

## 24. The Alleged Conspiracy

Al-Tabari recorded through a channel including Saif Ibn 'Umar that Muhammad (Ibn Oun) and Talhah (two reporters) reported that 'Ali sent Al-Qaaqaa Ibn Amr (a Kufite leader) to Ayesah Talhah and Al-Zubayr after they occupied Basra.

Al-Qaaqaa spoke to them and convinced them to make peace with the Imam and that the two parties should try to seek the killers of Uthman and punish them after the situation calms down and peace prevails.

The report says that the Imam agreed to the proposal and that he left Thee Qar area after he delivered a sermon in which he mentioned the grace of God that was bestowed on the nation by unity after the Messenger of God through the First Caliph then the one who followed him then the one who followed the Second Caliph. [1](#)

The Imam according to the report said also: "Then this event (the assassination of Uthman) took place. It was brought on this nation by groups who sought the material of this world envying those who obtained it by their own merit and they wanted to turn the affairs regressively.

God will fulfill His will and He will punish whom He wants to punish. I would like to inform you that I shall be leaving tomorrow and none from those who assisted in anyway against Uthman should accompany us. Let the fools stay away from me..."[2](#)

The report continues to say that individuals from those who participated in the siege of Uthman including Al-Ashtar Alba Ibn Haitham Uday Ibn Hatam Salim Ibn Thaalabah Al-Absi and Shuraih Ibn Dubai-ah held a secret meeting and Abdullah Ibn Saba (titled Ibn Al- Souda) was with them. (This man is said to have been a Yemenite from Sana-a born from a Jewish father and an Abyssinian mother adopted Islam during the days of Uthman and instigated people against him.)

The conferees realized that they will pay the price of peace with their lives and that 'Ali shall be harsher with them than Talhah Al-Zubayr and Ayesah because he knows more about the Book of God than the

three leaders and he was much more adherent to the Divine law especially the laws which deal with criminals.[3](#)

The report continues reminding us (as Dr. Taha Hussein said) of the conference of the Qureshite pagans when they conspired against the Messenger of God and Satan attended their conference disguised as an old man from Najd. There was only one difference: The Devil in this report was Abdullah Ibn Saba.

The conferees made several proposals but finally "Ibn Al-Souda" (Abdullah Ibn Saba) advised them to make the two camps lose the opportunity of agreement by starting a fight at night. By this each of the two camps would accuse the other of starting the fight. The report says that the conferees implemented their strategy with precision and succeeded in inflaming the Battle of Basra.[4](#)

Many historians after Al-Tabari gave this report great importance and chose it over other reports in spite of the fact that Al-Tabari himself mentioned a number of reports which contradict this report.

## **Contradicted by Better Reports**

He reported that Ammar Al-Duhani reported that 'Ali took a copy of the Holy Qur'an on the day of the Battle of Basra and went through his camp saying: Who shall hold this Qur'an and invite the Bassrite camp to agree that both camps should comply with the contents of the Qur'an?

Then he said: The one who makes this invitation should know that he will be killed by the Bassrites. A young Kufite man said to him: "I shall do it " and the Imam ignored him. Then he repeated his call and the same man repeated the same answer.

The Imam gave him the Qur'an and the Kufite youth extended the invitation and the Bassrites shot him to death with a hail of arrows. The Imam said: "Now it has become legitimate to fight them."[5](#)

Al-Tabari reported also that Al-Zuhri said that when 'Ali received the news of the death of the seventy men from Abdul-Qais (a branch from the tribe of Rabee-ah) he set out hurriedly until he came to Basra saying: "I am saddened by the tragedy of Rabee-ah the listener the obedient who was attacked before my arrival."

When the two camps faced each other Al-Zubayr came on his horse and 'Ali called upon Al-Zubayr. They faced each other and 'Ali asked Al-Zubayr: What brought you here? Al-Zubayr said: "You. And I do not believe that you are qualified for the caliphate; nor do I believe that you have more right to it than we and you killed Uthman." 'Ali said to Al-Zubayr:

Do you ask me for the blood of Uthman while you were his killer? May God make our harshest to Uthman meet today what he dislikes. He reminded Al-Zubayr of the word of the Messenger of God: That he will fight 'Ali while he is unfair to him. Al-Zubayr left the scene and promised the Imam that he will not fight him.[6](#)

Al-Tabari reported that the Imam said to Talhah: You have brought the wife of the Messenger of God trying to fight with her while you have hidden your wife at your house (in Medina). Did you not pledge your allegiance to me? Talhah said: I pledged my allegiance to you while the sword was over my neck.

'Ali said to his camp: Who shall display this Holy Qur'an and invite the opposite camp to agree with us to abide by its contents and the one who does that should know that he will be killed? A Kufite youth said I. The Imam said to him: Offer them this (the Qur'an) and say to them it is between you and us from its beginning to its end and fear God by refraining from shedding our blood and your blood.

The Kufite youth did what the Imam told him to do and he was killed. 'Ali at that time said: Now the fight is legitimate.

They started fighting and seventy men died and each one of them was holding the rein of the camel.<sup>7</sup> This report like the report that preceded it is evidence that the fight did not begin until the Imam offered the other camp peace and surrender of the matter to the Book of God.

This was after the Imam and his two opponents Talhah and Al-Zubayr faced each other and after he debated with them. All this was in front of people and the two camps were witnessing it. This was of course in the daytime. Thus there was no secret conspiracy and no battle that the conspirators started during the night.

