It is reported that some of the leaders of the city while they were visiting the governor spoke of the orchards of Kufa. A dialogue between them and the city Chief of Police Abdul–Rahman Ibn Khumeis took place and went as follows: Ibn Khumeis: "I wish all these orchards were owned by the governor and you the people of Kufah owned better than these orchards."

Malik Al-Ashtar: "Wish the governor better than these orchards but do not wish him to own our properties." Ibn Khumeis: "How did my wish harm you to make you so frown on me? By God if the governor wishes he would have these orchards."

Al Ashtar: "By God if he wants that he will not have it."

Sa-eed (angrily): "All these orchards are actually Quraish's garden." Al-Ashtar: "Do you make what we won through our spears and what God has given us a garden for you and your people?"

And others spoke supporting Al-Ashtar.

Al-Ashtar: "Is anybody here? Don't let this man get away with what he said."

They jumped Ibn Khumeis treading on him severely until he fainted. Then they dragged him by his feet. Finally his face was sprayed with water until he woke up.

Ibn Khumeis said to Sa-eed: "The people whom you selected have killed me.". Ibn Khumeis said to Sa-eed: "The people whom you selected have killed me.".

Sa-eed: "No one shall spend the evening with me after this.".

Other historians recorded that some people spoke in the presence of Sa-eed of the generosity of Talhah Ibn Ubaydullah and that comments by the governor and his visitors went as follows:

Sa-eed: "A man that has the wealth of Talhah and his holdings ought to be generous. Should I possess what Talhah possesses I would make you live in prosperity."

A young man from the Asad Tribe: "I wish that you owned all the orchards that are on the two sides of the Euphrates.".

This irritated some of the men who were present and made them speak harshly to the youth.

The father of the youth: "He is too young. Do not punish him for what he said." The irritated men: "He is wishing Sa-eed our own properties." They jumped the youth. His father wanted to defend him. They beat the father and the son until they fainted. The members of the tribe of Asad learned about the event and came encircling the palace. Sa-eed persuaded them to leave and they left.39

Both versions of the event agree that Al-Ashtar and others with him stayed away from the governor and spoke loudly against Sa-eed and the Caliph. This was the occasion which made the opposition surface in Kufah. Whether the first or second report was the truth the occasion indicates that people during that time were fed up with Quraish its leaders their big claims and their over-reaching hands.

The event was actually the straw that broke the camel's back. The sequence of events was inevitably leading to some political explosion.

Abdullah Ibn Masud's sermons in which he criticized the policy of Uthman and his officers helped to open the eyes of the people of Kufah on the corruption in the government.

Abu Dharr's exile was also a factor in fermenting the opposition. We have advanced that Al-Ashtar and others from Kufah were with Ibn Masud at the time of the oppressed companion's burial.

What happened afterwards to Abdullah Ibn Masud was also another factor. People of Kufah had a great esteem for this outstanding companion who was violently thrown out of the Holy Mosque by order of the

Caliph.

People of Kufah knew Ammar Ibn Yasir and his brilliant record in Islam. He was the governor of their city during the reign of 'Umar. They had a great respect towards this outstanding companion. What happened to him at the hand of the Third Caliph was also an additional factor which made the explosion of the opposition from the righteous people of Kufah an expected event. The fire was about to start and it found its spark at Sa-eed's occasion.

The opposition of Kufah received the same kind of punishment Abu Dharr received. Exile became the regular punishment for the criticism of the government; and Damascus became the destination of the exiled critics. There they received their discipline at the hands of Muawiya the strong man of the Islamic state.

The exiled Kufans were kept at the church of Mariam.

