

Abdullah Ibn Saba Part 1

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Enemies of Islam whose goal were/are to split the Muslims, in their effort to explain the emergence of Shi'a, claim that the Shi'a are a sect which was originated by Abdullah Ibn Saba, a Jew who embraced Islam during the reign of Uthman Ibn Affan, the third caliph. They further state that Abdullah Ibn Saba traveled in Muslim cities and towns, from Damascus to Kufa to Egypt, propagating among Muslims that 'Ali is the Prophet's successor. He provoked Muslims to kill Uthman since he believed Uthman had occupied the seat of Imam 'Ali.

He also made mischief in the armies of 'Ali and his opponents in the battle of Camel. He was also responsible for all the false ideas of the Shi'a forward. These mercenary writers believe that Abdullah Ibn Saba is the origin of Shi'a; and since he himself was a hypocrite and a falsifier of tales, then all the knowledge and beliefs of the Shi'a are also false. In fact, Abdullah Ibn Saba is the best scapegoat for all the claims of some Sunnis.

While the existence of a person in the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba in the early history of Islam is seriously under question, what is clear after extensively researching this topic is that even if a poor man with such name ever existed at that time, the stories propagated about this person are legendary, false, fabricated, and fictitious, and there exists no proof for the validity of these stories attached to him. This point will be studied in this discussion, by the willing of Allah.

Introduction

The fabricated stories around the character of Abdullah Ibn Saba are the malicious production of one of the disciples of the devil, namely Sayf Ibn Umar al-Tamimi. He was a story teller, lived in the second century after Hijrah, who shaped his stories by some primary facts he found in the documented history of Islam available at that time. Sayf wrote a novel much the same as what Salman Rushdi did in "Satanic Verses" with similar motives, but with the difference that the role of Satan in this case was given to poor

Abdullah Ibn Saba.

Sayf Ibn Umar distorted the biographies of the companions of the Holy Prophet (S) to please the government of his time, and to distort the history of Shi'a and to ridicule Islam. Sayf was a staunch advocate of the Umayyads, who were known throughout history to be one of the worst enemies of Ahlul-Bayt, and as such, it was in his best interest to invent such stories to degrade the Shi'a.

In his stories however he followed many other goals one of which was to cleverly elevate the status of his tribe over others by inventing some imaginary companions from his tribe. However many Sunni scholars found numerous unjustifiable heresies in his reports which was not limited to the issue of Abdullah Ibn Saba, and consequently they abandoned his reports, and accuse him as a man of forgery and lies. Yet Sayf's works enjoyed the support of a minority of Sunnis to this date.

Here, later on, I give the sayings of several leading Sunni scholars, who all confirmed that Sayf Ibn Umar was an untrustworthy person and his stories are void. Ideological studies indicate that most of those who hate the Shi'ite school of thought (a lot of whom being the enemies of Islam anyway) justify their enmity on this obvious heresy which they would exploit to backup their attack on Shi'a. The approach which resembles the one adopted by Sayf Ibn Umar himself.

[The Origin Of The Tale](#)

The tale of Abdullah Ibn Saba is over twelve centuries old. Historians and writers, one after the other recorded it, adding more and more to it. With a glance at the chain of transmitters of this story, you will find the name of Sayf sitting in there. The following historians recorded directly from Sayf:

- (1) Tabari.
- (2) Dhahabi. He has also cited from Tabari(1).
- (3) Ibn Abi Bakir. He has also recorded from Ibn Athir(15), who has recorded from Tabari(1).
- (4) Ibn Asakir.

The following have recorded indirectly from Sayf:

- (5) Nicholson from Tabari(1).
- (6) Encyclopedia of Islam from Tabari(1).
- (7) Van Floton from Tabari(1).
- (8) Wellhauzen from Tabari(1).
- (9) Mirkhand from Tabari(1).
- (10) Ahmad Amin from Tabari(1), and from Wellhauzen(8).
- (11) Farid Wajdi from Tabari(1).
- (12) Hasan Ibrahim from Tabari(1).
- (13) Saeed Afghani from Tabari(1), and from Ibn Abi Bakir(3), Ibn Asakir(4), and Ibn Badran(21).

- (14) Ibn Khaldoon from Tabari(1).
- (15) Ibn Athir from Tabari(1).
- (16) Ibn Kathir from Tabari(1).
- (17) Donaldson from Nicholson(5), and from Encyclopedia(6).
- (18) Ghiath al-Din from Mirkhand(9).
- (19) Abul Fida from Ibn Athir(15).
- (20) Rashid Ridha from Ibn Athir(15).
- (21) Ibn Badran from Ibn Asakir(4).
- (22) Bostani from Ibn Kathir(16).