Al-Tabari reported also that Al-Shi-abi reported that the battle of Basra started during the height of the day till the afternoon.<sup>8</sup> Ammar Al-Duhani and Al-Zuhri and Al-Shi-abi narrated witnessable events and consistent with the logic of the events.

Yet these reports were not chosen by the historians who came after Al-Tabari because these reports seem to convict the three leaders and place the responsibility of the Battle of Basra upon their shoulders. The historians chose Saif's report of the conspiracy though it reports something that was not witnessable and at the same time was not consistent with the logic of the events.

The three leaders did not come to Basra for a picnic or for spreading peace. They came to start a war against the Imam and they started the battle before his arrival to Basra. They killed scores of people and occupied the city before the arrival of the Imam to the city.<sup>9</sup>

Saif reported a conspiracy that was made in a secret conference attended by Abdullah Ibn Saba and that conspiracy resulted by starting the battle at night according to the plan of the conspirators. The historians chose this report and gave it high importance though Muhammad (Ibn Oun) and Talhah (whom Saif claimed to be the source of his report) did not claim that they witnessed the conference. These historians did not even ask how Muhammad and Talhah knew about this conspiracy.

History mentions that the Meccan pagans had a secret conference at the "Nadwa" (club in Mecca) in which they conspired to kill the Messenger. The Prophet knew about it through a Divine Revelation. Saif

Ibn 'Umar and Muhammad and Talhah on the other hand did not receive a Revelation from God.

It is evident that these historians chose this report because they wished that the contents of this report were real. The reason is that report vindicates the three leaders.

Since this report was given so much importance it is necessary to try to investigate it and see whether it is worth all that credence which it was given by the historians. Therefore I would like to record the following observations:

(1) This report presupposes that Ayesah Mother of Believers Talhah and Al-Zubayr were serious in seeking the avenge for the blood of Uthman.

Yet the instigation made by the three leaders against Uthman and their admission of making it is a well known fact in history. The three leaders urged the Muslims to kill Uthman and when he died and 'Ali was elected they used his blood only as a means of combating the Imam. Since this was their intention they would not be ready to change their attitude if he agrees with them to punish the killers of Uthman because their target was 'Ali rather than the killers of Uthman.

(2) Saif's report mentioned that the Imam said before his departure from Thee Qar: "I will be leaving tomorrow and you should leave with me. None of the people who assisted in the crisis of Uthman should accompany me and let the fools stay away from me."

If the Imam had uttered these words it would be evident that he did not mean by assistance in the crisis of Uthman a direct participation in his assassination because none of the direct participants in Uthman's murder were in the Imam's army.

The ones whom he meant by these alleged words are those who agitated against Uthman and started the march against him and particularly those who urged people to kill him or participated in his siege. Some of these people were in the Imam's army. If the Imam had issued this order he should have prevented those instigators and participants in his siege from accompanying him (the Imam) to Basra but this was not the case.

## **Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr**

The Imam did not prevent Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr from accompanying him though he knew that Muhammad was one of the leaders of the agitators against Uthman and of the participants in his siege. He was also one of those who climbed the wall and entered his mansion to kill him though he did not participate in his killing.

Historians agree that he held the beard of Uthman and insulted him and called him "Naathal" and that he said to him: "What did Muawiya and Ibn Abu Sarh and others from your relatives avail you?"<sup>10</sup> The Imam knew all that yet he kept Ibn Abu Bakr in his company.

Muhammad attended the Battle of Basra with the Imam. He is the one who removed the canopy of his sister Ayesha from the back of her camel when the camel fell down. [11](#) Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr was so close to the Imam that the Imam used to consider him as one of his children. Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr was killed while he was the Imam's appointed governor of Egypt.

### [Al-Ashtar](#)

It was clear to the Imam that Malik Al-Ashtar was an outstanding agitator against Uthman. He participated in his siege but he was not a participant in his murder.

Uthman exiled him from Iraq to Syria twice. Al-Ashtar led after that a group of Kufites to prevent Sa'eed Ibn Al-Aus (Uthman's appointed governor) from coming back to Kufa.

Al-Ashtar was the first revolutionary leader who called for 'Ali's election after the death of Uthman. He remained with the Imam and accompanied him to Thee Qar then he went to Kufa and came back with the Kufan army to meet the Imam in Thee Qar. Then he departed with the Imam to Basra and he was the top general in the Imam's army.

It is from the well known facts of history that Al-Ashtar was extremely close to the Imam for the duration of his reign until Al-Ashtar died. He was the Imam's right hand in both battles of Basra and Siffin. Al-Ashtar died by poison plotted by Muawiya while Al-Ashtar was on his way to Egypt. It was the Imam who sent him as his appointed governor of Egypt. [12](#)

### [Uday Ibn Hatam](#)

Uday Ibn Hatam who was mentioned in Saif's report as a conspirator and a part of the conference which was attended by Ibn Saba was also close to the Imam and an outstanding supporter. He attended the battles which the Imam faced during his caliphate.

Uday accompanied the Imam from Thee Qar to Basra and the Imam did not prevent him from going with him even after the alleged order that the participants against Uthman cannot accompany him. [13](#)

### [Ammar Ibn Yasir](#)

We ought to mention particularly Ammar Ibn Yasir who was an outstanding companion. He was from the leaders of the opposition to Uthman. He called for his removal. His voice was the loudest in criticizing his policy.

