

SAQIFAH- A SUNNI VIEW

Posted by answersforshiafriend on January 5, 2010

Source: www.ahlelbayt.com

Shia says

“Abu Bakr and Umar conspired to steal the Caliphate from Imam Ali (A.S.). After the Prophet’s death, these two fools rushed to Saqifah in order to quickly bring Abu Bakr to power in a coup d’état against the Ahlul Bayt. Meanwhile, Imam Ali (A.S.) was unable to attend the meeting in Saqifah because he was too busy attending the funeral of the Prophet (S.A.W.). And yet, Abu Bakr and Umar did not even have the decency to attend the Prophet’s funeral and instead were so greedy that they used that time to declare Abu Bakr the Caliph. How can you follow such people who are so greedy and power hungry that they didn’t even attend the funeral of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and instead used that time to aggrandize themselves?

”

The matter was not at all as our Shia brothers say. The Shaikhayn (Abu Bakr and Umar) did not at all intend to steal the Caliphate, nor did they miss out on the Prophet’s funeral. Let us now narrate the story of Saqifah...

Grief Over the Prophet’s Death

The Prophet’s death sent shock waves of grief throughout the Muslim Ummah. We read:

The tragic news (of the Prophet’s death) was soon known by everybody in Medinah. Dark grief spread on all areas and horizons of Medinah...Umar was so stunned (by grief) that he almost loss consciousness.

(Ar-Raheequl Makhtum, p.559)

Umar's love for the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) was so great that he was in denial, the first stage of grief. The American Psychiatric Association (AMA) states in "Grief Counseling":

The first stage of grief is denial of the loss...The thought of permanent loss is so painful that persons deny their loss in order to avoid facing the painful feelings. Denial of loss causes a flight from reality. Parkes et al. state that persons in denial may (thereby psychologically) minimize their loss...

Often the bereaved refuse to face the reality of the loss, and may go through a process of not believing, and pretending that the person is not really dead...This denial can take several forms: Denying the facts of the loss. The bereaved may manifest symptoms that range from slight reality distortions to full blown delusions. There may be attempts to keep the body in the house, retaining possessions ready for use when the deceased returns, or keeping the room of the deceased untouched for years...

The bereaved may invent stories, sometimes so complex as to be bizarre, to explain away the deceased's absence...in spite of having seen the deceased's body with one's own eyes...[we would] intuitively assume that the bereaved would affirm the loss on seeing the deceased's body or attending the funeral; however, this is not the case: the distortions of reality can sometimes become firmer with such "evidence." This paradoxical effect is believed to be a result of the intensely emotional and traumatizing nature of such "evidence" (i.e. seeing the dead body) which causes the bereaved to have a flight from reality as a defense mechanism...

The bereaved may at first seem to accept the news of a loved one's death, but later this may not be the case after having viewed the body (especially if the body is mangled, etc.) or attending the funeral...the more emotional and traumatic the experience, the higher the likelihood...of a flight from reality...

Such people will reject, often violently, any others who seek to affirm the loss that the patient has denied...Anger is a grief reaction commonly associated with denial, usually directed towards the harbinger of the news of the loss as well as those who seek to affirm the loss or those who reject the denial...these people require careful and appropriate grief counseling...

(Grief Counseling, American Psychiatric Association)

Our Shia brothers often bring up Umar's denial as some sort of proof against him, but if anything, it serves as a strong proof that Umar (عنه الله رضى) loved the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) so deeply that he could not face this loss of his loved one. And so, it was in the first stage of grief that Umar (عنه الله رضى) reportedly said in a state of great emotion:

“By Allah, he (the Prophet) is not dead but has gone to his Lord as Musa bin Imran went and remained hidden from his people for forty days. Musa returned after it was said that he had died. By Allah, the Messenger of Allah will (likewise) come back and he will cut off the hands and legs of those who claim his death.”

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.9, p.184)

As for Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى), he was in his home when he heard of the Prophet's death, and immediately upon hearing this tragic news, he head towards the Prophet's Mosque in haste. We read:

Abu Bakr came from his house at As-Sunh on a horse. He dismounted and entered the (Prophet's) Mosque, but did not speak to the people till he entered upon Aisha and went straight to Allah's Apostle who was covered with Hibra cloth (i.e. a kind of Yemeni cloth). He then uncovered the Prophet's face and bowed over him and kissed him and wept, saying, “Let my father and mother be sacrificed for you...”

(Sahih Bukhari: Volume 5, Book 59, Number 733)

And in another Hadith, we read:

Abu Bakr kissed the Prophet after his death.

(Sahih Bukhari: Volume 5, Book 59, Number 734)

So quite contrary to the callous and diabolic view that the Shia are portraying, Abu Bakr's first action was not at all to rush for the Caliphate, but rather he made haste to visit the Prophet's body. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) was deeply affected by the Prophet's death, so much so that he broke down in tears whilst kissing the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى). Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) then reassured the Muslims:

“To proceed, if anyone amongst you used to worship Muhammad, then Muhammad is dead, but if (anyone of) you used to worship Allah, then Allah is Alive and shall never die! Allah said: ‘Muhammad is no more than an Apostle, and indeed (many) apostles have passed away before him...(till the end of the Verse)...Allah will reward those who are thankful.’ (Quran, 3:144)”

(Sahih Bukhari: Volume 5, Book 59, Number 733)

Ibn Abbas (عنه الله رضى) said:

“By Allah, it was as if the people never knew that Allah had revealed this Verse before till Abu Bakr recited it and all the people received it from him, and I heard everybody reciting it (then).”

(Sahih Bukhari: Volume 5, Book 59, Number 733)

Umar (عنه الله رضى) said:

“By Allah, when I heard Abu Bakr reciting it, my legs could not support me and I fell down at the very moment of hearing him reciting it, declaring that the Prophet had died.”

(Sahih Bukhari: Volume 5, Book 59, Number 733)

So great was Umar's love for the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) that he fell down in grief when Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) made him come to terms with the reality.

News of a National Emergency

Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and Umar (عنه الله رضی) stayed by the Prophet's body. In some time, however, a man by the name of Mughirah bin Shubah (عنه الله رضی) approached Umar (عنه الله رضی) and notified him of an impending emergency. Answering-Ansar quoted the following in their article:

It is related by Umar that as they were seated in the Prophet's house, a man cried out all of a sudden from outside: "O Son of Khattab (i.e. Umar), pray step out for a moment." Umar told him to leave them alone and go away as they were busy in making arrangements for the burial of the Prophet. The man replied that an incident had occurred: the Ansar were gathering in force at Saqifah Bani Sa'idah, and—as the situation was grave—it was necessary that he (Umar) should go and look into the matter lest the Ansar should do something which would lead to a (civil) war. On this, Umar said to Abu Bakr: "Let us go."

(Al Faruq, by Allamah Shibli Numani, Vol 1, p.87)

Based on what the Shia have quoted on their very own website, we see that the matter was not at all as our Shia brothers portray. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and Umar (عنه الله رضی) were devastated by the Prophet's death and they wanted very much to stay with the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى). In fact, "Umar told him to leave them alone and go away as they were busy in making arrangements for the burial of the Prophet." Umar (عنه الله رضی) was only convinced when the man said that the Ansar were about to do something that would lead to a civil war. Likewise, when Umar (عنه الله رضی) first informed Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) that they must head out towards Saqifah, Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) refused to come out and disregarded Umar (عنه الله رضی); it was only when Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) was convinced of the dire situation that he was able to pull himself away from the Prophet's side. We read:

Umar learned of this (i.e. the gathering of the Ansar at Saqifah) and went to the Prophet's house and sent (a message) to Abu Bakr, who was in the building...[Umar] sent a message to Abu Bakr to come to him. Abu Bakr sent back (a message) that he was occupied (i.e. with caring for the Prophet's body), but Umar sent him another message, saying: "Something (terrible) has happened that you must attend to personally." So he (Abu Bakr) came out to him...