The above list gives evidence to the fact that the fictitious stories around the character of Abdullah Ibn Saba has been started by Sayf and cited next by Tabari directly from Sayf's book as Tabari mentioned himself (See the chain of narrators of traditions related to Abdullah Ibn Saba, inside the History of Tabari. For instance, see the index of Vol. 15, English version, under the name of Sayf Ibn Umar or Abdullah Ibn Saba).

Therefore, Sayf's character and his history should be studied and analyzed with a great care.

Who Is Sayf?

Sayf Ibn Umar al-Dhabbi al-Usayyidi al-Tamimi lived in the second century of the Muslim era (8th century AD) and died after the year 170 AH (750 AD). al-Dhabbi said that Sayf died during the rule of Haroon al-Rashid in Baghdad (Iraq). During his life, Sayf wrote the following two books which were available even during the reign of Umayyad:

1. "al-Fotooh wa al-Riddah" which is the history of the period before the death of the Prophet (S) until the third Caliph Uthman resumed office as the ruler of Muslim world.
2. "al-Jamal wa Maseeri Aisha wa 'Ali" which is the history from the murder of Uthman to the battle of Jamal (the fight that happened between Imam 'Ali and some companions).

These books are now lost but survived for a number of centuries after Sayf's own lifetime. Based on what we found, the last person who had said that he had possessed Sayf's books was Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852 AH). These two books of Sayf contained more action than truth, some forged stories, and some true events which, intentionally, have been recorded in a ridiculing manner.

Since Sayf spoke about some of the companions of the Prophet (S) and also invented some companions with strange names, his stories have affected the history of early Islam. Some biographers such as the authors of "Usdul Ghabah", "Isti'ab" and "Isabah" and geographers such as the authors of "Mu'jamul Boldan" and "al-Rawzul mi'tar" have written the life of some companions of the Prophet, and named places which exist only in the books written by Sayf. Because of this, the life and character of

Sayf and his credibility should be carefully investigated.

What Do Sunni Scholars Say About Sayf?

The following leading Sunni scholars confirm that Sayf Ibn Umar was a well known liar and untrustworthy:

- (1) al-Hakim (d. 405 AH) wrote: "Sayf is accused of being a heretic. His narrations are abandoned."
- (2) al-Nisa'i (d. 303 AH) wrote: "Sayf's narrations are weak and they should be disregarded because he was unreliable and untrustworthy."
- (3) Yahya Ibn Mueen (d. 233 AH) wrote: "Sayf's narrations are weak and useless."
- (4) Abu Hatam (d. 277 AH) wrote: "Sayf's Hadith is rejected."
- (5) Ibn Abi Hatam (d. 327 AH) wrote: "Scholars have abandoned Sayf's narrations."
- (6) Abu Dawud (d. 316 AH) wrote: "Sayf is nothing. He was a liar. Some of his Hadiths were conveyed and the majority of them are denied."
- (7) Ibn Habban (d. 354 AH) wrote: "Sayf attributed fabricated traditions to the good reporters. He was accused of being a heretic and a liar."
- (8) Ibn Abd al-Barr (d. 462 AH) mentioned in his writing about al-Qa'qa:

"Sayf reported that al-Qa'qa Said: I attended the death of the Prophet Muhammad." Ibn Abd al-Barr continued: "Ibn Abu Hatam said: Sayf is weak. Thus, what was conveyed of the presence of al-Qa'qa at the death of the Prophet is rejected. We mentioned the Sayf's traditions for knowledge only."
- (9) al-Darqutini (d. 385 AH) wrote: "Sayf is weak".
- (10) Firoozabadi (d. 817 AH) in "Towalif" mentioned Sayf and some others by saying: "They are weak."
- (11) Ibn al-Sakan (d. 353 AH) wrote: "Sayf is weak."
- (12) Safi al-Din (d. 923 AH) wrote: "Sayf is considered weak."
- (13) Ibn Udei (d. 365 AH) wrote about Sayf: "He is weak. Some of his narrations are famous yet the majority of his narrations are disgraceful and not followed."
- (14) al-Suyuti (d. 900 AH) wrote: "Sayf's Hadith is weak."
- (15) Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852 AH) wrote after mentioning a tradition: "Many reporters of this tradition are weak, and the weakest among them is Sayf."