He shared with Ayesha Talhah and Al-Zubayr their opinion which called for Uthman's assassination. In spite of all that Ammar was one of the outstanding leaders in the Imam's army. Those who attended the Battles of Basra and Siffin used to follow Ammar as if he were an Islamic banner. [14](#)

It is well known in history that the presence of Ammar at the Battle of Basra on the side of the Imam was

one of the main factors which contributed to the departure of Al-Zubayr from the battlefield. [15](#)

Al-Zubayr knew that the Messenger of God said to Ammar: "Ammar the aggressor party shall kill you." [16](#) Had the Imam ordered those who assisted with anything against Uthman not to accompany him to Basra he would have prevented Ammar from going with him.

Thus as the report of Saif is opposed to the reports of Ammar Al-Duhani Al-Zuhri and Al-Shi-abi it is also opposed to the well known facts of history that the Imam was accompanied to Basra by Ammar Ibn Yasir Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr Malik Al-Ashtar and Uday Ibn Hatem. These distinguished individuals were with him and they were extremely close to him. When a report is opposed to well known facts in history it should be disregarded.

(3) In addition to the aforementioned the Imam was not in need of anyone to ask him to punish anyone who killed a believer unjustly. Had the Imam known the killer (or killers) of Uthman he would have punished him immediately without waiting for any agreement with Talhah Al-Zubier and Ayesah as a price for his peace with the three leaders.

It is well known in history that the Imam was most observant of criminal punishment. He was the one who counseled Uthman to kill Obeidullah Ibn 'Umar when he killed Al-Hirmizan without any evidence that substantiates his involvement in the murder of his father 'Umar. [17](#) The Imam threatened Obeidullah with punishment because of this while still out of power.

His strong adherence to the Islamic principles forced him to enter into the war of Siffin the bloodiest in the history of Islam until that time. It was possible for him to avoid himself that costly war by keeping Muawiya as governor of Syria. But he said: "I would not compromise in my religion." He chose that rather than to deviate from his principles in the least.

Such a leader does not need an agreement with Talhah and Al-Zubayr in order to enforce the Islamic law by punishing killers of a prominent Muslim. Had he viewed that Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr Al-Ashtar and those who instigated people against Uthman deserved punishment he would have done that without delay.

The caliphate in his view was only a means for executing justice and enforcing the Islamic laws. The least of what the Imam would have done to them is to keep them away from him and not make them a part of his army. Since he did not do that and did the opposite by making them his closest associates we infer that they did not deserve any punishment for their attitude towards the Third Caliph and their agitation against him.

## [The Three Leaders](#)

If he had believed that they were criminals deserving punishment it would not be conceivable that he would agree with Talhah and Al-Zubayr to punish them and leave Talhah Al-Zubayr and "Om Al-

Mumineen" (Mother of Believers) unpunished while they were the outstanding agitators against Uthman. They were the first to do that and they continued their way until Uthman died. The Imam would not give different treatments to people of equal crimes.

It seems that the Imam used to believe that only the ones who participated directly in the assassination of Uthman were punishable. We have already mentioned that three of those who participated in his murder were killed at the same hour he was killed. The three were Qutairah Soudan Ibn Hamran and Kinanah Ibn Basheer Al-Tajeebi.

If there were other participants the Imam did not know.

He said in a letter to Muawiya: "I do not know specifically any killer of Uthman. I thought deeply about this matter and I did not see it permitted for me to hand you anyone you accuse from among those who are around me."[18](#)

(4) The sermon of the Imam which Saif's report mentioned speaks clearly that the Imam believes in the soundness of Uthman's policy and his administration of public funds and that he approved Uthman's appointment of his relatives. The report mentioned that the Imam said in his sermon: "God has bestowed His grace on the nation by the unity through the three Caliphs one after another.

Then this event (assassination of Uthman) took place. It was brought on this nation by people who sought the material of this world. They were envious of those who were given it by God meritoriously for their virtues. These material seekers were trying to turn the affairs of the nation regressively."

Thus the Imam according to this report was speaking of the soundness of the policy of Uthman and accusing those who opposed him of trying to turn the national affairs regressively. They did what they did just for the sake of the worldly material and out of jealousy of Uthman and his appointed officials to whom God had given the materials of the World meritoriously and for their virtues.

There is no doubt that this is in conflict with what was known in history with utmost certainty that the Imam did not approve Uthman's policy in handling the public funds; nor did the Imam approve Uthman's appointments of his relatives. The Imam mediated many times between Uthman and his opponents asking him to dismiss his relatives and change his policy and many times Uthman promised to change and reform in response to his mediation then Marwan would prevent Uthman from fulfilling his promise.[19](#)

Had the Imam believed in the soundness of Uthman's policy and the policy of his appointed governors the Imam would not have insisted on the dismissal of Muawiya and waged for his dismissal the Battle of Siffin which had no equal in the history of Islam before that time.

All these aspects substantiate clearly that the report of Saif Ibn 'Umar was a fabrication made up for covering the reality and acquitting the three leaders of the responsibility of the Battle of Basra. It aimed

also at ruining the reputation of the supporters of the Imam such as Al- Ashtar and others by accusing them of starting the war for their selfish purposes and upon the counsel of a hypocrite who was alien to the Islamic nation.