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.10, p.3)

The Shaikhayn very much wanted to stay with the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) throughout his funeral, and they were only persuaded to come out because of the warnings of a third man who implored upon them to save the Ummah from civil war. The Ansar were about to declare their own Caliph by force of arms, ready to declare war on any tribe that denied their leadership. The Ansar had adopted a most belligerent attitude and were prepared to declare war; it is this precarious situation that the Shaikhayn sought to diffuse peaceably. We read:

(The) Ansar said: "In case they reject our Caliph, we shall drive them out from Al-Medinah at the point of our swords." However, the few Muhajirs in the assembly protested against this attitude and this led to a dispute and disorder of a serious nature and a war between the Muhajirs and Ansars seemed possible. When the situation took this ugly turn, Mughirah ibn Shubah left the trouble spot and came to the Prophet's Mosque to relate what was going on in Saqifah Banu Sa'idah.

(Tareekh Al-Islam, Vol.1, p.273-274)

Sometimes our Shia brothers fail to realize (or rather, insist on not understanding) how volatile the situation was: the Ansar were ready to elect their own man and declare war on any tribe which rejected their leader, and some of the Ansar were even ready to wage war on the Muhajirs. The Ansar had adopted a very belligerent attitude, and Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and Umar (عنه الله رضی) therefore went as peace-makers and conflict resolvers, to prevent the Ansar from placing themselves at loggerheads with the rest of Arabia.

The Ansar were about to nominate Saad ibn Ubaadah (عنه الله رضی) as Caliph. During the Islamic conquest of Mecca, the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) had given the standard to Saad (عنه الله رضی). However, when the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) saw Saad's belligerent attitude towards the Quraish, he (the Prophet) took the standard away. Shaykh Mufid, the classical Shia scholar of the tenth century, writes:

When the Apostle of Allah ordered Saad ibn Ubaadah to enter Mecca carrying the standard, he (Saad) became aggressive towards the people and showed the anger he felt against them. He entered Mecca shouting: "Today is the day of slaughter, the day of capturing any daughter."

Al-Abbas heard him and asked the Prophet: “Haven’t you heard what Saad ibn Ubaadah is saying? I am afraid that he will attack Quraish fiercely.”

(Kitab al-Irshad, by Shaykh Mufid, p.92)

Upon this, the Prophet (ﷺ) took the standard away from Saad (رضي الله عنه) and gave it to one of the Muhajirs, thereby averting a possible “dispute between the Ansar and the Emigrants (Muhajirs).” (Kitab al-Irshad, p.92) It is clear from this that Saad ibn Ubaadah (رضي الله عنه) had a very militant attitude towards the Muhajirs and Quraish in general. He was ready to fight them, and the establishment of his Caliphate would have led to civil war. It was for this reason—Saad’s condescending attitude towards the Meccans—that the Prophet (ﷺ) stripped him of the standard and it was also the reason that the Shaikhayn rushed to prevent him from declaring his Caliphate. If Saad (رضي الله عنه) were to declare his Caliphate, the Muhajirs would protest his nomination on the grounds of his attitude towards them, one of untoward hostility. The Muhajirs would then rush to nominate their own Caliph, and the Ummah would thus be splintered into two rivaling nation-states.

Furthermore, if the Ansar declared their own Caliphate, then nothing would prevent other tribes—not only the Meccans but others—from similarly declaring their own leaders, which would result in a civil war between all the rivaling claimants to the Caliphate. When Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) and Umar (رضي الله عنه) set out for Saqifah, they did so with no intention of seeking the Caliphate for themselves but rather only to prevent the Ansar from doing so by force of arms. The Shaikhayn went as peace-keepers in order to soften the militant attitude adopted by some of the Ansar. The Ansar were pushing the Ummah towards a civil war that could rip apart the nascent Ummah to shreds and lay waste to all the hard work of the Prophet (ﷺ), who had spent his sweat and blood to unify the ranks of the Muslims.

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) and Umar (رضي الله عنه) took along with them Abu Ubaidah (رضي الله عنه), another Muhajir. These three Sahabah were from amongst the Ashara Mubash Shararah (i.e. the Ten Companions promised Paradise by the Prophet), and it was hoped that the influence of these three great personalities could avert a civil war and disaster. In times of national crisis, the leaders of a country must become strong and steadfast in order to deal with pressing matters of state, and they cannot allow personal woes and feelings to hamper or hinder their effectiveness; if the Prophet (ﷺ) were alive, he would not want Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) and Umar (رضي الله عنه) to dilly-dally but rather he would indeed want them to act swiftly to save the Muslim Ummah, which would be the best way to honor the memory of the Prophet (ﷺ).

We read:

So the two of them (Abu Bakr and Umar) hurried toward them (the Ansar); they met Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah (on the way), and the three of them marched towards them (the Ansar).

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.10, p.3)

Umar (عنه الله رضى) said:

I told Abu Bakr that we should go to our brothers, the Ansar, so we went off to go to them, when two honest fellows met us (on the way) and told us of the conclusion the people (the Ansar) had come to (i.e. to declare their own Caliph). They (the two honest fellows) asked us where we were going, and when we told them, they said that there was no need for us to approach them and we must make our own decision (i.e. elect our own Muhajir Caliph).

(Ibn Ishaq, Seerah Rasool-Allah, p.685)

What he meant by this was what some of the Ansar had said earlier, namely:

“Let us have a leader from amongst ourselves, and you (Quraish) a leader from amongst yourselves.”

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.10, p.3)

Of course, the Shaikhayn and Abu Ubaidah (عنه الله رضى) were wise enough to know that this would reduce the Muslim union into nothing but disjointed and warring fiefdoms led by rivaling warlords. The Shaikhayn would in their respective Caliphates transform the Muslim state into a powerful empire that would propel the Muslims to greatness. These two men not only saved Islam from extinction (i.e. at Saqifah) but expanded the Islamic world far and wide, ensuring a unified and stable Muslim empire, an accomplishment which all Muslims worldwide should thank them for.

Why Ali (عنه الله رضی) Stayed Behind

Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and Umar (عنه الله رضی) did not take along Ali (عنه الله رضی) and Zubair (عنه الله رضی) because they were immediate relatives of the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) and it would not be fitting to bother them with such a matter during their time of grief. We read in an authentic Hadith:

“A person’s family and relatives are the ones responsible for arranging his burial.”

(Sunan Abu Dawood, Vol. 2, Page 102)

We read:

Now Ali ibn Abi Talib was working busily preparing the Apostle (for burial), so Umar sent a message to Abu Bakr (instead)...

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.10, p.3)

We read further:

(They) left Ali and others (close relatives) to make arrangements for the burial of the Prophet.

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, p.274)

It should be noted that Umar (عنه الله رضی) mentioned in detail during his Caliphate that Abu Bakr (رضی عنه الله) went to Saqifah only in order to caution the Ansar against taking any action that would spark a civil war. When Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) left for Saqifah, he had no intention whatsoever of becoming Caliph himself; had this been the case, then surely Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) would have brought along

more than two of his supporters. Surely, if what our Shia brothers portray is true, then shouldn't Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي) have brought with him a whole mass of his supporters and friends? Instead, he went with only two Companions to a large group of the Ansar. At Saqifah, there were thus only three Muhajirs who were far outnumbered by the Ansar. This would be a less than ideal situation for a Muhajir like Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي): Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي) would have only two supporters whereas Saad ibn Ubaadah (عنه الله رضي) had a whole gathering of Ansar to back him! Common sense dictates that if Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي) and Umar (عنه الله رضي) had conspired to take the Caliphate for themselves, then surely they would have brought along with them more Muhajir friends of theirs.

This fact cannot be stressed enough, as it completely vindicates Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي) and Umar (عنه الله رضي) of all suspicion. These two men were so unaware of such a happening that they went to Saqifah with no more than one man with them! Had they desired to take the Caliphate, then what prevented them from taking along with them a strong group of their supporters? Why did they not take along Uthman bin Affan (عنه الله رضي), Khalid bin Waleed (عنه الله رضي), Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan (عنه الله رضي), etc? If this was a coup d'état as the Shia claim, then it had to be the worst planned operation ever in the history of humanity. The Ansar were the great majority at Saqifah and they were ready to pledge Baya'ah to one of their own men; if Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي) wanted to further his own claim to the Caliphate, he should have brought enough of his supporters to overwhelm the Ansar. Instead, he came with only two Companions. Indeed, it was not a grab for power at all, but rather Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي), Umar (عنه الله رضي), and Abu Ubaidah (عنه الله رضي) set out only to counsel the Ansar, hoping that their veteran status would straighten out the Ansar.