It is interesting to see that although al-Dhahabi (d. 748 AH) has quoted from the book of Sayf in his History, he has mentioned in his other book that Sayf as a weak narrator. In "al-Mughni fi al-Dhu'afa" al-Dhahabi wrote:

"Sayf has two books which have been unanimously abandoned by the scholars." (al-Mughni fi al-Dhu'afa', by al-Dhahabi, p292)

The result of the investigation into Sayf's life shows that Sayf was an agnostic and an unreliable story teller. Stories told by him are dubious and are entirely or partly forged. In his stories, he has used names of cities which never existed in the world. Abdullah Ibn Saba are the star of those stories. He also introduced some 150 imaginary companions for the Prophet to fill out the empty characters of his scenarios, by giving them some strange names which are not found in any other documents. Also the timing of the events given by Sayf's narrations contradict the authentic Sunni documents. Sayf has also used imaginary chains of narrators, and reported many miraculous events (like talking cows with human etc...).

Some of the defenders of Sayf hold the opinion that eventhough he was known as a weak transmitter and many scholars of Hadith do not trust his reports, it is only in the matter of the Shari'ah (the Law), but not in the matter of historical report!

By that, they want to rely on the "historical" stories of someone who was regarded a liar and "zindeeq"! If the problem of Sayf was just lack of knowledge about Shari'ah (divine law), one could say he can be trusted on other accounts.

But the problem with Sayf was that he was a liar, and made lots of forgery by constructing the events, attributed fabricated traditions to good narrators. Then such person becomes questionable for almost everything. As for his historical accounts we will witness in Part V that even Christian historians have confirmed great inconsistencies between his historical report and other sober transmitters. No need to mention Sunni and Shi'a opinion on the heretical nature of Sayf.

The Stories About Abdullah Ibn Saba Which Do NOT Have Any Source Or Any Chain Of Transmitters

There are some reports from both Shi'a and Sunni scholars, historians, and story tellers of ancient cultures who wrote few lines about Abdullah Ibn Saba but did not supply any evidence for their claims, nor did they provide any chain of supportive authorities (isnad) for their reports to be examined.

For instance, their reports start with: "some people say so and so ..." or "some scholars say so and so ..." without mentioning who that scholar was, and where they got it from. It was based on rumor which was propagated by Umayyads (AFTER Sayf's work) which had reached them, and some based on the authors' own creativity. This is inferred when we see these authors have reported some legends which

are clearly false and rejected by logic. These reports are provided by those who wrote books about "al-Milal wa Nihal"(stories about civilizations and cultures) or "al-Firaq"(divisions/sects).

Among the Sunnis who mentioned the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba in their stories WITHOUT bringing any source for their claims, are:

(1) 'Ali Ibn Isma'il al-Ash'ari (d. 330) in his book "Maqalat al-Islamiyin"(Essays about the People of Islam).

(2) Abdul-Qahir Ibn Tahir al-Baghdadi (d. 429) in his book "al-Farq Bain al-Firaq"(Differences of the Sects).

(3) Muhammad Ibn Abdil-Karim al-Shahrastani (d. 548) in his book "al-Milal wan Nihal"(Nations and Cultures).

The above mentioned Sunnis do not give any source or any chain of authority for their story about Abdullah Ibn Saba. They have competed with each other to increase the number of sects in Islam with strange names such as al-Kawusiyyah, al-Tayyarah, al-Mamturah, al-Ghrabiyyah, al-Ma'lumiyyah!!!, al-Majhuliyyah!!! and so on without giving any source or reference for their claims. Living in medieval times, these authors presumed that writing stranger stories and attributing unrealistic events to different Muslim nations will make them more reputable than the other competitors in this area. And by that, they caused a tragic damage to the history of Islam and committed a great crime for what they have falsely attributed to the Muslim nations.

Some of them have provided silly legends and fairy-tales whose falsehood are easy to detect nowadays, though it would have been possible for them to succeed in passing off such stories as history in those times. For instance, al-Shahrastani in his book "al-Milal wan Nihal"has mentioned that there was a group of semi-human creatures in the name of "al-Nas-Naas"with only half face, one eye, one hand, and one leg. Muslims could talk to these semi-human creatures and they even exchanged poetry!!!