Any serious student of the Islamic history knows that Al-Ashtar and the rest of the revolutionar leaders were among the most noble Muslims in their intention and adherence to the ideals of Islam and who gave their souls for the pleasure of God.

## Did Abdullah ibn Saba exist?

However there are reasons to doubt the very existence of Abdullah Ibn Saba. I do not think that this man was but a fairy-tale and was admitted into the history of Islam for covering undesirable informations. The defenders of Uthman and his policy wanted to attribute the revolution which was made against him to a Jew who is alien to Islam.

They alleged that he organized through secret conspiracies elaborate cells in Basra Kufah Egypt and Damascus for a revolution against the Caliph.<sup>20</sup> They said that this alleged man claimed that the Prophet Muhammad will come back and that he tried to substantiate the return of the Holy Prophet to this world by comparing it to the return of Jesus to this world in the future. Since Muhammad is more important than Jesus he would be more entitled than Jesus to return. They said that Ibn Saba supported the idea of the return of the Prophet by the following verse:

***"Certainly the One Who commanded you to convey the Qur'an (to mankind) shall return you to a new coming..." The Holy Quram Chapter 28 verse 85***<sup>21</sup>

## Who Was the First to Speak of the Prophet's Return?

I would like to state clearly that attributing the idea of the Prophet's return to the imaginary Ibn Saba is an obvious distortion of the truth. Was not 'Umar the first one who proclaimed the doctrine of the Prophet's return?

History testifies and no historian or hadith-reporter would deny that 'Umar stood at the Mosque of the Prophet when the Prophet died and said:

"Some hypocrites allege that the Messenger of God died. The Messenger did not die. He only went to his Lord as Moses son of Imran went to his Lord. He left his people for forty nights then he returned to them after it was said that he died. By God the Messenger of God will return as Moses returned. He will sever the hands and legs of the men who alleged that he died." (The Brother of the Prophet Muhammad vol.1 p. 161 (and Ibn Hisham in his Biography of the Prophet part 2 p. 655)

Would any Muslim accuse 'Umar of learning this doctrine from Abdullah Ibn Saba?

If anyone after 'Umar believed in the return of the Prophet we should assume that he learned that from 'Umar rather than from Ibn Saba.

They also mentioned that this imaginary Jew was the one who spread the doctrine of 'Ali's executorship and successorship to the Messenger.<sup>22</sup> They said also that he taught Abu Dharr while in Damascus the theory that prohibits treasuring gold and silver and that what is collected from Zakat and other Islamic taxes are Muslims' fund rather than God's fund.<sup>23</sup> They also said that Ammar Ibn Yasir went to Egypt and met Ibn Saba and that Ibn Saba turned him against Uthman. <sup>24</sup>

These allegations contradict well known historical facts and very substantiated truths. From these facts is that Uthman did not follow the policy of the Two Caliphs before him though he pledged to Abdul-Rahman Ibn Ouf and the nation at the time of his selection that he will follow their policy.

It is well known in history that the Messenger exiled Al-Hakam Ibn Abu Al-Aws and his family and said: Al-Hakam shall not live with me in Medina forever. Uthman brought back the exiled of the Prophet and his children.

He gave them large amounts from the public funds.<sup>25</sup> He gave them hundreds of thousands of dirhams. He made Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam his main advisor and actually he was the real caliph.

It is a well known fact of history that Abdullah Ibn Abu Sarh deserted the Faith after he declared his Islam and that the Messenger of God ordered his execution.<sup>26</sup> It is also known in history that Walid Ibn Aqabah Ibn Abu Mo-eet was a transgressor and used to drink intoxicants.<sup>27</sup> The Holy Qur'an testifies to his transgression.<sup>28</sup>

Yet Uthman appointed Ibn Abu Sarh as governor of Egypt. He gave him the fifth of the spoils of North Africa.<sup>29</sup> Uthman also appointed Walid governor of Kufa. He did not dismiss him until the Muslims testified that he was found drunk while he was leading the congregational prayer at the main Mosque of Kufa.<sup>30</sup>

It is also known that Uthman exiled Abu Dharr<sup>31</sup> and beat up Ammar Ibn Yasir until Ammar fainted.<sup>32</sup> He also ordered Abdullah Ibn Masud to be thrown out of the Mosque and his ribs were broken.<sup>33</sup> He penalized these three outstanding companions only because they were critical of his policy.

Uthman also exiled a number of good people from Kufa to Syria because they criticized his policy and that of his appointed officials from the Umayyads.<sup>34</sup> There are no prescribed punishments in Islam for critics who demand reform from a ruler.

The masses of the people resented punishment of these people by exile. Exile according to the Holy Qur'an is a punishment for those who are at war with God and His Messenger and those who spread corruption in the land.

These exiled Muslims were neither at war with God and His Messenger nor were they from the

corruptors of the land. They were only critics of the Caliph because he used to give any member of his clan tens or hundreds of thousands of dirhams from the public funds and grant them vast pieces of land from the public property.[35](#)

It was only expected that the companions and the rest of the Muslims would frown at these arbitrary actions after they witnessed the way of the Messenger and the two Caliphs after him. It was only a matter of course that resentment would grow and that people would demand from the Caliph to change his policy and dismiss his appointed officials who were his relatives. It was also expected that the resentment would be transformed into a revolution after he refused to change.

The companions and other outstanding Muslims were not in need of an alleged Jew to call for a revolution. The existence of such a Jew in relation to the causes of the revolution was of no effect and similar to the existence of a fifth leg of a chair.