The reality is that it is not right to complain about how Ali (عنه الله رضي) was not taken along to Saqifah. How can anyone complain of this when the Shaikhayn did not even bring along their closest friends and supporters? Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي) and Umar (عنه الله رضي) didn't find the need to bring along Ali (عنه الله رضي)—or any of the other Muhajir Sahabah, for that matter—because they had no idea whatsoever that an election would take place. Instead, they went only to prevent the Ansar from electing their own leader: it was well-known that if the Ansar announced themselves the leaders, then the other tribes would fail to recognize them, declare their own leader, and fall into civil war.

What the Shia criticize the Shaikhayn for is actually something these two noble men should be praised for: Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي) and Umar (عنه الله رضي) were showing softness and sensitivity towards Ali (عنه الله رضي), allowing him to grieve for his loved one without having to worry about the fate of the Muslim Ummah. An analogy of this is a man whose father dies and so his employee/colleague shoulders his work load for a time so that the man can go to his father's funeral without any other extra worries or burdens to think about. And so it was that Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضي), Umar (عنه الله رضي), and Abu Ubaidah (عنه الله رضي) head out towards Saqifah—despite their grief over the Prophet's death—to deal with a major

problem, and to prevent the nascent Islamic state from collapsing into nothingness. Indeed, these three men did single-handedly save Islam and prevent a great Fitnah.

The Ansar-Muhajir Divide

The two major groups of the early Islamic movement were the Muhajirs (Emigrants of Mecca) and the Ansars (Helpers of Medinah). After the Prophet's death, the question arose as to which group would be granted the Caliphate. There were two considerations: (1) the religious and spiritual issues, as well as (2) the practical and socio-political issues.

The Religious and Spiritual Issues

As far as religion and spirituality were concerned, the Muhajirs were the more rightful candidates for the Caliphate based on the fact that they were the first to convert to Islam, they had struggled and sacrificed more for Islam, and most of the seasoned Sahabah were from amongst the Muhajirs. Naturally, since they had been in the folds of Islam for a longer time, they had acquired more deeds of merit than the Ansar, and so they were the ones who deserved the Caliphate. No group surpassed the Muhajirs in good deeds and service to Islam. It should be understood that from a religious and doctrinal point of view, it was the merits of the Muhajirs (i.e. their service, sacrifice, and good deeds for Islam)—not their lineage—that granted them the right to Caliphate. However, in addition to this, there were many practical and socio-political reasons that the leadership should remain from amongst the Muhajirs, due to the fact that they were from the tribe of Quraish. Nonetheless, these should not at all be confused for religious and spiritual reasons. When Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) debated with the Ansar, the perceptive reader will note that Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) himself appreciated this difference. He himself only furthered the religious and spiritual arguments (i.e. the merits of the Muhajirs), and he only mentioned the practical and socio-political arguments (i.e. the position of the Quraish) as the views held by the general public, not by himself; the latter were important only insofar as maintaining the unity of the fledgling Muslim empire. This distinction—between religious and socio-political reasons—is important to understand.

Practical and Socio-Political Issues

In the times of Jahiliyyah before the advent of Islam, Arabia consisted of various independent and sovereign city-states. Although they were not united as one nation, the Arabs did nonetheless recognize

Mecca as the center and helm of Arabia. The Quraish of Mecca had become very powerful and influential due to the fact that they took care of the Ka'abah: the Arabs from all over would pay the Quraish to have them house their gods. Because of this special honor, the Quraish of Mecca were generally honored by all the other tribes and operated as the United Nations (UN) of Arabia. Meanwhile, whereas the sanctuary in Mecca was off limits to fighting and warfare, the rest of Pre-Islamic Arabia was steeped in violence from incessant tribal warfare and in-fighting.

This changed with the advent of Prophet Muhammad (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) who united all the various tribes together under the banner of Islam. It was the Prophet's powerful personality which brought peace to the warring factions. First, the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) united the Aws and the Khazraj of Yathrib (i.e. Medinah), who had been locked into a hundred year long war. These two tribes agreed to make the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) their arbiter and broker of peace. This unity between the Aws and Khazraj bolstered the strength and prestige of Medinah in the eyes of Arabia. Even so, the various tribes of Arabia still recognized the Quraish of Mecca to be the leaders of Arabia; when the Quraish polytheists declared a state of hostility with Medinah, the rest of Arabia joined suit and collectively came to be known as the Confederates.

It was based on this situation that the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) and the Sahabah realized that Mecca was the key to ruling Arabia. Until Mecca was not conquered, the Muslims would never be recognized as the leaders of Arabia. It was for this reason that the Muslim armies marched out against Mecca and conquered it; and without fail, as soon as Mecca was converted to a land of Islam, the neighboring tribes of all of Arabia paid tribute to the supremacy of the Islamic state. Tribe after tribe then converted to Islam, and the Muslims were recognized as the new leaders of Arabia. It was only after Mecca was conquered by the Muslims—and the tribe of Quraish, the unwritten leaders of Arabia, converted en masse to Islam—that the people of Arabia were willing to accept the supremacy of Islam under the leadership of a Prophet from the tribe of Quraish. We read:

The conquest of Mecca was considered the most serious advantage achieved by Muslims during those years, for it affected the course of events and consequently affected the Arabs' whole life [sic]...for the tribe of Quraish, at that time, were in the eyes of Arabs the defenders and helpers of (all of the) Arabs. Other Arabs were only (considered) their subordinates. The submission of the Quraish (to Islam) is, therefore, estimated to be a final elimination of paganism in the Arabian Peninsula...(after which) people began to convert to Islam in very large numbers.

(Ar-Raheequl Makhtum, p.474)

We read further:

The destruction of idols installed in the Ka'abah meant the destruction of the idols all over Arabia. Likewise, the entry of the Quraish into Islam implied the whole of Arabia coming to the fold of Islam, for all eyes were fixed on the Quraish of Mecca to see whether they accepted Islam or not.

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, pp.223-224)

Historians agree that—due to the socio-political structure of that time—the Arabians would have rejected Prophet Muhammad (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) had he come from a weak tribe, and it was only because he was from the leading tribe of the Quraish that they accepted him. This is not at all a strange concept: if today the Micronesian ambassador tried pushing legislation through the United Nations, no other country would feel compelled to accept it. However, if the American ambassador adopted such a legislation, then all the countries of the world would comply. In other words, the United States—by one way or the other—is seen as the leader, and the countries of the world would accept an American leader, not a Micronesian one.

When Prophet Muhammad (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) had been ex-communicated from the leaders of the Quraish and banished to Medinah, the tribes of Arabia rejected the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) and his Message. When Prophet Muhammad (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) converted the tribe of Quraish to Islam and became their leader, then all of the tribes of Arabia recognized him. The Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) used this position of prestige to infuse the spirit of Islamic brotherhood throughout the land; he warned against tribal affiliation and Assabiyyah, uniting all of Arabia under one banner.

However, after the Prophet's death, the unity of the Ummah—that the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) had worked so hard to achieve—was in a state of great peril. A power vacuum was created, and each of the various factions were vying for the position of power, a situation that no doubt was threatening to tear up into pieces the nascent Islamic state. Sir John Glubb says: "Mohammed was not dead an hour before the struggle for power threatened to rend Islam into rival factions."

The Ansar of Medinah were planning on declaring themselves the leaders of the Muslim state, and this is how the gathering at Saqifah began. There was a great fear that if the Ansar declared their own man

to be the Caliph, then the tribes of Arabia would reject them as being inferior and unfit to rule. Most of these tribes had converted to Islam after the conquest of Mecca. Before the Islamic conquest of Mecca, these Arab tribes had submitted to the leadership of the Meccan Quraish; after the Islamic conquest of Mecca, these Arab tribes continued to submit to the same Meccan Quraish who were now Muslim. If, however, the leadership were to suddenly switch to Medinah—and if the Ansar declared their own man to be Caliph—then nothing prevented these other Arab tribes from similarly declaring their own leaders. The Ansar themselves knew this and they were satisfied with this idea that every tribe have their own leader, but Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and Umar (عنه الله رضی) knew that this would be unacceptable for the Muslims to become disunited after they had been once united under the banner of Islam. Allah Almighty says:

“And hold fast, all of you together, by the Rope of Allah and be not divided amongst yourselves.”