Some Muslims even used to go hunting these semi-human creatures and they used to eat them!!! These semi-humans could jump faster than a horse and were ruminant/cud- chewers!!! al-Shahrastani further mentioned that al-Mutawakkil, the Abbasid Caliph, ordered the scientists of his time to investigate about these creatures!!! (See al-Milal wan Nihal, by al-Sharastani)

People at that time did not have the modern tools that would enable them to discover the falsehood these unrealistic stories and fairy-tales, and perhaps they would have preferred more extensive and more strange collections which may have seemed a guarantee of their accuracy, eventhough they were provided with no reference.

Also by chronological study of the life time of these authors, we can conclude that ALL of them were long after the era of Sayf Ibn Umar, and even after al-Tabari. So it is quite possible that they all got the

story of Abdullah Ibn Saba from Sayf. This claim becomes more strong when one observes that non of them mentioned the source of their reports which might be due to the fact that Sayf Ibn Umar's scandal was known to every body by that time and they did not want to discredit their books by mentioning its source. Moreover there exists NO document available related to Abdullah Ibn Saba BEFORE Sayf. The scholars or historians who lived before Sayf Ibn Umar NEVER mentioned the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba in their books. This shows that if Ibn Saba ever existed he was not anything important for the historians before Sayf. This is also another reason to believe that what was propagated around the personality of Abdullah Ibn Saba was initiated by the mass propaganda of Sayf Ibn Umar al-Tamimi.

Among the Shi'a who mentioned the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba but without any information regarding to their source, are the following two historians:

(1) Sa'ad Ibn Abdillah al-Ash'ari al-Qummi (d. 301) in his book "al-Maqalat wal-Firaq" mentioned a report in which there exists the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba. But he did not mention any chain of authorities nor did he mention from whom (or which book) he got the story and what his source was.

Moreover al-Ash'ari al-Qummi has narrated many traditions from Sunni authorities. al-Najjashi (d. 450) in his "al-Rijal" said that al-Ash'ari al-Qummi traveled to many places and was well-known for his relation with Sunni historians and heard many stories from them. He wrote many weak reports from what he heard, one of which is a short story about Abdullah Ibn Saba, with no reference.

(2) Hasan Ibn Musa al-Nawbakhti (d. 310) who was a Shi'a historian who provided in his book "al-Firaq" a report in which is the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba. However he never mentioned from whom he got the report and what his source was.

The above two were the Shi'a who originally provided some information about the existence of an accursed man in the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba at the time of Imam 'Ali (as). Notice that all of them reported these information long after Sayf Ibn Umar and even after al-Tabari wrote his history. Thus they might perhaps got the information from Sayf or those who quoted from him such as al-Tabari. This becomes more probable when we see that they wrote "Some people say so and so..." without giving any documented support (isnad) or the name of those "some people"!

Reports About Abdullah Ibn Saba Which Were NOT Transmitted Through Sayf Ibn Umar

We should point out however that there are less than 14 reports available in the collections of Shi'a and Sunni which mentions the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba, and are supplied with the chain of authorities, but in their chain of authorities the name of Sayf does not exist.

As for the Shi'a, he was al-Kushshi (or al-Keshshi; also abbreviated as Kash) (d. 369) who wrote his book "Rijal" in 340 AH. In that book he mentioned few traditions in which there exists the name of

Abdullah Ibn Saba, from the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt which were quoted below. As we will see, these traditions give a very different picture than those mentioned by Sayf.

However, it has been proven for Shi'a scholars that the book of al-Kashshi has some errors, especially in the names and also few errors in quotations. His book also contains some weak traditions, and as a result, it is not a fully reliable source for the Shi'a. Not to mention that the reports of al-Kushshi (Kash) are not found in any of the major 4-books of tradition for Shi'a. (For a critical evaluation of his errors, please see al-Rijal by al-Tusteri as well as al-Askari.)

Other Shi'a scholars who mentioned Abdullah Ibn Saba, have quoted al-Kushshi or the two historians mentioned above (i.e., al-A'sh'ari al-Qummi and al-Nawbakhti who did not provide any chain of transmitters or any source for their report). Among those who quoted al-Kushshi (Kash) are: Shaikh al-Tusi (d. 460), Ahmad Ibn Tawoos (d. 673), Allama al-Hilli (d. 726), etc.

As for the Sunnis, beside those who quoted from Sayf Ibn Umar whose names were given earlier, there are few reports from Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani which provide the very similar information of what al-Kushshi (Kash) provided (see below).

For these very few Shi'i and Sunni reports, we would like to mention the following points:

1. The story that these few Sunni and Shi'a traditions provide, are totally different than the heavy narrations propagated by Sayf Ibn Umar. These traditions say that there was a poor man in the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba appeared at the time of government of Imam 'Ali (as).