Muawiya met them spoke to them and lectured them. The topic of his lecture was the distinction of Quraish in the Islamic and pre-Islamic history. He tried to substantiate the superiority of Quraish by the fact that all communities were invaded except the Qureshites whom God protected. He mentioned also that God made the caliphate in the Qureshite companions of the Prophet. Thus they are the qualified ones for leadership. Then he told them that God protected Quraish while they were unbelievers. "Do you think that He will not protect them while they are following His religion."40

He told them also that Abu Sufyan (his father) was the most honorable and the son of the most honorable among the Qureshites except the Prophet then he added: "I think that if Abu Sufyan were the father of all people all people would have been wise."41

Sa-sa-ah Ibn Souhan belied him saying: "Adam was better than Abu Sufyan. God created him by His own hand breathed in him from His spirit and ordered the angels to bow to him. He was the father of mankind. Yet we see among them the good and the weak the foolish and the wise.".

The logic of Muawiya was full of distortion of facts.

Re said that his father Abu Sufyan was the best man after the Messenger (including Abu Bakr and 'Umar)

He forgot that the Divine protection to the Qureshite was not for the sake of Abu Sufyan his children and their likes from the Qureshites. It was rather for the sake of the Sacred House and for the sake of the Messenger the best of the descendants of Abraham. It was also in response to the prayer of Abraham the Prophet of God of which the Holy Qur'an informs us:

"And when Abraham said: 'My Lord make this a safe town and give its settlers of fruits to those of them who believe in God and the Hereafter.' The Almighty said: 'And whoever of them disbelieves I will give them a respite. Then I will drive them to the chastisement of Fire; terrible is the fate.' "42

Muawiya did not know that the caliphate in the offspring of Abraham including the Qureshites was made by appointment from God. That appointment did not reach the unjust among them. We read in the Book of God:

"And remember when God tested Abraham by commandments and he fulfilled them. The Almighty said:

'I am making you Imam of the people.' Abraham said: 'And make imams from my offsprings.' The Almighty said: 'My covenant will not include the unjust.' The Holy Quran Chapter 2 verse 125.

History tells us that Muawiya freed the exiles and when they went back to Kufah they resumed their opposition. Consequently they were exiled to Homs. They were placed under the authority of Abdul-Rahman Ibn Khalid Ibn Al-Walid.

This was harsher on them and more violent than Muawiya. They showed him repentance and he released them. Al-Ashtar went back to the Caliph and the Caliph permitted him to go wherever he chose. He went back to Homs. When opposition grew stronger in Kufah Al-Ashtar went back to it. He and Yazeed Ibn Qais led a multitude to a place called Al-Jarah to prevent Sa-eed Ibn Al-Aws from reentering Kufah. Sa-eed went back to Medina and the Kufans demanded from Uthman to replace Sa-eed with Abu Musa.

We may realize the bitterness which exiled men used to feel when we read a message from Malik Al-Ashtar to Uthman as an answer to the Caliph's letter to the people of Kufah reprimanding the opposition:

"From Malik Ibn Al-Harth to the tested and sinful Caliph who is deviating from the precepts of his Prophet and turning his back on the rule of the Holy Qur'an.

"We have read your message. You ought to prohibit yourself and your officers from injustice aggression and exiling our righteous men. This will make us content to obey you. You alleged that we have wronged ourselves.

This is your conjecture which caused you to perish (spiritually) and made you consider inequity a justice and the wrong right. As to what we desire we want you to change and repent and to ask God His forgiveness for incriminating our righteous men exiling our good people driving us out of our homes and ruling us by our youth. We desire that you appoint Abdullah Ibn Qais Abu Musa governor of our city. We ask you to keep your Walid and Sa-eed away from us. "43

The Caliph responded to this by appointing Abu Musa governor of Kufah.

The opposition to the Caliph's policy was not confined to Kufah. It was extended to Basra in Iraq and also to Egypt. Historians inform us that Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr and Muhammad Ibn Abu Hutheifah went to Egypt and instigated the people against Uthman.

With the presence of Abdullah Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarh in Egypt as its governor the two Muhammad s did

not need to bring to the Egyptians any additional evidence of the corruption in the government. It is reported that an Egyptian went to Medina complaining of the governor to the Caliph. When the complainer came back to Egypt the governor killed him.