To say that Uthman adopted the policy that was approved by the companions and the rest of the Muslims and that Abdullah Ibn Saba is the one who instigated people against him is an invitation to the denial of well established facts of history.

The attribution of the revolution against Uthman to Abdullah Ibn Saba cannot be true unless we say that Abdullah Ibn Saba is the one who counselled the Caliph to commit the numerous violations which he committed and which brought about the revolution. Thus we ought to ask the following questions: Did Ibn Saba advise the Caliph?

Did he persuade the Caliph to give his relatives the public funds and make Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam his prime minister? Did he convince him to exile companions such as Abu Dharr and other prominent Muslims such as Malik Al-Ashtar? Did Ibn Saba counsel him to beat up outstanding companions?

These and other illegal actions are the true causes of the revolution. Unless Ibn Saba is the one who convinced Uthman to commit all these mistakes and refuse to change them he could not be a cause of revolution. Of course the historians who adopted the report of Saif Ibn 'Umar (which created the tale of Ibn Saba) would not accept any relationship between Uthman and Ibn Saba.

## **Was Ibn Saba in Medina?**

The people who accepted the report of Saif Ibn 'Umar have forgotten that the agitation against Uthman did not start in Basra or Kufa or Egypt. It rather started in Medina and that Ayesah and Talhah and Al-Zubayr were the most outstanding agitators against Uthman. Was Ibn Saba the motivator of these people to oppose Uthman and to call for his murder?

The report of the conspiracy of Ibn Saba says that Ibn Saba met Abu Dharr in Damascus and urged him to oppose Uthman and Muawiya. But Abu Dharr started his critical campaign while in Medina before he went to Damascus. He was exiled to Damascus because of his critical campaign against the Caliph.[36](#)

Saif's report says also that Ibn Saba is the one who taught Abu Dharr to say that the revenues of Zakat and other Islamic taxations are the revenues of the Muslims rather than the revenues of God. Yet history tells us that when Abu Dharr was brought back to Medina from Damascus he was still saying that these revenues are revenues of God.

It is reported that when Abu Dharr came to Medina he faced the Caliph and he reported in the presence of other companions that he heard the Messenger of God saying:

"When the men from the children of Abu Al-Aws become thirty they will make the revenue of God rotate among them the servants of God their slaves and the religion of God interpolated."[37](#)

However saying that Abu Dharr learned some religious doctrines from an alien hypocrite seems to be extremely ugly and obviously fabricated. Abu Dharr was an outstanding companion of the Prophet. He embraced Islam before all the Medinite and most of the Meccan companions.[38](#)

He accompanied the Holy Prophet and his companionship was long. He memorized the Holy Qur'an and he heard from the Messenger and understood what he heard. He reported the statements of the Messenger and his deeds accurately. He was well aware of what he was reporting. He was extremely true and devoted and the Holy Prophet loved him very much.

Al-Tirmidhi reported that the Messenger said: "Neither did the Heaven shade nor did the earth carry truer than Abu Dharr."[39](#) He reported also that the Holy Prophet said: "Neither did the Heaven shade nor did the earth carry truer and more loyal than Abu Dharr. He walks on earth with the immaterialistic attitude of Jesus son of Mary"[40](#)

It is reported by Ibn Majah that the Messenger said: "God commanded me to love four persons and He informed me that He loves them. When he was asked: Who are they? The Prophet said; 'Ali is from them (repeating that three times) and Abu Dharr Salman and Al-Miqdad."[41](#)

Abu Dharr was so concerned with the purity of the Islamic teaching to a degree that he did not allow Kaab Al-Ahbar to give a verdict in Islamic law though Kaab Al-Ahbar was highly respected by 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab and Uthman. Many times the two Caliphs asked him about things in religion and they used to listen to what he said.

It is reported that Abu Dharr said to Uthman after he came back from Damascus to Medina: "It is not sufficient for a man to pay only Zakat. He should add to that by helping the needy and feeding the hungry and spending in the way of God." When Kaab Al-Ahbar commented that "Whoever fulfills his prescribed duty does not have to add anything to it " Abu Dharr became angry and said to Kaab: Son of the Jewish lady who are you to say this? Do you want to teach us our religion? Then he hit him with his rod on his neck.[42](#)

A man that does not allow Kaab (who was highly regarded by 'Umar) to give a verdict in religion is not

expected to follow the opinion of a Jew who adopted Islam during the time of Uthman and did not see the companions of the Messenger nor did he know the Islamic instructions.

If Abu Dharr and Ammar agreed with Ibn Saba Ibn Saba must be right. The Holy Prophet testified for the truth of these two companions.

It is reported that Ayesha said that the messenger of God said: "Whenever Ammar is given the choice between two alternatives he always chooses the most righteous of the two alternatives."<sup>43</sup> Abdullah Ibn Masud was consulted: Whom should we follow when the Muslims are divided? He said: "Follow Ammar. He will never part with the truth..."<sup>44</sup> The Prophet told Ammar: "Ammar be cheerful the aggressor party will kill you."<sup>45</sup> He also said: "Paradise longs for three persons: 'Ali Ammar and Salman."<sup>46</sup>

When the Messenger of God testified for the distinction of a companion of this kind such companion must have been right. And if these two companions had agreed with any person about a religious matter the one with whom they had agreed must have been right. If the two companions agreed with a person who was a new convert he and not they must be the learner. He would be learning from the two companions.