He claimed that he was a Prophet and 'Ali was God, and as soon as Imam 'Ali heard the news, he imprisoned him, and asked him to repent. He did not do so, and thus, Imam 'Ali ordered to burn him. The traditions confirm that Imam 'Ali and his descendants cursed this man and disassociated themselves from his claim of deity for Imam 'Ali (as). This is all there is about it, provided that these few traditions are genuine in the first place.

2. These few (less than 14) traditions do not exist in any authentic book. In fact, there is NO mention of Abdullah Ibn Saba in any of the six authentic Sunni collections (Sihah). Moreover, these few reports were never rated authentic by Shi'a or Sunni scholars, and there is a great possibility that a person in the name of Abdullah Ibn Saba never existed in the world, and was the total invention of Sayf Ibn Umar, similar to his invention of 150 imaginary companions for the Prophet (S) which do not exist in any other independent report. Granted that Abdullah Ibn Saba ever existed, Sayf has used his character and attributed many events to him for which there exists no similar report by other Sunni narrators.

Not only that, but also Sayf's reports clearly contradict other reports by the Sunnis, as we will show in this part and the next parts. Such malicious construction of the events were easy to detect even by the Sunni scholars.

Now, let me give you some of these few traditions which have NOT been reported by Sayf, and compare what Sayf attributed to Abdullah Ibn Saba.

As for Shi'a:

It is attributed to Abu Ja'far (as) saying:

Abdullah Ibn Saba used to claim being a prophet and claimed that The Commander of Believers, 'Ali (as) is God. Allah is Higher than such (claim). This news reached to The Commander of Believers (as), so he called him and questioned him. But he repeated his claims and said:

"You are Him (i.e., God), and it has been revealed to me that you are God and I am a prophet." So The Commander of Believers (as) said: "How dare you! Satan has made a mockery of you. Repent for what you said. May your mother weep at your death! Quit (your claim)." But he refused, so (Imam 'Ali) imprisoned him and asked him three times to repent, but he didn't. Thus he burnt him with fire and said: "Satan had taken him into his whim, he used to come to him and to induce these (thoughts) in him." (Rijal, by al-Kushshi)

Moreover it is reported that Imam 'Ali Ibn Husayn (as) said:

"May the curse of Allah be upon those who tell lies about us. I mentioned Abdullah Ibn Saba and each hair in my body stood up, Allah cursed him. 'Ali (as) was, by Allah, a proper servant of Allah, the brother of the Messenger of Allah (S). He did not earn the graciousness/honor from Allah except with the obedience to Allah and His Messenger. And (similarly) the Messenger of Allah (S) did not earn the honor from Allah except with his obedience to Allah." (Rijal, by al-Kushshi)

It is reported that Abu Abdillah (as) said:

"We are a family of truthfulness. But we are not safe from a liar telling lies about us to undermine our truth with his lies in front of people. The Messenger of Allah (S) was the most truthful among people in what he said (Lahjatan) and the most truthful among all humanity; and Musaylima used to lie on him. The Commander of Believers (as) was the most truthful one among the creation of Allah after the Messenger of Allah; and the one who used to lie on him, and tried to undermine his truthfulness and claimed lies about Allah, was Abdullah Ibn Saba." (Rijal, by al-Kushshi)

Also:

"As he (Aba Abdillah – Ja'far al-Sadiq) was telling his companions in the subject of Abdullah Ibn Saba and that he claimed in Godness of The Commander of Believers, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. He said: When he claimed that in 'Ali, he asked him to repent and he refused, so he burnt him with fire." (Rijal, by al-Kushshi)

As for the Sunnis, few reports from Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani which provide the very similar information of

what al-Kushshi (Kash) provided. Ibn Hajar mentioned:

"Abdullah Ibn Saba was one of the extremist (al-Ghulat), dualist/seducer/manichaeist (Zindeeq), and misguided, which is conveyed that 'Ali burnt him with fire.'"(Lisan al-Mizan, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v3, p289)

Then Ibn Hajar continues:

"Ibn Asakir mentioned in his History that 'his origin (Abdullah Ibn Saba) was from Yemen and that he was a Jew who adopted Islam and traveled in the cities of Muslims and preached them to disobey their rulers, to induce evil amongst them, then he entered Damascus for that purpose.' Then Ibn Asakir mentioned a long story from the book of al-Futooh of Sayf Ibn Umar, which does not have correct support/ authorities (isnad)."(Lisan al-Mizan, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v3, p289)

Then Ibn Hajar gives a tradition among whose chain of authorities two individuals are missing. In footnote he says that its has been dropped.