(Quran, 3:103)

Worse still was the fact that after the Prophet’s death, many of the new converts to Islam apostasized; without the powerful leader of Muhammad (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى), entire tribes renounced Islam and slipped back into Kufr (disbelief). Allah Almighty warned of this in the Quran:

“And Muhammad is no more than a messenger; many were messengers that have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed will you turn back upon your heels? And whoever turns back upon his heels, he will by no means do harm to Allah in the least but Allah will reward the grateful.”

(Quran, 3:144)

It was in this precarious situation that the Ummah needed a strong and capable leader to quickly replace the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) before the various groups split apart in complete disarray and utter chaos. It was in this atmosphere that the people needed to declare a Caliph posthaste in order to quell any rebellion. We read:

Amir asked: “When was the oath of allegiance given to Abu Bakr?”

“The very day the Messenger of Allah died,” he (Saeed) replied. “People disliked to be left even part of the day without being organized into a community (jama’ah).”

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.1, p.195)

And this new leader could not at all come from a weak and unpopular tribe, because the Arabians would definitely not have accepted him as a leader; such a thing would have resulted in all out rebellion and collapse of the Muslim union. What the Muslims needed was a candidate from a powerful and popular tribe with mass appeal that could secure the vote from all of the other tribes.

The Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) himself recognized the dynamics of Arabia at the time. He knew that his successor must come from the tribe of Quraish; he knew that if the Caliph was an Ansar, then this would have been the end of the Islamic empire. The Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) respected the right of the people to decide for themselves who would be their Caliph; to impose upon them someone that the vast majority of the people reject would not at all be just. The Arabian and Islamic tradition was established that among the various groups present, only that group assumed the political authority which enjoyed the confidence of the majority of the people. At the time of the Prophet’s death, this was the Quraish (i.e. Muhajirs) of Mecca and not the Ansar (i.e. Aws and Khazraj) of Medinah.

It should be noted that the Prophet (وَسَلَّمَ وَآلَهُ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى) was not at all being racist or discriminatory. But rather, he was applying the principles of self-determination and popular sovereignty that are accepted today by international law. To give a proper analogy: the former USSR was made up of many republics, including Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Armenia, etc. Of these, Russia is the most dominant. Would it be fair to impose an Armenian on the masses when they would not recognize him? Surely not! It would only be fair and just for a Russian to be the leader of the USSR because only he would be accepted by the vast majority of the people. Likewise, in Islamic Law, the leader must be accepted by the masses who pledge their Baya’ah to him; if the masses do not pledge their Baya’ah to a person, then he cannot be Caliph over them as that would be tyranny. Qadhi Abu Ya’la al-Farra al-Hanbali states in his Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah: “Caliphate is not established merely with the appointment of the Caliph, rather it requires (after the former Caliph’s death), the approval of the Muslim Ummah.” (al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah, p. 9)

Ghamidi says:

After the general acceptance of faith by the Arab masses, they (Quraish) enjoyed the same confidence of the people and they were the influentials of the Arabs as they were in the Pre-Islamic era. Hence, elections were not needed to confirm this reality. There was there no room for a difference of opinion in the fact that the Quraish had the popular support of the masses behind them and that no tribe could challenge this position of theirs. There is no doubt that as far as Medinah was concerned, the Ansar under Saad ibn Ubaadah and Saad ibn Muadh, the respective leaders of the Aws and Khazraj, had more influence among the local population...Had the Islamic State been confined only to Medinah, it can be said with certainty that after the Prophet, they (the Ansar) would have assumed political authority. But after the conquest of Mecca, when a large number of Arabs of other territories accepted Islam, the political scene changed drastically. The extent of confidence commanded by the Muhajirs of the Quraish far surpassed that of the Ansar.

It was based on this principle of popular sovereignty and self-determination—and not Assabiyyah (tribalism/bigotry)—that the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered that a man of the Quraish tribe become the first Caliph. The Prophet (ﷺ) was not at all saying that the Quraish were superior based on their lineage, and in fact, the Prophet (ﷺ) warned against such Assabiyyah (tribalism/bigotry) in multiple Hadith. Instead, the Prophet (ﷺ) was merely saying that the Quraish were fit to be the rulers because they commanded the support of the masses of Arabia. Furthermore, and this point cannot be stressed enough, it was the Quraish who had been for hundreds of years managing the affairs of Arabia. They had thus developed the skills set and capability to lead, whereas other tribes did not have such experience and were thus not capable to take on a position of leadership. To suddenly switch the leadership from an experienced tribe to a less experienced one would cause decay and civil collapse. We read:

Yes, he (the Prophet) admitted to tribal preference but it was confined only to those which were known for their managing and leading capabilities due to the experience and training that the members of those specific tribes were exposed to. For management and commander-ship, he selected the capable and qualified persons from among those families.

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.2, p.22)

It is for these practical reasons that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“Our political authority shall remain with the Quraish...as long as they follow Islam.”

(Bukhari: Kitabu'l-Ahkam)

And the Prophet (ﷺ) warned the Ansar:

“In this matter (i.e. leadership), bring forward the Quraish and do not try to supersede them.”

(Talkhis al-Habeer, Vol.2, p.26)

As well as:

“After me, the political authority shall be transferred to the Quraish.”

(Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hambal, vol. 3, p. 183)

The Prophet (ﷺ) clearly explained the reason for this:

“People (of Arabia) in this matter (i.e. leadership) follow the Quraish. The believers of Arabia are the followers of their believers and the disbelievers of Arabia are the followers of their disbelievers.”

(Muslim, Kitabu'l-Imarah)

In fact, the Prophet (ﷺ) trusted the Ansar over the Quraish. One must understand that only a small segment of the Quraish were the loyal Muhajirs, whereas the vast majority of Quraish were recent converts after the conquest of Mecca. After the Battle of Hunain, the Prophet (ﷺ) showered the Quraish and all the other tribes of Arabia with gifts of war booty, but he left out the Ansar. We read:

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri said: "When Allah's Messenger had given the Quraish and Arab tribes those gifts and allotted nothing to the Ansar, a group of the Ansar felt so uneasy about it that a lot of ill-statements against the Prophet were spread amongst them to an extent that one of them said: 'By Allah, Allah's Messenger is ill-spoken of by his folks men!'"

(Ibn Ishaq, Seerah Rasool-Allah)

Saad ibn Ubaadah (عنه الله رضى), the leader of the Ansar and the man whom the Ansar would seek to elect as Caliph at Saqifah, said to the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى):

"O Messenger of Allah, the group of Ansar is furious at you about the distribution of the booty that you had won. You have allotted shares to your own (Quraish) kinsmen and forwarded lots of gifts to the (other) Arab tribes, but this group (of Ansar) has obtained nothing."

(Ar-Raheequl Makhtum, p.485)

Shaykh Mufid, the classical Shia scholar, wrote of this incident:

The Prophet of Allah made the distribution of the booty of Hunayn, particularly among the Quraish. He gave a generous share to reconcile the hearts of some of them like Abu Sufyan, Ikrima, al-Harith, Suhayl, Zuhayr, Abdullah, Muawiyah, Hisham, al-Aqra, Uyyayna, and their like.

It is reported that he (the Prophet) gave the Ansar only a small part but that he gave most of it to the people whom we have named. A group of the Ansar became angry on account of that. The Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him and his family, was informed of their words and discontent against him. He summoned them and they gathered. He told them: "Sit down but do not let anyone other than your own people sit with you."

(Kitab al-Irshad, by Shaykh Mufid, pp.99-100)

The Prophet (ﷺ) then reassured Saad ibn Ubaadah (رضي الله عنه) and the Ansar, saying:

“You Ansar, do you feel eager for the things of this world wherewith I have sought to incline these people (i.e. the Quraish and Arab tribes) into the Faith (of Islam) in which you (Ansar) are already (firmly) established?”