If Ibn Saba were in existence and if he had met Abu Dharr and Ammar (as Saif's report alleged) it would be logical to assume that he did not teach the two companions anything and that he learned from them.

If he had spoken of 'Ali's executorship and his succession to the Messenger he would be only following the two companions. Ibn Saba did not hear the Messenger but Abu Dharr and Ammar heard him saying at Ghadir Khum: "Whoever I am his "Mawla" (leader) 'Ali is his Mawla."<sup>47</sup> The two companions heard the Messenger saying: "I am leaving for you that which if you uphold you will never go astray: The Book of God and the members of my House.

Beware how you shall treat them after me."<sup>48</sup> These two companions no doubt understood from the statement of the prophet that the Messenger was appointing 'Ali his successor.

## **To Discredit Abu Dharr and Ammar Is To Discredit The Prophet**

As we conclude our discussion and analysis of Saif Ibn 'Umar Al-Tameemi's report we come to the following conclusions:

- 1) The subscribers to Saif Ibn 'Umar's report who are trying to smear the Shi'ite Muslims are actually smearing Abu Dharr and Ammar Ibn Yasir before they smear the contemporary Shi'ites.
- 2) The two companions were following the line of the Prophet because he testified to their righteousness truth and rightfulness. The Shi'ites follow the same line.
- 3) This means that he who discredits the two companions actually discredits the Prophet himself.

I do not believe that Ibn Saba ever existed. I believe that he was only a fabricated story to ruin the reputation of the "Shi'ites" (the followers of the members of the House of the Holy Prophet)

Dr. Taha Hussein observed that what was reported about "Ibn Al-Souda" (Abdullah Ibn Saba) was obviously made up and fabricated. It was invented when the debate between the Shi'ites and other Islamic schools was in progress.

The enemies of the Shi'ites wanted to admit into the teaching of this school a Jewish element for the sake of destroying their reputation. Taha Hussein said: Ibn Al- Souda was nothing but an imagination.

And if he had truly existed he was not that important as the historians try to portray him and describe his activity during the days of Uthman and in the first year of the caliphate of 'Ali. He is an imaginary person treasured by the enemies of the Shi'ites in order to harm the Shi'ites.[49](#)

## The Source Of The Legend

The source of the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba or Ibn Al-Souda was Saif Ibn 'Umar Al-Tameemi who lived in the second century after the Hijra. Al-Tabari Ibn Asakir and Ibn Abu Bakr took the story of Ibn Saba from Saif Ibn 'Umar. The rest of the historians such as Ibn Al-Athir Ibn Kutheyer Ibn Khaldoon and Abu Al-Fida took the story from Al-Tabari.

This Saif Ibn 'Umar was one of the forgers of the hadiths and the reports of the events of history. The Muslim scholars who are specialized in Hadith have expressed their opinion about Saif: Ibn Mu-een (died in 277) said: Saif is a weak reporter.

Al-Nisa-i (died in 303) said: Saif is a weak reporter.

Abu Dawud (died in 317) said: Saif is nothing.

Al-Hakim (died in 405) said: Saif is abandoned and accused of being heretic.

Ibn Hayyan said: Saif reportedly forged stories and attributed them to reliable reporters and he was accused of being heretic.

Al-Dar Qutni (died in 385) said: Saif is a weak reporter and was abandoned.

Ibn Hajar (died 850) said: Saif is a weak reporter.[50](#)

This Saif reported many Hadiths which are opposed to the well known facts of history and to the facts which are reported by numerous reliable reporters. He also reported events which are inconceivable.

The resentment of 'Ali towards the election of Abu Bakr was reported by outstanding hadith-reporters and this is known to the students of history. What Al-Tabari reported through Saif Ibn 'Umar about 'Ali's

election of Abu Bakr is the following:

"Ali was at his house when he was informed that Abu Bakr is receiving the pledge of allegiance. 'Ali hurriedly left his home without having his cloak on him because he did not like to lose time. He came to the mosque and pledged his allegiance to Abu Bakr then sat with him and sent after his cloak. When it was brought to him he put it on and remained with Abu Bakr."[51](#)

It is a well known fact of history which was reported by numerous reliable sources that 'Ali did not accept the caliphate of Abu Bakr at the beginning and refused to give him the pledge of allegiance and he continued to do so until his wife Fatima Al-Zahra died. Al-Bukhari and Muslim through their channels to Ayesha reported the following:

"... Fatima daughter of the Messenger of God sent to Abu Bakr asking him for her inheritance from her father out of what God has given him in Medina Fadak and what remained from the "fifth of Kheibar"... ; Abu Bakr said: The Messenger of God said: "We (the Prophets) are not to be inherited (materially); what we have left is (or as) charity."

Abu Bakr refused to give Fatima anything. She was outraged by what he did and she refused to speak to him until she died. She lived six months after the Messenger of God. When she died 'Ali buried her at night and did not inform Abu Bakr of her death. 'Ali prayed on her.

People were warm towards 'Ali when Fatima was still living. When she died 'Ali lost that warmth. Thus he sought to make peace with Abu Bakr and he pledged his allegiance to him."[52](#)

Of Saif's reports of events which are inconceivable are the following: Al-Tabari reported that Saif said that Abu Bakr sent Al-Ala Ibn Al-Hadrami to fight the deserters of the faith in Al-Bahrain and that he and his army went through Al-Dahna and that their camels ran away from them in the desert during the night and that they became thirsty. Then water appeared to them. They drank from it and washed then their camels came back.