It is reported also that a group of companions in Medina wrote to other companions at different provinces saying:

"If you want to make Jihad come to us. The religion of Muhammad is corrupted by our Caliph. By this people were turned against him."44

Now People Remembered 'Ali

The regressing developments of the political events made the non–Qureshite Muslims realize the gravity of the erroneous attitude of the Qureshites toward 'Ali. Now they could clearly see the magnitude of the mistake which the members of the Electoral Convention had committed when they diverted the caliphate from him to Uthman.

By doing that they drove the nation into a crisis which it had never experienced before. It became obvious to the people of wisdom that the nation would not have had to be confronted with such a crisis if 'Ali were the Caliph. Thus they began to think that 'Ali's leadership was the solution to the problems of the nation.

People spoke of 'Ali loudly and Uthman started to see that 'Ali's existence and his presence in Medina added to his difficulties. He asked him to leave Medina for his land in Yunbu that people might forget him; but when the crisis grew in dimension he asked him to come back to Medina that he might shield him against danger. Then Ibn Abbas came to him with a message from Uthman asking him to leave for Yunbu hoping that people would stop circulating his name. The Imam said:

"Ibn Abbas Uthman wants to treat me like a camel going back and forth to fill the buckets with water. He told me to go to Yunbu then he asked me to come back. Now he is asking me to go to Yunbu again. By God I have defended him until I feared that I am committing a sin." 45

'Ali faced in Uthman a problem bigger than the problem which Uthman was facing. It was in the hands of Uthman to solve all his problems by changing his policy in handling the public funds dismissing his relative officials and keeping Marwan away from him. This could have regained him the confidence of the people and their satisfaction.

'Ali on the other hand did not possess the means to solve his problem and the problem of the nation in Uthman.

He was seeing through the light of God that the future and the fate of the nation would be decided to a great extent by what would happen to Uthman. Uthman had embarked on a policy which would enable

the Umayyads to rule the Muslim world for generations to come. Yet the Umayyads were noted for their lack of sincerity toward Islam. They embraced Islam only after they were completely defeated.

'Ali knew them very well as men and as children. He is the one who broke their back and humiliated them until they adopted the faith of Islam reluctantly. He knew that if they had the authority they would devour the public fund enslave the servants of God and corrupt His religion.

Uthman had three alternatives: (1) Resign; (2) persist in his policy and refuse to resign or (3) change his policy drastically. The first two alternatives were evil and the third was not expected. If he were to persist in his policy he would be killed. His murder would be a terrible and ugly event. He would be the first imam to be killed by the Muslims. The Umayyads the relatives of the Caliph already possessed enough power to enable them to challenge the good Muslims by waging war avenging his death using it for seizing authority.

Should Uthman be forced to resign and people elect a man to succeed him the Umayyads having so much power would not surrender. They would be able to claim that Uthman was the legitimate Caliph and that forcing him out of office would not remove the legality of his leadership. By this they would arrive at what they want. And it would become easier for them to reach their goal than if he were killed.

The third alternative was not expected. There was nothing in the behavior of Uthman to indicate the possibility of the needed change. Even if he wanted to change his financial policy and dismiss his wicked relatives Marwan would dissuade him from doing that and he did not possess the will–power which would make him immune from his influence.

'Ali knew all that. Yet he tried his best to reach the third alternative in order to avoid the evil of the other two alternatives. Historians inform us that a group of the companions of the Messenger who were living in Medina wrote to the companions who were settling on the borders of the Muslim state saying: "Come back to Medina. The "Jihad" is here." People spoke ill of Uthman and none of the companions defended him except Zied Ibn Thabit Abu Osaid Al–Sa–idy Kaab Ibn Malik and Hassan Ibn Thabit. These were loyal to the Caliph because they had received his generous gifts.