(Ar-Raheequl Makhtum, p.486)

This is therefore the crux of the matter: the Prophet (ﷺ) was thinking only of the future of the Islamic state and how to unify the entire Arabian peninsula. He (ﷺ) was enticing the newly converted Quraish by bestowing upon them gifts and giving them the leadership, which would result in the rest of Arabia also submitting to the Islamic state. The Prophet (ﷺ) had so much trust in the Ansar (i.e. they were already firmly established in the faith) that he knew that they would loyally sacrifice the leadership for the sake of the Ummah. This is what the Prophet (ﷺ) told Saad ibn Ubaadah (رضي الله عنه), explaining to him that it was actually a lofty status that the Ansar had obtained and that the Prophet (ﷺ) used gifts of spoils and leadership to strengthen those weak in the faith. The former masters of Arabia (i.e. the Quraish of Mecca) had been conquered by the Muslims of Medinah; it was a face-saving measure to allow the leadership to continue from amongst the Quraish so that they would not be humiliated and thereby weakened in faith and fervor.

Requirement to be Member of Majority Group

Shaikh Al-Sunnah and Lisaan al-Ummah (i.e. Imam al-Baqillani) stated that there is no requirement that a person must be Quraishi in order to be Caliph. He stated that a person must simply belong to the majority group. This is also stated by Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Muhammad Riya-Ad-Deen, namely that the leader must simply belong to the group in the majority. Because the Quraishis were the majority group at the time of the Prophet's death, therefore the Prophet (ﷺ) said the Caliph must be Quraishi. Again, this was based on the principle of majority rule, not upon Assabiyyah (bigotry/tribalism).

Saqifah

After the Prophet's death, the Ansar had gathered at Saqifah and were intending on nominating their own man as Caliph, namely Saad ibn Ubaadah (عنه الله رضى)—the same Ansar to whom the Prophet (صلى الله وسلم وآله عليه الله) had said earlier words which would again apply here:

“You Ansar, do you feel eager for the things of this world wherewith I have sought to incline these people (i.e. the Quraish and Arab tribes) into the Faith (of Islam) in which you (Ansar) are already (firmly) established?”

(Ar-Raheeql Makhtum, p.486)

We read:

Being informed of the proceedings of the Ansars, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Abu Ubaidah hastened to the meeting place and were there just in time to interrupt the finalization of the Ansars choice of Saad ibn Ubaadah to the successorship of the Prophet.

(A Short History of Islam, p.57)

Saad ibn Ubaadah (عنه الله رضى) conveyed the following message to his fellow Ansar:

“Company of the Ansar! You have precedence in religion and merit in Islam that no other tribe of the Arabs can claim. Muhammad remained ten-odd years in his tribe, calling them to worship the Merciful and to cast off idols and graven images, but only a few men of his tribe believed in him, and they were able neither to protect the Apostle of Allah, nor to render his religion strong, nor to divert from themselves the oppression that befell them all.

“Until, when He intended excellence for you (O Ansar); He sent nobility to you and distinguished you with grace. Thus Allah bestowed upon you faith in Him and in His Apostle, and protection for him and his companions, and strength for him and his faith, and Jihad against his enemies. You (O Ansar) were the

most severe people against his enemies who were not from among you, so that the Arabs became upright in Allah's Cause, willingly or unwillingly...through you (O Ansar) Allah made great slaughter (of the infidels) in the earth for His Apostle, and by your swords (O Ansar) the Arabs were abased for him. When Allah took (the Prophet) to Himself, he was pleased with you (O Ansar) and consoled by you.

“So keep control of this matter (i.e. the Caliphate) to yourselves, to the exclusion of others, for it is yours and yours alone.”

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.10, p.2)

When the Ansar said such sort of things (i.e. praising the Ansar and minimizing the Muhajirs), Umar (عنه الله رضی) was ready to respond. However, Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) refrained him and advocated a more conciliatory tone. We read:

In a situation packed with confusion, disorder, anger, and emotion, only a man like Abu Bakr could do what was necessary. When Umar made an attempt to say something, Abu Bakr put a check on him for he knew that the emotionally charged Umar could mishandle the already deteriorating situation. Abu Bakr himself rose to speak...

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, p.274)

Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) said:

“O Ansar! You deserve all the qualities that you have attributed to yourselves, but this question (of Caliphate) is only for the Quraish”

(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 82, Number 817)

Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) explained:

“(O Ansar) you are our brethren in Islam and our partners in religion...but the Arabs will not submit themselves except to this clan of Quraish...we (the Quraish) are in the center among the Muslims with respect to our position...”

(The History of al-Tabari, Volume 9, p.193)

Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) reminded the Ansar of the Prophet’s instructions that the leader should be from the Quraish because they commanded the political authority of all of Arabia. Indeed, had the Arabs back then had a sophisticated system of polling and voting, the Arabs of the peninsula would have voted for the Quraish to be the leaders, not the Ansar. Therefore, based on the principles of self-determination and popular sovereignty, the leader of the Muslims should be from the Quraish (i.e. Muhajirs). Umar (عنه الله رضی) warned the Ansar that “the rest of Arabia would never accept a non-Quraish (leader).”

The Ansar responded by extolling their own virtues and attempted to use this as evidence of their right to Caliphate. To counter this, the three Muhajirs reminded them that the the Muhajirs also had many qualities and accomplishments. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) said:

“(We were) the first on earth to worship Allah (in Islam) and we were the patrons (of the Prophet) and the supporting group of the Prophet. (It is we) who tolerated (great suffering) and suffered with him (through many) adversities...”

(History of al-Tabari, Volume 3, p.219)

The Ansar had praised themselves, using this as a proof for their Caliphate. However, the truth of the matter is that it was the Muhajirs who were the most senior in rank amongst the Muslims. The Muhajirs were the first ones to stand up for Islam: after the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) declared Islam in the land, it was the Muhajirs who were the next after him to do so. It was the Muhajirs who were turned out by their own people and who migrated in the Path of Allah. Therefore, if anyone deserved the Caliphate based upon merit and service for Islam, then it was the Muhajirs who took precedence in greatness over the Ansar. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) said:

“Now the Arabs found it most distressing that they should leave the religion of their forefathers; so from among his (the Prophet’s) tribe Allah singled out the first Muhajirs, by having them affirm that he spoke the truth and by their belief in him, and consoling him and enduring patiently with him the harsh insults their tribe (directed) against them and (their tribe), calling them liars. All the people were opposed (to the Muhajirs) and rebuked them; but they were not distressed by their small numbers or by (the people’s) single-minded opposition to them, for they were the first who worshipped Allah on the earth and who believed in Allah and the Apostle...Oh company of the Ansar, your superiority in religion and great precedence in Islam are undeniable. May Allah be satisfied with you as helpers (Ansar) for His religion and His Apostle. He made his Hijrah to you...so—after the Muhajirs—there is no one among us who is in your station. We (the Muhajirs) are the leaders, and you (Ansars) are the helpers; matters shall not be settled without consultation, nor shall we decide on them without you.”

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.10, pp.4-5)

Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) then said:

“Allah is my witness that we are not pressing the claim of the Quraish because of any selfish interest. The proposal is prompted in the interest of the solidarity of Islam (i.e. to maintain unity and prevent civil war). To give you a proof of our sincerity, I declare before you that I do not covet the office. Here are Umar and Abu Ubaidah. You may choose any one of these.”

(Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab, Chapter of “Death of the Prophet”)

Ibn Ishaq narrates it as follows:

He (Abu Bakr) said: “All the good that you have said about yourselves (O Ansar) is deserved. But the Arabs will recognize authority only in this clan of Quraish, they being (considered) the best of the Arabs in blood and country. I offer you one of these two men (Umar and Abu Ubaidah): accept whom you please.’ ”

(Ibn Ishaq, Seerah Rasool-Allah)

The Ansar made their counter-offer, saying:

“O Quraish. There should be one ruler from us and one from you.”