Abu Huraira filled a container of his with water but he left it near the water. When they departed from that place they came back to it. They did not find the water but Abu Hurairah found his container.

Saif also reported that Al-Ala and his army went to Daren traveling by sea on their camels for twenty-four hours and the water of the sea did not cover the hooves of the camels. He mentioned also that after the army passed through the sea it was able to obtain victory against the people of Daren.[53](#)

But Al-Baladhuri on the other hand reported the invasion of Al-Bahrain through a source other than Saif and mentioned that Al-Ala invaded Zarah and Daren during the reign of 'Umar (rather than the reign of Abu Bakr).

He reported that the inhabitants of Zarah made a peace treaty with Al-Ala and that they agreed to give him a third of the city and a third of what was in it of gold and silver; that he would take half of what

belongs to them outside the city and that Al-Akhnas Ibn Al-Amiri said to him that they did not include in the peace treaty what they had in Dareen.

Thus he advised him of a shallow passage between Zarah and Dareen in the sea and that Al-Ala and his army went through that shallow passage and invaded Dareen.<sup>54</sup> Al-Tabari reported through Saif that when Saad Ibn Abu Waqass and his army arrived to a place called Othaib Al-Hijanat he sent Assim Ibn Amr to the lower part of the Euphrates.

Assim came to Maisan seeking sheep or cows but he did not find any. The cows fortified themselves by going into a wooded area. Assim went and looked until he found a man near the area. He asked him about the cows and the sheep and the man swore to him that he did not know anything about their location.

But the man was the shepherd of those animals. Upon this a bull spoke clearly in Arabic saying what means: "By God he lied to you; We are here." Assim went in and drove the cows out and brought them to the camp.<sup>55</sup>

Thus we find that Saif reports in the two stories what is unbelievable. A water appears and the whole army drinks from it. Then it disappears shortly after they leave it; an army goes through the sea for twenty-four hours and the water of the sea does not cover the hooves of the camels and a cow speaks the grammatical Arabic language.

This is only some of Saif's fabricated lies. It is amazing that Al-Tabari who was an outstanding Muslim historian relied upon Saif's reports while his own reports testify to Saif's incredibility.

Ibn Saba was nothing but one of his fabricated lies. He tried to cover up the truth by alleging that the revolution against Uthman was not caused by Uthman's mishandling the public funds and giving it to his relatives and friends and appointing his transgressor relatives as governors of the Muslims.

He tried to say that the cause of that revolution was the conspiracies of Abdullah Ibn Saba who never was mentioned by any reliable historians before Saif Ibn 'Umar.

Saif wanted to acquit Ayesah Mother of Believers Talhah and Al-Zubayr from the responsibility of the Battle of Basra. Thus he invented the story of a conspiracy by Ibn Saba and his followers for starting the Battle.

Al-Tabari and the historians who followed him in recording the story of Saif Ibn 'Umar should have asked themselves the two following questions: 1. If Ibn Saba had existed and had such revolutionary and destructive activity why did not Ayesah mention him and his activities when she went to Basra trying to turn people against 'Ali and his followers?

Why did she not mention that those who made the revolution against Uthman and those who killed him were followers of a Jewish Arab that was conspiring against Islam and that these conspirators were the

followers of 'Ali and the callers for his election?

She did not mention that though she came to Basra for the sole purpose of turning its inhabitants against 'Ali. Had the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba been truthful Ayesah would have made it the main theme of her speeches. Had she mentioned that she would have hurt 'Ali and his followers a great deal.

It could be said that Mother of the Believers was not aware of the intrigues and conspiracies of Ibn Saba because he used to work secretly. But the report which speaks of Ibn Saba says also that he came to Basra and formed a revolutionary cell in it and that Abdullah Ibn Amir who was the Umayyad governor of Basra expelled him from Basra when he discovered his subversive activities.[56](#)

Abdullah Ibn Amir was with Ayesah when she departed from Mecca and he was with her when she came to Basra. Why did he not give her that information about Ibn Saba if Ibn Saba had really existed? Tens of Umayyads were with Mother of the Believers and these people were fully aware of the situation of the Islamic cities and communities and what was taking place in them.

These Umayyads were the rulers of the cities during the time of Uthman and they were not simple people.

Ayesah did not mention Abdullah Ibn Saba and his activity before the Battle of Basra nor on the day of the Battle. Nor did she mention anything about Ibn Saba and his activities after the Battle though she lived a good number of years afterwards.

None of the Umayyads who accompanied her (such as Abdullah Ibn Amir and Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam who were arch enemies of the Imam) ever mentioned anything about Ibn Saba and his activities. Had the story of Ibn Saba been true the voices of these people would have filled the Muslim World.

Granted that Ayesah did not mention Ibn Saba because she did not know about his intrigues and conspiracies but why did Muawiyah refrain from mentioning that? The report which speaks of Ibn Saba mentioned that he went to Damascus and that he turned Abu Dharr against Muawiyah and Uthman and that Ibn Saba spoke of his destructive opinions to two other companions of the Prophet: Abu Al-Darda and Abadah Ibn Al-Samit.