The Imam Mediates the companions met together and spoke to 'Ali to mediate between them and Uthman. He met the Caliph and spoke to him saying:

"The people behind me asked me to mediate between you and them. By God I don't know what to tell you.

Nor do I know something which you don't know. Nor can I point to matters of which you are ignorant. You have seen heard and accompanied the Messenger of God and acquired the honor of being his son-in-law. You are not less expected to do good than Ibn Abu Quhafah (Abu Bakr) and Ibn Al-Khattab ('Umar)

You are closer than both of them to the Messenger of God and you have acquired through marriage what they did not acquire. Nor were they ahead of you in anything. I ask you in the name of God to be merciful to yourself. You are not suffering blindness nor ignorance. The right road is clear and obvious and the demarcation of religion is standing.

"Uthman remember that the best of the servants of God in the eyes of God is a just imam who is led to the truth and leads to the truth. Thus he establishes a well-known precept and abolishes an abandoned innovation. The worst of all is an unjust Imam who is erroneous leading to error. Thus he abolishes a well-known precept and revives an abandoned innovation.

"I have heard the Messenger of God saying: 'An unjust Imam will be brought on the Day of Judgement while he has no helper nor a vindicator. He will be thrown into hell.... I warn you of the wrath of God and His smite and chastisement. Certainly His chastisement is painful and severe. I warn you not to be the murdered imam of this nation. It is said that an imam will be killed and his death will open on the nation the door of killing and wars until the Day of Judgement. He will confuse the affairs of the nation and throw the Muslims into divisions that they will not be able to see the truth because of the height of the falsehood...."46

The words of the Imam did not please the Caliph. A dialogue between the two men took place as follows: Uthman: "'Umar appointed and kept in office people like those whom I appointed and kept in office."

'Ali: "'Umar appointed such people but he used to tread on their heads. When he knew of any minor violation by any of them he used to summon him and punish him severely. You are weakened because you are too lenient on your relatives.".

Uthman: "They are your relatives also." 'Ali: "Yes they are but virtue is not in them."

Uthman: "Do you not know that 'Umar appointed Muawiya and kept him in office for the duration of his reign?"

'Ali: "I ask you in the name of God. Do you not know that Muawiya was afraid of 'Umar more than Yarfah 'Umar's servant?".

Uthman: "Yes." 'Ali: "Muawiya makes his decisions without consulting you then he tells people: 'This is the order of Uthman.' You know it and you do not change anything. Nor do you stop him from doing what he is doing."47

Thus 'Ali unlike any other person did not take advantage of the difficulties of a Caliph whom he considered to be usurper of his right in leadership. He rose above that and was most protective of him endeavoring to correct the situation of his adversary because his fate had a bearing on the fate of the whole nation.

But Uthman considered his advice provocative. He went to the pulpit and delivered a fiery speech threatening the opposition with punishment. He was expected to do only that so long as Marwan was his chief advisor. Thus the fire of opposition became more inflamed.

The Caliph Is Besieged

The messages which were sent by the companions residing in Medinah to people of various provinces brought its expected results. Groups from Egypt Kufah and Basra came to Medinah asking the Caliph to dismiss his ruling relatives or resign. Otherwise they were ready to kill him.

When the Caliph realized the seriousness of the situation he came to 'Ali and asked him to mediate between him and his adversaries.

'Ali asked him: "What are your terms for reconciliation?" The Caliph replied: "You are fully authorized to pledge to them whatever you choose. I shall do whatever you propose." 'Ali reminded him that he spoke to him re peatedly about certain corrective measures and that the Caliph time after time promised to take those measures.

Then the promises remained unfulfilled by the Caliph who was influenced by Marwan Muawiya Ibn Amir and Abdullah Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarh. Uthman replied: "I will disobey them and obey you."

Accompanied by thirty men from the Qureshites and the Medinites the Imam went to meet the Egyptian group.