(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 82, Number 817)

Of course, this was an unacceptable solution to the problem, because nothing would prevent the other tribes from similarly demanding that they each get to nominate their own Caliph. If this were to happen, the Muslim union would dissolve into various small and competing amirates. Not only this, but the Prophet (ﷺ) never sanctioned the idea of having more than one leader, something which would create confusion and disarray. Therefore, Umar (رضي الله عنه) rebuffed this offer, saying:

“How preposterous! Two swords cannot be accommodated in one sheath. By Allah, the Arabs will never accept your rule...”

(History of al-Tabari, p.194)

The Ansars and Muhajirs fell into argumentation, and then Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) said:

“O Saad (ibn Ubaadah)! You know very well that the Prophet had said in your presence that the Quraish shall be given the Caliphate because the noble among the Arab (masses) follow their (Quraish) nobles and their ignobles follow their (Quraish) ignobles.”

(Musnad Ahmad, vol. 1, p.5)

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) explained that although he himself was well aware of the Ansar's greatness, it was the Quraish who commanded the popularity of the masses of Arabia. It would not be justice for a less popular candidate to rule over a country, one who did not command the confidence of the masses. A man must have the acceptance and Baya'ah of the people in order to become Caliph: while the Ansar

may have secured the vote and support of many in Medinah, they would not be able to do so in any other part of Arabia. These other Arab tribes would then demand the Caliphate for themselves and thereby break away from the Muslim union. Therefore, in order to prevent this scenario, a leader must be chosen from a group that had the acceptance of the masses of Arabia, and this could only be a man from the Quraish. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) explained:

“The people of Arabia are not aware of anyone’s political leadership except that of the Quraish.”

(Musnad Ahmad, vol 1., p.56)

Finally, the Ansar assented and said:

“What you say is correct: we are your advisors and you are our rulers.”

(Musnad Ahmad, Vol.1, p.5)

And then Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) repeated his proposal, asking the Ansar to accept either Umar (الله رضى عنه) or Abu Ubaidah (عنه الله رضى) as their next leader. We read:

Abu Bakr Siddiq said, “Umar and Abu Ubaidah are here: choose any one of them.”

Umar said, “No! Abu Bakr is the most excellent amongst the Muhajirs. He has been the Companion of the Prophet in the cave [as mentioned in the Quran]; the Prophet asked him to be the Imam to lead the prayers, and prayer is the most superior of all other articles of faith. Therefore, none (not I nor Abu Ubaidah) is entitled to assume the duties of the Caliphate in the presence of Abu Bakr.”

Saying this, Umar stretched his hand first of all to take Baya’ah (oath of allegiance) at the hand of Abu Bakr Siddiq followed by Abu Ubaidah and Bashir ibn Saad Ansari. After that, the people of all sides of Abu Bakr came to take Baya’ah. As the news spread, all the believers rushed to pledge their allegiance to the Caliph.

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, p.275)

Neither Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) nor Umar (عنه الله رضی) desired the Caliphate. In a well-known Hadith, the Messenger of Allah has said that he who seeks leadership is not fit to assume it. (Bukhari: Kitab al-Ahkam, chapter 7; Muslim: Kitab al-Amarah, Chapter 3) We see the qualities of a leader in the modest way in which Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) does not himself seek the Caliphate but rather he asks the Muslims to choose between Umar (عنه الله رضی) and Abu Ubaidah (عنه الله رضی). Meanwhile, Umar (عنه الله رضی) rejects the Caliphate himself, saying that Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) is more fit for it. And then Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) is so modest that he says in his inauguration speech that “I have been chosen as your chief, although I am better than none of you”, despite the fact everyone else knew that Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) was the most worthy! We can clearly see that neither Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) nor Umar (عنه الله رضی) desired the Caliphate for themselves and neither furthered their own cause.

It was in this manner that Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) became the first Caliph of the Muslims. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) did not seek the Caliphate let alone steal it from Ali (عنه الله رضی). The Ansar were the cause of the gathering. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and Umar (عنه الله رضی) were forced to proceed to Saqifah in order to prevent a civil war. The election of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) was something un-premeditated and purely spontaneous. To this effect, Umar (عنه الله رضی) said:

“The pledge of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was an un-premeditated spontaneous affair which was (then only later) ratified.”

(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 82, Number 817)

When Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی), Umar (عنه الله رضی), and Abu Ubaidah (عنه الله رضی) arrived at Saqifah, they came to know of the resolve of the Ansar (i.e. in seeking to nominate their own man to Caliphate); and so these three Muhajirs attempted to persuade the Ansar to change their minds. The Ansar wavered and the Muhajirs jumped on this opportunity to resolve the conflict. Some people might say: why didn't the Shaikhayn or Abu Ubaidah (عنه الله رضی) suggest delaying the nomination of the Caliph until all of the Muhajirs (such as Ali) could be summoned? Umar (عنه الله رضی) himself explained the reason:

“...because we were afraid that if we left the people (without rendering the oath of allegiance), they might (in our absence) give the pledge of allegiance after us to one of their men...”

(Sahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 82, Number 817)

In a slightly different version, Umar (عنه الله رضى) explained:

“We feared that if we left (without rendering the oath of allegiance), no agreement would be hammered out (with the Ansar) later. (And if they then elected one of their own men) it was either to follow the Ansar in what we did not approve of (i.e. disobey the Prophet’s words), or else oppose them (i.e. with the sword), which would have led to disorder (fasad).”

(History of al-Tabari, Vol. 9, p.194)

Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) would later say to Ali (عنه الله رضى):

“Had I delayed the matter, it would have posed a greater danger to the unity, integrity, and solidarity of Islam. How could I send for you when there was no time?”

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, p.276)

When the Shaikhayn and Abu Ubaidah (عنه الله رضى) arrived at Saqifah, the Ansar were only moments away from nominating Saad ibn Ubaadah (عنه الله رضى). The three Muhajirs were able to stop the Ansar from doing that but only momentarily, and if they left without first securing the Baya’ah, they knew that the Ansar would once again proceed to elect their own man. But when the Ansar gave their Baya’ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى), this was the Ansar taking a strong oath that would prevent them from nominating any of their own men. Therefore, it is clear that the Baya’ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) was rushed in order to prevent double-mindedness on the part of the Ansar. It was less than ideal, as expressed by Umar (عنه الله رضى) himself, but it was born out of dire necessity and it was only with the Grace of Allah Almighty that it worked out.

The Prophet's Funeral

Although our Shia brothers imply that Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) missed out on the Prophet's funeral, this is actually not true at all. After he saved the Ummah at Saqifah, Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) rushed back to help with the Prophet's funeral. In fact, the only thing that Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) missed out on was washing the Prophet's body, something which is anyways done by the near relatives according to Islamic custom. So we ask our Shia brothers: what exactly did Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) miss out on?

Not only did Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) help out with the burial, he was actually the one who is credited with deciding where the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) was to be buried. We read:

The task of washing the body being over, the Companions were divided over the place of burial. Abu Bakr then said: "I have heard from the Messenger of Allah that every Prophet is buried at the spot where he has breathed his last." The Prophet's bedding was accordingly removed from the place and a grave was dug for him at the spot.

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, p.246)

General Baya'ah

The Ansars and a few of the Muhajirs had given Baya'ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) at Saqifah, but many of the Muslims had not. Therefore, a day after Saqifah, Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) ascended the pulpit of the Prophet's Mosque and the masses (approximately 33,000 of the Sahabah) took Baya'ah at his hand. We read:

After the meeting at Saqifah Banu Sa'idah...(and) the burial of the Prophet, Abu Bakr took the oath of allegiance from the general population and then rose to deliver his (inauguration) address...that was the day when 33,000 Companions pledged their allegiance to Abu Bakr.

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, p.276)

This came to be known as the General Baya'ah. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) thus became the recognized leader of the Muslim empire. One is always astonished with the immense modesty of Abu Bakr (الله رضى عنه), which contrasts sharply with the monarchs and leaders of other empires. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) said to the people:

“I have been chosen as your chief, although I am better than none of you. Thus, if I do good work, it is incumbent on you to extend your help and support me; if I go wrong, it is your duty to put me on the right path. Truth and righteousness are a trust and un-truth is a breach of trust. The weak among you are strong to me unless I give them full justice, and the strong among you are weak to me unless I receive what is due from them. Abandon not Jihad. When the people hold back from Jihad, they are put to disgrace. Obey me while I keep obeying Allah and His Messenger; renounce me when I disobey Allah and His Messenger, for obedience to me is not incumbent on you then.”