The report added that Abadah resented the statements of Ibn Saba and took him to Muawiyah and informed Muawiyah that Ibn Saba is the one who turned Abu Dharr against him... and with this information Muawiyah drove Ibn Saba out of Damascus.[57](#) Ibn Saba later went to Egypt and Abdullah Ibn Abu Sarh (the governor of Egypt) also knew about Ibn Saba.[58](#)

Muawiyah used to give large amounts of money to people in order to defame the Imam by inventing stories that would damage his reputation and the reputation of his followers. Muawiyah was the one who decreed that the Imam 'Ali should be cursed every Friday at every Islamic Mosque.

This order was issued after the death of the Imam. Had the story of Ibn Saba been true Muawiyah would

have considered it most important and would have held it by his two hands and he would not have failed to mention it every day.

Yet history does not mention that Muawiya or anyone of his appointed governors ever spoke one word concerning Ibn Saba.

History has preserved numerous messages from Muawiya in which he directed whatever he could of false accusations towards the Imam. His main goal in those messages was to smear the Imam by saying that he protected the killers of Uthman and those who participated in the revolution against him.

Yet he did not mention in any of those messages that the killers of Uthman or the participants in that revolution had any relation with a man named Ibn Saba. Had the legend of Ibn Saba had any truth to it the pen of Muawiya would have flown with it and it would have come on his tongue and the tongues of his followers during the days of his reign and the reign of the rest of the Umayyads.

The truth is that Ibn Saba was not dangerous to the unity of the Muslims or a cause in dividing the Muslims because Ibn Saba did not exist. The fact is that one of the main reasons for dividing the Muslims and spreading animosity among them was Saif Ibn 'Umar who invented the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba.

Saif elaborately fabricated the story and Al-Tabari accepted it. Thus it was spread and became popular among the Muslim masses. This fabrication brought a mutual hatred among the Muslims and divided them into two parties separated by considerable distance.

Only God knows how many innocent Muslims lost their lives as a result of the poison with which Saif Ibn 'Umar sprayed the Islamic atmosphere through his fabrications.

[1.](#) Al-Tabari, his History, part 4, p. 493.

[2.](#) Al-Tabari, his History, part 4, p. 493.

[3.](#) Al-Tabari, his History, part 4, pp. 493-494.

[4.](#) Al-Tabari, his History, part 4, pp. 493-494.

[5.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 Events of 36 H. p. 509.

[6.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 Events of 36 H.

[7.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 Events of 36 H. p. 509.

[8.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 512.

[9.](#) Dr. Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 pp. 36-37.

[10.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 89-90.

[11.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 533 and he mentioned that Ammar Ibn Yasir aided Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr in the removal of the canopy.

[12.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 178.

[13.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 4 p. 119 Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 525 mentioned that Oday Ibn Hatam and Al-Ashtar were the ones who reached the camel of 'Aisha in order to end the Battle of Bassrah.

[14.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 157.

[15.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 107.

[16.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 pp. 323-333.

- [17.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 239.
- [18.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 2 p. 68.
- [19.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 81-82.
- [20.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 (Events of the 36th year H.) pp. 340-341.
- [21.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 (Events of the 36th year H.) pp. 340-341.
- [22.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 340.
- [23.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 283.
- [24.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 341.
- [25.](#) Al-Baladhuri Ansab Al-Ashraf part 4 p. 28.
- [26.](#) Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet part 2 p. 409.
- [27.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 53-69.
- [28.](#) Ibn Hisham Biography of the Prophet part 2 p. 296.
- [29.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 46.
- [30.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 53.
- [31.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 56 and Al-Tabari his History part 4.
- [32.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitnat Al-Kubra part 1 p. 161.
- [33.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 1 p. 161.
- [34.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 pp. 70-71.
- [35.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 49.
- [36.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol. 1 p. 240.
- [37.](#) Ibn Abu Al-Hadid Commentary on Nahjul-Balaghah vol. 1 p. 241.
- [38.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 1 p. 133.
- [39.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 4 p. 334 (hadith no. 3889)
- [40.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 334 (hadith no. 3890)
- [41.](#) Ibn Majah his authentic Sunan part 1 p. 53 (hadith no. 129)
- [42.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 284.
- [43.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 pp. 332-333.
- [44.](#) Yousof Ibn Abdul-Barr Al-Istea-Ab part 3 p. 1139.
- [45.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 332-333.
- [46.](#) Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 4 p. 332 (Hadith no. 3884)
- [47.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 110.
- [48.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 109.
- [49.](#) Taha Hussein Al-Fitna tul-Kubra part 1 pp. 98-99.
- [50.](#) Sayed Murtadha Al-Askari in his book Abdullah Ibn Saba p. 26.
- [51.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 3 (Event in the 11th year A. H.) p. 201 (conveyed by Sayed Al-Askari Abdullah Ibn Saba)
- [52.](#) Al-Bukhari his Sahih part 5 p. 177 (chapter of Battle of Khaibar). Muslim also reported it in his Sahih part 12 p. 77.
- [53.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 3 conveyed by Al-Askari Abdullah Ibn Saba.
- [54.](#) Al-Baladhuri Futuoh Al-Buldan pp. 92-93 (conveyed by Al-Askari Abdullah Ibn Saba p. 117)
- [55.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 3 p. 12.
- [56.](#) Ibn Al-Athir Al-Kamil part 3 p. 72.
- [57.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 283.
- [58.](#) Al-Tabari his History part 4 p. 341 (Events of 35th year A.H.).

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