This is the tradition:

"Ali ascended the pulpit and said: What is wrong with him? People said: He is denying (or lying upon) Allah and His Messenger."(Lisan al-Mizan, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v3, p289)

In another tradition, Ibn Hajar reported:

"Ali said to Abdullah Ibn Saba: I have been told that there shall be thirty liars/imposters (who claim prophethood) and you are one of them"(Lisan al-Mizan, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v3, p290)

He also wrote:

"Ibn Saba and his followers believed in the deity of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, and certainly 'Ali burnt them by fire during his rule."(Lisan al-Mizan, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v3, p290)

These Sunni traditions were not rated authentic either. The total of these tradition by both Shi'a and Sunni (reported by other than Sayf), do not exceed fourteen at most. They will be even less if you remove repetitions.

These few Sunnite and Shi'ite traditions convey that:

1. Abdullah Ibn Saba appeared during the Caliphate of Imam 'Ali (as), and not during the rule of Uthman as Sayf alleged.
2. Abdullah Ibn Saba did not say that 'Ali is the successor of Prophet (S) as Sayf claimed. Rather he said 'Ali (as) is God.

3. Imam 'Ali (as) burnt him along with all other extremists (al-Ghulat). This is while Sayf does not state such a thing.
4. There is no mention of his existence or his playing a role at the time of Uthman. There is no mention of his agitation against Uthman which ended up with assassination of Uthman as Sayf attributed to Abdullah Ibn Saba.
5. There is no mention of the role of Abdullah Ibn Saba in the battle of Camel as Sayf attributed to him.
6. These traditions do not indicate that any righteous companions of Prophet followed Abdullah Ibn Saba. This is while Sayf maliciously alleged that some of the most faithful pioneers of Islam such as Abu Darr (ra) and Ammar Yasir (ra) were the students of Abdullah Ibn Saba during the reign of Uthman.

Al-Saba'iya And The Multiple Personality Of Ibn Saba

Since pre-Islamic times, the term "Saba'iya" used to indicate those related to Saba son of Yashjub, son of Ya'rub, son of Qahtan; synonymous to "Qahtaniya", also used to be known as "Yamaniya" referencing their place of origin, Yemen.

This group of people (i.e., Saba'iya/Qahtaniya/Yamaniya) in contrast to the "Adnaniya", "Nazariya" and "Mudhariya", which used to refer to relation to Mudhar son of Nazar, son of Adnan, from the sons of Ishmael (as) the son of Abraham (as). There were some allies for each tribe who were under protection of that tribe, and at times they were referred by the name of that tribe.

In general, Arabs trace their roots to one of these two major tribes. When the two tribes joined in Medina to create what became the first Islamic society led by the Prophet(S) (year 0 AH), those related to Qahtan were named al-Ansar (Helpers) who were the residents of Medina at that time; and those from Adnan and their allies who traveled to Medina and were called al-Muhajireen (Immigrants).

The personality Abdullah bin Wahab al-Saba'i, the first leader of al-Khawarij (the group which opposed 'Ali (as) during his rule), was from the first tribe, the Saba'iya or Qahtan above. As the friction increased between the two tribes of Adnan and Qahtan in Medina and Kufa, the Adhanies reportedly used to nickname the Qahtanians by the term Saba'iya.

However, this name-calling was purely tribal and ethnical until the appearance of the work of Sayf Ibn Umar (of Adnan) in the beginning of the second century (AH) during the Umayyad rule, in Kufa. Sayf took the advantage of this purely tribal friction and created the mythical Saba'iya religious entity, with Abdullah Ibn Saba as its leader, altering the meaning of the tribal reference to Qahtan to that of the ill inference attributed to Abdullah Ibn Saba's deviant sect.

To come up with the alleged name of the creator of the sect (Abdullah Ibn Saba), Sayf Ibn Umar either transposed the name Abdullah (bin Wahab) al-Saba'i, described above, to Abdullah Ibn Saba as

appears from reports by al-Ash'ari, al-Sama'ani and al-Maqrizi; or he created the story and invented the name on his own altogether. Either way, there was no strong proof for the existence of Abdullah Ibn Saba during the time of Uthman and 'Ali, except as Abdullah bin Wahab al-Saba'i who was the leader of Khawarij, as mentioned earlier.