He convinced them not to resort to violence and promised them on behalf of the Caliph to fulfill their demands of dismissing his relatives and changing his policy in handling the public fund. When he went back to the Caliph he advised him to go to the Mosque and pledge publicly to make the reform.

Repentance and retreat The Caliph responded positively to the good advice. He went to the pulpit and addressed the congregation saying:

"I am the first one that should obey God. I ask God to forgive me for what I did. I shall repent to him. A man like me is expected to change and repent. When I come down let your leaders come and make a decision about me. By God if justice reduces me to a slave I shall do what a slave does and I shall be as humble as a slave. There is no escape from the anger of God but through Him. By God I shall give you the satisfaction and I will keep Marwan and my relatives away from me. I shall not seclude myself from you."48

These words moved the audience. They wept until tears moistened their beards and the Caliph wept and people hoped for the good.

Marwan was waiting. As soon as Uthman came back to his home Marwan dissuaded him and brought

him back to his old hard line. Marwan went out facing the multitude which were waiting for the reform. He reprimanded them and told them"... You have come to rob us of the authority which is in our hands. Go away. By God if you challenge us you will see what will displease you...".

When 'Ali knew what happened he said: "Servants of God if I sit home he says: 'You let me down in spite of my relationship to you and what I am entitled to of your respect. If I try to help him and a good comes out of my effort Marwan dissuades him and deceives him. He has become an obedient tool in the hands of Marwan after having been the companion of the Prophet." He went to Uthman and spoke to him angrily saying:

"You couldn't satisfy Marwan but by your deviation from your religion and wisdom. You have become like a ridden camel led by his rider to wherever he pleases.

By God I forsee that he will bring you to danger but he will not be able to take you out of it. I will not come back to you after this. You have ruined your honor and lost the power of judgement."49

'Ali ceased to mediate between Uthman and the rebels.

When Uthman was besieged he came to him and told him: "I have the right of brotherhood of Islam relationship to you and of being a son-in-law of the Prophet. If none of these things existed and we were in pre-Islamic days it would be shameful to the children of Abd Munaf (the great grandfather of the Hashimites and the Umayyads) to let a man from Tyme (Talhah Ibn Ubaydullah) rob us of our authority.".

Talhah was strongly supporting the rebels. He helped them and approved their siege of Uthman. Probably their invasion of Medina was the result of his communication and instigation.

'Ali went to Talhah and found people gathering around him. He asked Talhah: "What are you involving yourself in?" Talhah replied: "It is too late." (He meant that Uthman is coming to his end.) 'Ali went to the treasury and asked that it be opened. When the keys were not found he broke the door and distributed some of what was in the treasury among people who were gathering around Talhah.

They left him and Uthman was pleased with that. Talhah came to Uthman and said: "Amir Al-Muminine (Commander of the Believers) I wanted something and God barred me from it." Uthman replied: "By Cod you did not come repenting; you are only defeated. May God hold you accountable for what you did."50

Ibn Al-Athir reported that Ibn Abbas said: "I came to Uthman when he was besieged. (This was before Uthman sent Ibn Abbas as a leader of the pilgrims during that year.) He (Uthman) held my hand and led me to the door ordering me to listen to the words of the besiegers. Some of them were saying: 'What are we waiting for?'

Others said: 'Let us wait. Probably he will change.' While we were standing. Talhah came and asked about Ibn Odais (One of the leaders of the Egyptian rebels) Ibn Odais went to Talhah confiding in him. When Ibn Odais returned he ordered his followers not to let anyone go into or come out of Uthman's

house.

Uthman said to Ibn Abbas: "This is the order of Talhah. God take care of Talhah. He instigated these people against me. By God I hope that his share of the caliphate will be zero and that his blood will be shed." Ibn Abbas said: "When I wanted to leave the house they prevented me until Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr interceded for me."51

As to Al–Zubayr it is said that he left Medina before Uthman was killed. Some historians reported that he was present in Medina when Uthman died. Ayeshah went on pilgrimage and while in her devotional duty she was urging people to repudiate Uthman.