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, p.276)

And so it was that the most modest man of the Muslims became the Caliph of the emerging Islamic empire.

Ali ibn Abi Talib (عنه الله رضى)

Ali (عنه الله رضى) was not present at the General Baya'ah; instead, he took Baya'ah at the hand of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) some time later: some sources seem to indicate that Ali (عنه الله رضى) took Baya'ah after two days, whereas others state that he did not give it for six months. There is nothing strange at all in this discrepancy because an innumerable number of events in Islamic history also have similar discrepancies due to the fact that historical dating is a troublesome task. (For example, to give just one other such instance, “The History of al-Tabari” cites some sources which state that the Prophet died at 63 years of age, whereas others state that the Prophet died two years later at 65 years of age; Tabari states both views in his book.)

Perhaps the strongest opinion is that Ali (عنه الله رضى) gave Baya'ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) twice, once on the second day and the other six months later. The tradition of the Muslims was to renew one's Baya'ah periodically (i.e. the Muslims renewed their Baya'ah to the Prophet on numerous occasions),

and people may have expected Ali (عنه الله رضى) to renew his Baya'ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) due to the conflict of Fadak which had created a situation in which some people questioned Ali's loyalties to the Caliph. Whatever the case, whether it was two days or six months is largely immaterial. The fact is that Ali (عنه الله رضى) did in fact pledge his Baya'ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى), something which does not sit well with the Shia paradigm; why would Ali (عنه الله رضى) pledge his Baya'ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) at all if the Shia claims were true?

We will, Insha-Allah, write an article citing the overwhelming evidence from Shia sources which confirm that Ali (عنه الله رضى) gave his Baya'ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى). For now, we shall suffice with a handful of such reports, and we will focus on those which indicate that in fact Ali (عنه الله رضى) gave this Baya'ah on the second day after the General Baya'ah. Shaikh Tabrasi wrote in his "al-Ihtejaj" (a classical Shia book) the following:

Tabrasi narrates from (Imam) Muhammad Baqir that when Usamah had left for Jihad when the Messenger of Allah passed away, the news reached Usamah (and) he returned with his army to Medinah. He (Usamah) saw a great number of people surrounding Abu Bakr; on seeing this, he went to question Ali ibn Abi Talib and asked: "What is this?" Ali ibn Abi Talib replied: "It is exactly what you are seeing!" Usamah asked: "Have you (also) given Baya'ah to him?" Ali ibn Abi Talib replied: "Yes."

(Al-Ihtejaj, p.50: Printed Mashad, Iraq)

We also read the following, in another Shia book:

Ali ibn Abi Talib said to Zubair: "(Although) we got angry momentarily at the time of consultation (i.e. Saqifah), we can now see that Abu Bakr is the most deserving of the Caliphate: He was the companion of the Messenger of Allah in the cave. We know of his life and we know that the Messenger of Allah had ordered him to lead the prayers." And then he (Ali) gave his Baya'ah (to Abu Bakr).

(Sharh Nahjul-Balagha; Ibn Abi Al-Hadeed; Vol.1, p.132)

To provide an online source, we kindly refer the reader to "The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam" by SHM Jafri. Establishing this book's authenticity in the eyes of the Shia is not difficult since it is

available on Al-Islam.org, the most reliable Shia website on the internet. The book may be found here:http://al-islam.org/index.php?sid=729406346&t=sub_pages_74&cat=74

The book “The Origins and Early Development of Shi’a Islam” by SHM Jafri is so authoritative that it is endorsed by the Iranian government. The book is published in Qum with the blessing of the highest scholars (Maraje’) in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Please go to this Shia website <http://www.karbala-najaf.org/shiaism/shiaism.html> and scroll down to the bottom to confirm this.

It is also available on Al-Shia.com; you can view this here:

<http://www.al-shia.com/html/eng/books/history/origins-development-shia-islam/>

Al-Islam.org praised the book:

Al-Islam.org says

“For a good source on the effect that Imam Husayn’s sacrifices had on the minds of the Muslims, see: Jafri, The Origins and early Development of Shi’a Islam. With salaams and du’as Liyakatali Takim

source: <http://www.al-islam.org/organizations/AalimNetwork/msg00706.html> ”

Let us now look at Chapter 2 of this book which is entitled “Saqifa: The First Manifestations”. We read:

Al-Shia.com says

“The Origins and Early Development of Shi’a Islam S.H.M. Jafri Chapter 2

Saqifa: The First Manifestations

But according to the most commonly reported traditions, which must be accepted as authentic because of overwhelming historical evidence and other circumstantial reasons, ‘Ali held himself apart until the death of Fatima six months later. Insisting that ‘Ali should have been chosen, a number of his partisans from among both the Ansar and the Muhajirun who had delayed for some time in accepting Abu Bakr’s

succession were fain to yield, however. They gradually, one after the other, were reconciled to the situation and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr.

source:

<http://www.al-shia.com/html/eng/books/history/origins-development-shia-islam/> "

And there are many other Shia books we can quote. For brevity sake, we shall not include them all here. (We will, Insha-Allah, write an article on this topic in the near future, Insha-Allah.) As for the Sunni sources, we read:

...Ali came to Abu Bakr and said: "I don't refuse to admit that your virtues entitle you to the Caliphate. My sole complaint is that we are the close relatives of the Prophet, (so) why did you then take Baya'ah at Saqifah Banu Sa'idah without consulting us? Had you called us there, we would have taken Baya'ah at your hand ahead of everyone."

Abu Bakr said in reply: "To treat the relatives of the Prophet well is dearer and more desirable to me than to do so for my own relatives. I went to Saqifah Banu Sa'idah not for the taking of Baya'ah but for putting an end to the dispute...I did not seek their support (for Caliphate). Rather, they took their oath of allegiance to me on their own...Had I delayed the matter, it would have posed a greater danger to the unity, integrity, and solidarity of Islam. How could I send for you when there was no time?"

Ali listened with rapt attention to what Abu Bakr Siddiq said and withdrew his complaint gracefully. The next day, he (Ali) pronounced his allegiance to Abu Bakr before a large congregation in the Prophet's Mosque.

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, pp.275-276)

In another account, Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) said:

"Never for a moment was I eager for authority (imara) nor did I want it or pray to Allah for it secretly or publically. But I was afraid of disorder. I take no pleasure in authority. I have been invested with a grave

matter for which I have not the strength and can only hope (to) cope with it if Allah gives me the strength. I would (only wish) that he who has the most strength for it were in my place.”

(Seerah of Musa ibn Uqba)

To which Ali (عنه الله رضی) said:

“We were angry only because we were not admitted to the council and we think that Abu Bakr is the most worthy of supreme authority now that the apostle is dead. He was the one with the apostle in the cave and we recognize his dignity and seniority; and the apostle put him in charge of the prayers while he was still with us.”

(Seerah of Musa ibn Uqba)

Abu Sufyan (عنه الله رضی) offered Ali (عنه الله رضی) the Caliphate, promising to back Ali (عنه الله رضی) with all his men and camels of war. Ali (عنه الله رضی) refused the offer. This is narrated in both Sunni and Shia books. For Sunni sources, please refer to the History of al-Tabari (Vol.9, pp.198-199). As for Shia sources, we shall herein cite what is written in “al-Irshad” written by Shaikh Mufid:

···He (Abu Sufyan) called out at the top of his voice: “Banu Hashim, Banu Abd Manaf! Are you content that the despicable father of a young camel, the son of a despicable man, (i.e. Abu Bakr), should have authority over you? No, by Allah, if you wish, let me provide horses and men who will be sufficient for it (i.e. to take the Caliphate).”

“Go back, Abu Sufyan,” shouted the Amir al-Mu’mineen (Ali), peace be on him. “By Allah, you do not seek Allah in what you are suggesting...”

Abu Sufyan went to the mosque. There he found the Banu Umayyah gathered. He urged them (to take action) in the matter (i.e. against Abu Bakr) but they did not respond to him.