One also finds that "Saba'i" tag in persons' names, who belong to the tribes of Qahtan, ceased especially in Iraq, the origin of the fairy tale, after that date. This naming convention then continued throughout the second and third century (AH) in the areas of Yemen, Egypt and Spain, where a number of Sunni Hadith narrators (including some of the narrators of the traditions in six Sunni collections) were labeled Saba'i due to their relation to Saba Ibn Yashjub and not Abdullah Ibn Saba the Jew who created disturbance per Sayf's allegations.

Later as the books of the Tabari and others spread the fairy tale across the land, the naming convention of Saba'i was dropped everywhere. Whence this mention in the books is used to indicate a following to Abdullah Ibn Saba alone, even though they never enjoyed existence outside the covers of those books. The tale evolved over the years to include a multiple of its creator's persona and beliefs.

At the same time, while Abdullah Ibn Saba was Ibn al-Sawda' to the inventor of the tale (Sayf), you find them becoming two separate persons around the 5th century, along with the variation in their news (see "al-Farq" by Abdul-Qahir Ibn Tahir al-Baghdadi). We can delimit these variations in the fifth century onwards, in three personalities:

1. Abdullah bin Wahab al-Saba'i, head of the Khawarij, who opposed Imam 'Ali (as).
2. Abdullah Ibn Saba who established the Saba'iya clan/group which believes in the deity of 'Ali. He and his followers were burnt with fire shortly after.
3. Abdullah Ibn Saba, also known as Ibn al-Sawda' to those who reported from Sayf. He was the creator of the Saba'iya clan/group who believed in successorship to 'Ali, who agitated against Uthman and then they started the war of Jamal (Camel).

The first one existed in reality, and some of the traditions related to Abdullah Ibn Saba actually refer to this man who was the leader of al-Khawarij. For the second person, there are few traditions which were mentioned earlier, yet they were not authenticated by either schools.

The third personage, however, was the imagination of Sayf who perhaps invented it based on the original story he heard about the first and the second persons, and then attaching his own story to them.

Ibn Saba And Shi'a

One should distinguish between those Sunni scholars who reported the story of Abdullah Ibn Saba (either from Sayf's mass production (such as al-Tabari) or otherwise (such as Ibn Hajar)), and those

pseudo-Sunnis who not only reported it, but also declared that Shi'a are the followers of this fictitious character.

It has been proven that those pseudo-scholars (i.e., the second group) who attributed the foundation of Shi'a to Abdullah Ibn Saba were never Sunnis. They were rather the followers of Sunnah of the House of Abu Sufyan and Marwan. This is clear when one observes their tendencies to these two families when they discuss their history.

When these pseudo-scholars want to talk about Imami Shi'a, they use the word of al-Saba'iyyah to undermine the devotion of the followers of the Members of the House of Prophet (S) to Islam, in the same way that they undermine the devotion of a group of Muslims who were killed in the reign of Abu Bakr since they followed what the Messenger of Allah ordered them in distributing the Zakat (alms) among their own poor people and thus did not give it to Abu Bakr.

Yet these mercenary scholars, when talking about those people, they mix them with the issue of Musaylamah who claimed Prophethood, and attribute these martyrs to him, in order to justify shedding their bloods, plundering their wealth and taking their women. But Allah will soon judge between us and them, for He is the best judge.

Such blending of falsehood and truth is not anything new for us when we see in today's world of technology those who see Islam a barrier for their illegitimate interest in the world, accuse Muslims of terrorism, in order to justify shedding their bloods and taking their wealth.

To prepare their agenda, they take advantage of some foolish individual(s) who happened to be Muslim in ID, and who did a violation out of his/their anger. They call devoted Muslims terrorists because a pseudo-Sunni-Muslim blew up the World Trade Center. By that, they follow exactly the footsteps of Sayf Ibn Umar who in turn learnt this great idea from the devil.

Moreover, if they could not find any foolish act from Muslims to cover the media at any period, they pay money to emulate it artificially, and attribute it to the Muslims, much the same way that Sayf Ibn Umar shaped the character of Abdullah Ibn Saba (and most probably invented him by picking up his name at the middle of the night). They do this to provide an excuse for their malicious accusations and their attacks to the whole Muslim world, much the same as what Sayf and his disciples did to the House of Prophet (S).

According to both Shi'a and Sunni scholars, Sayf Ibn Umar was one of those who manipulated the truth and made some fake traditions based on some partial truth. Believing in the existence of Ibn Saba does not mean believing in the stories of Sayf who tried to relate him to Shi'a. The fact is that people like Abdullah Ibn Saba are useless without a story attached to their names. Fake stories around such characters are different than their actual existence. Such a person might be existent while the stories around him might not be.