When Uthman was besieged the rebels cut off his water supply. 'Ali came with a skin of water and spoke to Talhah saying: "This water has to be allowed to Uthman" then it was allowed. He attempted another time to bring him water and spoke to the rebels saying: "What you are doing does not resemble the deed of the believers or unbelievers! Cut not this man from his water supply. The Romans and the Persians feed and give water to their prisoners." But the rebels refused to allow the water in.

The siege of the Caliph continued for forty days. The rebels were trying to force him to change his policy or resign. He refused to resign saying: "I Will not take off a shirt which God put on me.".

Probably Uthman was right in his refusal to resign. But he was wrong in saying that the caliphate was a shirt which God had put on him for his leadership was not by an appointment from God or His Messenger. The one who put the shirt on him was Abdul–Rahman Ibn Ouf and behind him the Qureshites; or we may say that the Second Caliph was the one who put the shirt on Uthman.

It seems that the rebels were not determined to force the Caliph to resign nor were they willing to kill him. All they wanted from him was to change his policy in handling the public funds dismiss his relative governors and keep Marwan away from him.

He promised to do that but he never fulfilled his promise. Thus they asked him to resign and he refused. Now some of the rebels resorted to violence.

Muawiya Let the Caliph Down It is amazing that Muawiya and the rest of the Umayyad governors did not seriously attempt to rescue their relative Caliph. They did not send armies to break the siege around him or to prevent the invaders from killing him.

Yet the Caliph asked their help. It is reported that Muawiya sent an army which came near Medina but did not enter it while the Caliph was besieged. Muawiya ordered the commander of the army not to do anything until he received his order. He told him: "Say not that the present sees what the absent does not see. You are the absent and I am the present.".

And So the Medinites

The other thing which can be easily noticed in the recorded events of those days is the absence of any resistance on the part of the Medinites. They neither challenged the invading rebels nor did they prevent them from killing the Caliph. It seems that the Qureshites from the inhabitants of Medina (with the exception of Umayyads) were not in sympathy with Uthman.

They were fed up with the Umayyads and the extreme growth of their influence in the Muslim world. The majority of the Qureshites in Medina were sharing with Ayeshah Talhah and Al–Zubier their feelings towards the Caliph.

The majority of the Medinites were displeased with Uthman's policy of glorifying the Qureshites and putting the Umayyads the least religious clan among the Qureshites on the necks of the Muslims. The natives of Medina evidently did not feel that they owed the Caliph a serious support because they did not receive what the Qureshites received of his generosity. By their nature the natives of Medina were more religious than the Qureshites.

Thus the majority of the inhabitants of Medina let Uthman down and did not defend him though they were much more numerous than the invading rebels.

The Imam 'Ali was the companion most opposed to the murder of Uthman and the most sincere in trying to correct the Caliph's policy. He did not only show his sympathy toward him by word; he tried to defend him by arm. He endangered the lives of his two sons Al-Hassan and Al- Hussein who were to him more valuable than his two eyes.

He sent the two young men to protect Uthman and ordered them to stand in arm at his door to prevent the rebels from entering his house. Finally the rebels were informed that armies from various cities were on their way to Medina to rescue Uthman.

Some of the rebels felt that the only solution was to kill the Caliph. Since they could not enter the door they climbed up to the house from over the wall and killed him while the guards at the door did not know what took place.

Thus what 'Ali tried fervently to prevent occurred and all his efforts to prevent it from happening failed. The murder of the Caliph was an ugly event whose consequences were dangerous to the future of Islam and Muslims. This was not necessary to happen had the Caliph listened to 'Ali's advice by purging his regime from the wicked officials and purifying the state from corruptions.

