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Introduction: The tale of 'Abdullah bin Saba'

In His Glorious Name

The historians say that a Jew called 'Abdullah Bin Saba[ؓ] was converted to Islam at the time of 'Othman the Caliph, in order to fulfill his aims at peace by making enemies within the Muslim community.

This 'Abdullah Bin Saba[ؓ] spread the following ideas among Muslims.

- a) The resurrection of the Prophet.
- b) All Prophets have had successors — the successor of the Prophet Muhammad is 'Ali, his cousin and son-in-law. He has been deprived of his divine office by 'Othman the Caliph, and therefore it is necessary to revolt against 'Othman in favor of 'Ali.

'Abdullah Bin Saba[ؓ] formed a party called Saba[ؓ]ia, and this party rioted and killed 'Othman, the third Caliph. They also made mischief between the armies of 'Ali and Talha, his enemy, during the time when peace negotiations were expected at the battle of Jamal near Basra.

The Sabaia who were enrolled in both armies, fired shots one early morning, without waiting for any order from the commandants, and thus they started the war. Therefore, this Jew was the real cause of all these mischief's and wars among Muslims, and he is the man who spread the idea of resurrection of the Prophet Muhammad, and the idea of 'Ali being the successor of the Prophet among the Muslims.

The Origin of the Story

The tale of 'Abdullah Bin Saba[ؓ] is over twelve centuries old. Historians and writers, one after the other recorded it, adding more and more to it.

All historians agree that the story was told first of all by Saif.

The following historians recorded directly from Saif:—

- 1) Tabari.
- 2) Dhahabi — He has also cited from Tabari.
- 3) Ibn Abi Baker — He has also recorded from Ibn Athir 15, who has recorded from Tabari.
- 4) Ibn ‘Asaker.

The following have recorded indirectly from Saif:–

- 5) Nicholson from Tabari 2.
- 6) Encyclopedia of Islam from Tabari 2.
- 7) Van Floton from Tabari 2.
- 8) Wellhauzen from Tabari 2.
- 9) Mirkhand from Tabari 2.
- 10) Ahmad Amin from Tabari 2, and from Wellhauzen.
- 11) Farid Wajdi from Tabari 2.
- 12) Hasan Ibrahim from Tabari 2.
- 13) Sa‘eed Afghani from Tabari 2, and from Ibn Abi Baker 3, Ibn ‘Asaker 4, and Ibn Badran 21.
- 14) Ibn Khaldoun from Tabari 2.
- 15) Ibn Athir from Tabari 2.
- 16) Ibn Kathir from Tabari 2.
- 17) Donaldson from Nicholson 5 and Encyclopedia 6.
- 18) Ghiathud Din from Mirkhand 9.
- 19) Abulfeda from Ibn Athir 15.
- 20) Rashid Reza from Ibn Athir 15.
- 21) Ibn Badran from Ibn ‘Asaker 4.
- 22) Bostani from Ibn Kathir 16.

The above list gives evidence to the fact that the story of ‘Abdullah Bin Saba has been started by Saif

and cited primarily from Tabari. Therefore, Saif's character and history should be studied and analyzed with great care.

Who is Saif?

(Short Biography)

Saif Bin 'Omar Tamimi lived in the second century of the Muslim era (8th century A.D.) and died after the year 170

H.L. (750 A.D.). He wrote two books.

1. al-Fotouh wal Reddah which is the history of the period before the death of the Prophet until the third Caliph 'Othman resumed office as the ruler of Muslim world.
2. al-Jamal wa Maseer 'Ayesha wa 'Ali which is the history from the murder of 'Othman to the battle of Jamal. These two books contain more fiction than truth; some forged stories, and some true event which, intentionally, have been recorded in a ridiculing manner.

Since Saif spoke of some of the companions of the Prophet, and also invented some, his stories have affected the history of early Islam. Some biographers such as the authors of Osdulghabah, Esti'ab and Esabah and geographers such as the authors of Mo'jamul Boldan and Alrowzolme'tar have written the lives of some companions of the Prophet, and named places which exist only in the books written by Saif. Because of this, the life and character of Saif must be investigated thoroughly and carefully.