Sayf's Achievements: An Overview

What follows in this article and the next parts of this series is a comparison between Sayf's stories and others. First I give a general view of achievements of Sayf Ibn Umar:

Sayf was paid to write some stories as a relief for the contradictions and disputes happened in the early history of Islam. Those critical disputes were from year 11 AH (demise of Prophet) till 40 AH. Sayf only focused on that period (11–40 AH) and left the rest.

The first dispute he has talked about is the dispute related the dispatch of the army of Usamah and the death of prophet. The Prophet (S), about four days before his death, ordered all Helpers and all Immigrants except 'Ali to leave Medina, and to go Syria in order to fight with the Romans.

But companions disobeyed and complained about the leadership of Usamah (See Sahih al-Bukhari, Arabic-English version, Traditions numbers 5.552, 5.744 and 5.745) and delayed in joining the camp, and finally returned to Medina, in order to prepare themselves for discussion about successorship as soon as the Messenger of Allah dies. Sayf tried to forge the story to show that there was no delay. Sayf said that after the death of Prophet, when Abu Bakr dispatched the army of Usamah, he said to them:

"March on! May God destroy you by murder and plague!"

Sunni references: History of al-Tabari and History of Ibn Asakir, reported from Sayf, Events of Year 11 AH

This is while other narrators never mentioned such a stupid thing from Abu Bakr. Sayf being a heretic, wanted to make a mockery of Islam as a religion, as well as to please the Caliph of his time.

The next thing he has talked, is about the pavilion of Saqifa. Sayf reported that:

"Ali was in his house when he was told that Abu Bakr had sat to receive the oath of allegiance. So He went out immediately wearing his night shirt only, out of dislike that he might be late. Then He gave the oath of allegiance and sat with Abu Bakr, and then sent for his clothes. When (the clothes) were brought to him, he put them and stayed in (Abu Bakr's) assembly."

Sunni reference: History of al-Tabari, English version, v9, pp 195–196 reported from Sayf Ibn Umar.

This ridiculous report is in clear contradiction with Sahih al-Bukhari where it has been mentioned that Imam 'Ali did NOT give the oath to Abu Bakr for the first six month of his reign (Sahih al- Bukhari, Arabic-English version, Tradition 5.546).

Sayf has told seven stories about Saqifa, and has used three imaginary characters as the companions of prophet who played his scenarios in Saqifa, whose names are not mentioned anywhere else except in the work of those who reported from Sayf himself. He named them: Qa'qa, Mubashshir, and Sakhr.

His main legend is the malicious stories attributed to Abdullah Ibn Saba, by which he had tried to solve the following puzzles:

- Creation of Shi'a
- Problem of exile of Abu Dharr
- Murder of Uthman
- The War of Jamal (Camel)

Sayf has also maliciously tried to link the forged stories of Abdullah Ibn Saba to the Shi'a Imam 'Ali (as) which shows he did not know too much about Shi'a, otherwise he would not have attributed some of the beliefs which are not held by the followers of the members of the house of Prophet.

Insha Allah, in the next parts, I will analyze the fictitious story of Abdullah Ibn Saba in comparison with the other Sunni reports.

I should mention that al-Askari had a very distinguished achievement. He proved beyond any doubt, in his book named "Abdullah Ibn Saba and Other Myths", that Ibn Saba _with_ such achievements never existed, and that he was invented by Sayf Ibn Umar. If there was any Abdullah Ibn Saba at that time, his story was much different than what Sayf manipulated.

For brothers and sisters who like to know more about the business of Abdullah Ibn Saba and his fictitious character, I introduce the following two interesting books, in English, which can be ordered immediately:

1- "Abdullah Ibn Saba and Other Myths,"(English) by al-Askari, S. M.

To order, send \$15.00 to:

al-Khoei Foundation Library,
89-89 Van Wyck Expressway,
Jamaica, NY 11435-4123 U.S.A.

Unfortunately only first volume, out of four volumes of this book is available in English which still gives enough information, however the rest are available in Arabic. The second two volumes in Arabic are separately named "One Hundred Fifty Companions".

2- "The Shiites Under Attack,"(English) by Chirri, M. J.

To order, send \$8.00 to:

Muhammad Javad Chirri,
The Islamic Center of America,
15571 Joy Road,
Detroit, MI 48228 U.S.A.

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