Had he listened to 'Ali's advice by following the policy of his two predecessors Abu Bakr and 'Umar Uthman would not have been killed. But Uthman was not in control of the affairs. Marwan son of the exile of the Prophet was the actual ruler of the Muslim world and the chief advisor of the Caliph. He was able to steer him in any direction he chose.

However I doubt that Uthman was able even if he wanted to dismiss Muawiya who had become stronger than the Caliph. Suppose that Uthman told Muawiya to leave his post and he refused to do that. Would Uthman attempt to force him out of office? And had he enough power to do that?

- 1. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid his Commentaries on Nahjul-Balagah Vol. 2 pp. 411-412.
- 2. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid in his Commentary on Nahjul-Balagha Vol.2 pp. 411-412.
- 3. Ibn Majah his Sunan Part 1 p. 53 (hadith No. 149)
- 4. Al-Tirmidhi his Sunan Part 5 p. 329 (hadith No. 149)
- 5. Al-Tirmidhi his Sunan Part 5 p. 332.
- 6. Al-Tirmidhi his Sunan Part 5 pp. 332-333.
- 7. Al-Tirmidhi his Sunan Part 5 pp. 332-333.
- 8. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid in his Commentaries of Nahjul-Balaghah Vol.2 p. 411.
- 9. Obd Al-Fattah Abd Al-Masqood Al-Imam 'Ali Part 1 p. 287.
- 10. Ibn Al-Athir in Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 57.
- 11. Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p. 409.
- 12. Chapter 49 verse 6-7 Ibn Hisham recorded the event in his Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p. 296.
- 13. Ibn Al-Athir in Al-Kamil Part 3. p. 40.
- 14. Abdul-Fattah Abd Al-Maqsud in Al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib Part 2 p. 120.
- 15. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid in his Commentaries on Nahjul-Balaghah Vol.2 p. 412.
- 16. Al-BaladhuriAnsab Al-Ashraf Part 4 p. 28.
- 17. Ibn Al-Athir in Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 49.
- 18. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra Part 1 p. 193.
- 19. Dr. Taha Hussein in his Al-Fitna tul-Kubra Part 2 p. 193.
- 20. Ibn Hisham recorded this in his Biography of the Prophet Part 2 p. 443.
- 21. Abu Dawood Sunan Abu Dawood Part 2 p. 127.
- 22. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid in his Commentaries on Nahjul-Balaghah Vol.3 p. 104.
- 23. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra Part 1 p. 77.
- 24. Al-Baladhuriin Ansab Al-Ashraf Part 4 p. 31.
- 25. Ibn Al-Athir in Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 52.
- 26. Ibn Sa'd in his Al-Tabaqat Part 3 p. 110.
- 27. Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 3 p. 222.
- 28. Ibn Sa'd Al-Tabaqat Part 3 p. 126.
- 29. Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra Part 1.
- 30. Al-Tabari History of Messengers and Kings about the events of the year 36 p. 3112 and lbn Al-Athir in Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 102.
- 31. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentaries on Nahjul-Balaghah Vol.2 p. 506.
- 32. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 82.
- 33. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentaries on Nahjul-Balaghah Vol. 1 p. 240.
- 34. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 56.
- 35. Nahjul-Balaghah Part 2 pp. 12-13.
- 36. Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra Part 1 p. 160.
- 37. Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra Part 1 pp. 160-161.
- 38. Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra Part 1 p. 167.
- 39. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Vol.3 pp. 71-72.
- 40. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Vol 3 p. 70.
- 41. Ibn Al-Athir Vol.3 p. 71.
- 42. Chapter 2 verse 127.
- 43. Al-BaladhuriAnsabul-Ashraf Part 4 p. 46.

- 44. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil. Vol.3 pp. 73 and 83.
- 45. Nahjul-Balaghah Part 2 p. 233.
- 46. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 76.
- 47. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 76.
- 48. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Parr 3 p. 82.
- 49. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 82.
- 50. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 84.
- 51. Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil Part 3 p. 87.

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