The result of the investigation into Saif's life shows that Saif was an agnostic and an unreliable story teller. Stories told by him are dubious and are entirely or partly forged.

The following are some stories told by him.

1. The Army of Osama

The Prophet prepared an army to be sent to Syria. The commander of this army was Osama. Before the last column of the army left the moat (city limits) of Medina, the Prophet died. Osama sear 'Omar to get the approval of Abu Bakr the successor of the Prophet. 'Omar also carried a message from some of the helpers (Ansar) suggesting that commandant Osama be changed. Abu Bakr heard the message, jumped up, and grabbed 'Omar by his beard, insulted him by saying, "The Prophet made Osama the commandant. I will not change him." He ordered the immediate dispatch , of the army and cursed saying, " A plague on you."

Other historians of the time have recorded this event differently.

2. Saqifa, pavilion of Bani Sa'edah

On the very day that the Prophet died, says Saif, all the Mohajerin supported Abu Bakr as being the successor to the Prophet, except those who renounced Islam. The news of the election of Abu Bakr so excited 'Ali that he came in, wearing his shirt only. He shook hands in friendship with Abu Bakr and later on when his clothes were brought and he had put them on, he sat down beside Abu Bakr. Saif continues, saying that Abu Bakr claimed to have a devil in his soul and that Muslims must watch him, and prevent his doing injustice.

Saif told seven stories about Saqifa. There were three heroes in these stories, included among the companions of the Prophet. Their names are not mentioned anywhere except in Saif's stories. This peculiarity makes one think, and suspect

the truth of the stories. When reliable books, accepted by Sunni leaders are consulted, the deviation from the truth by Saif, in recording the events of Saqifa, can be readily detected.

The Story of the Pavilion of Bani Sa'edah according to authentic sources

On his deathbed, the Prophet Muhammad wished to make a will. 'Omar opposed this, and later he made threats against the people if they dared to spread the news of the Prophet's death until Abu Bakr arrived. Then suddenly 'Omar

became quiet. While the family of the Prophet were busy with funeral rites, Ansar party gathered in a pavilion to elect Sa'd Bin 'Obada as the Prophet's successor. 'Omar, Abu Bakr and their friends rushed to the pavilion joining in the meeting.

Finally the election was won in favor of Abu Bakr. The crowd then went to the mosque to swear the allegiance of all Muslims to Abu Bakr. All this time the body of the Prophet was laid in his house and only the family of the Prophet and one member of Ansar party were present.

After the allegiance to Abu Bakr, at the pavilion and the mosque, was over the people went to the house of the Prophet and joined the funeral prayers. The body of the Prophet lay on his deathbed from Monday midday until Tuesday midnight when his burial took place.

Only the family of the Prophet attended the funeral. al- Imam 'Ali and Bani Hashim (the cousins of Muhammad) did not give their consent to the election of Abu Bakr as the Prophet's successor, and sought refuge in the house of Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet.

'Omar went to the house to take them to the mosque to give allegiance to Abu Bakr. But they refused to support Abu Bakr in Fatimah's life time. After

six months 'Ali and Bani Hashim finally gave their con-sent, and their allegiance after Fatimah died.

All the above events, judgment on them by Bin 'Abbas, Abu Dharr, Megdad, Abu Sufyan, Mo'awiah and 'Omar Bin Khattab, a summary of the life of Sa'd Bin 'Obada in his old age, and a comparison between the recording of Saif and those from reliable sources, are collected in this present book.

It shows how Saif wrote the biographies of the companions of the Prophet to please the government of the day and to suit the sentiments of the common people. Saif forged to evidence support and safeguard his views, in order to ridicule Islamic history. For many centuries Saif's stories have been regarded as the history of Islam.

It is time to disclose the sources of these untrue stories by Saif and his kind, in order to show Islam as it really is, by studying true stories about Muhammad, his family and companions. We should not defend Saif and his tales, or protect them in the name of Islamic tradition. Otherwise we will harm Islam by opposing the publicity of Islamic truth.

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