(Al-Irshad, p.136)

In “the History of al-Tabari”, we read:

He (Abu Sufyan) said (to Ali): “O Abu Hasan, stretch out your hand so that I may give you Baya’ah,” but Ali declined...(and) Ali rebuked him, saying: “By Allah, you do not intend anything but to stir up Fitnah...”

(The History of al-Tabari, Vol.1, p.199)

So we see that Ali (عنه الله رضی) did not at all wish to create Fitnah or disunity within the ranks of the Muslims. He accepted the decision of the 33,000 Sahabah who pledged Baya’ah to Abu Bakr (الله رضی عنه), and he upheld the Caliphate of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی). If Ali (عنه الله رضی) upheld the Caliphate of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی), then why do our Shia brothers create Fitnah by rejecting the Caliphate of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی)? The fact that Ali (عنه الله رضی) abstained from pledging Baya’ah to Abu Bakr (الله رضی عنه) cannot at all be used as a proof for the Imamah of Ali (عنه الله رضی); if this were the case, then could someone claim that Saad ibn Ubaadah (عنه الله رضی) of the Ansar was an Infallible Imam because he refused to pledge Baya’ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی)? The opinion of Ali (عنه الله رضی) or Saad ibn Ubaadah (عنه الله رضی) could not possibly overturn the collective decision of 33,000 Sahabah; Abu Bakr (الله رضی عنه) was the most popular candidate for Caliphate, and therefore it would not be justice to give the position to anybody else.

In any case, Ali (عنه الله رضی) did give Baya’ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) eventually (be it after two days or six months), and this in and of itself negates the Shia claims. If Ali (عنه الله رضی) thought he was divinely appointed by Allah to be the Infallible Imam of the Muslim Ummah, then why would he ever pledge his Baya’ah to a man who supposedly usurped a God-given position? Did the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) ever pledge his Baya’ah to those who sought to deny his Prophethood? Why then would Ali (عنه الله رضی) pledge his Baya’ah to those who sought to deny his Imamah, a position which the Shia hold to be higher than Prophethood? Our Shia brothers should follow the way of Ali (عنه الله رضی) which was to avoid causing Fitnah, instead of following the ways of their Ayatollahs who seek to cause Fitnah by denying the Caliphate of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and, in doing so, setting themselves apart from the great majority of the Muslims. It took Ali (عنه الله رضی) at most six months to accept the Caliphate of Abu Bakr (الله رضی عنه), and yet it has been over a thousand years and our Shia brothers have still not accepted it!

Eulogy of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی)

On the death of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى), Ali (عنه الله رضى) said:

“O Abu Bakr! May Allah shower mercy upon you. By Allah, you believed first of all in the entire Ummah and made your belief the base of your behavior and manners. You were the man excellent in trust and conviction, the most generous caretaker of the Prophet. You were the greatest supporter of Islam and well-wisher of all creatures. In manners, virtues and guidance you were closest to the Prophet. May Allah confer on you the best reward on behalf of Islam and the Muslims. You affirmed the Prophet when others denied him; you showed sympathy when others were un-generous to him; you rose to help the Messenger of Allah when others held themselves back...

“You stood like a rock in support of Islam and drove away the disbelievers. Neither your argument was ever misdirected nor your insight weakened; your soul never showed timidity. You were firm like a mountain; strong winds failed to uproot or stir you. About you, the Prophet said: ‘Weak in body, strong in Faith; humble, exalted by Allah; venerable on earth and worthy among the believers.’ Nobody could show greed in your presence nor could give free expression to his (illicit) desires; the weak happened to be strong to you and the strong weak till the right of the weak was given to him and the strong was forced to give what was due.”

(Tareekh al-Islam, Vol.1, p.316)

Therefore, we can see, that no matter the disagreements that Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) and Ali (عنه الله رضى) may have had, they both reconciled and respected each other deeply. Indeed, even Umar (عنه الله رضى) was impressed with the eloquence of Ali’s eulogy to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى). Why should our Shia brothers focus on the disputes between two great men who eventually reconciled? Is this not being the cause of great Fitnah?

Superiority of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى)

Thirty-three thousand Sahabah pledged their Baya’ah to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى). The Muslim masses recognized the superiority of Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى) above all the other Sahabah, and they came to this conclusion after reflecting on the words of the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) himself. We read in the following Hadith narrated by Amr ibn al-Aas (عنه الله رضى):

So I came to him (the Prophet) and said, “Which of the people is dearest to you?” He said, “Aisha.” I said: “Who among the men?” He (the Prophet) said: “Her father.”

(Sahih Bukhari, 3662; Sahih Muslim, 2384)

In another Hadith, we read:

“We used to regard Abu Bakr as the best (of the Sahabah)...”

(Sahih Bukhari, 3655)

It was Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) who was chosen by the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) to be the Imam of the prayers in the Prophet’s sickness, and therefore this is indeed an indication that the Prophet (عليه الله صلى) saw Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) as the most suitable successor. He did not state this directly, because then the people would view this as a religious obligation to be imposed on people, as opposed to the will of the people (as is just). But the people rightfully interpreted it as the Prophet’s “vote” for Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and it is therefore no surprise that 33,000 Sahabah pledged Baya’ah to Abu Bakr (الله رضی عنه) and nobody else.

As for Ali (عنه الله رضی), he himself did not view himself superior to Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی). Although Ali (عنه الله رضی) may have felt for a small stretch of time that he was more fitted for the Caliphate, he would reverse this position, evidenced by the sayings of Ali (عنه الله رضی) later in life. Ali’s son, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah (عنه الله رضی), narrated: I said to my father: “Whom of the people was the best after the Messenger of Allah?” He (Ali) said: “Abu Bakr.” (Sahih Bukhari, 3671)

In another narration, Ali (عنه الله رضی) said: No one is brought to me who regards me as superior to Abu Bakr and Umar but I will punish him with a beating like a fabricator.”

Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: It was narrated that he (Ali) used to speak from the minbar of Kufa and say that the best of this Ummah after our Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى) was Abu Bakr and then Umar. This was narrated from him via more than eighty Isnads, and it was narrated by Bukhari and others. (Manhaj al-Sunnah, 1/308)

Ali (عنه الله رضى) said:

“The best of this Ummah after its Prophet is Abu Bakr.” (Musnad Ahmad, 839)

There is no doubt that the most superior of the Sahabah was Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضى). This was the view of the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى), the consensus of the Sahabah, and the position of the rightly guided Ahlus Sunnah (People of the Sunnah). Therefore, based on this, it was only fitting that Abu Bakr (الله رضى عنه) be declared the successor of the Prophet (وسلم وآله عليه الله صلى).

Shia Account of Saqifah

Surprisingly, the Shia account of Saqifah is similar to the Sunni version. We read:

When Muhammad died, his daughter, Fatima, her husband, Ali, and the rest of the family of Hashim, gathered around the body preparing it for burial...[a] group (of Ansar) were gathering in the portico of Banu Sa'ida. It was reported to Abu Bakr that the Ansar were contemplating pledging their loyalty to Sa'd ibn Ubada, chief of the Khazraj. And so Abu Bakr and his group hurried to the Saqifa. One of the Ansar spoke first saying that as the Ansar had been the ones who supported and gave victory to Islam and since the Meccans were only guests in Medina, the leader of the community should be from the Ansar. Abu Bakr replied to this very diplomatically. He began by praising the virtues of the Ansar, but then he went on to point out that the Muhajirun (the Meccans) were the first people in Islam and were closer in kinship to the Prophet. The Arabs would accept leadership only from the Quraysh and so Quraysh should be the rulers and the Ansar their ministers. One of the Ansar proposed: “Let there be one ruler from us and one ruler from you...” And so the argument went back and forth until Abu Bakr proposed: “Give your allegiance to one of these two men: Abu Ubayda or Umar.” And Umar replied: “While you are still alive? No! It is not for anyone to hold you back from the position in which the Apostle placed you. So stretch out your hand.” And Abu Bakr stretched out his hand and Umar gave him his allegiance. One by one, slowly at first, and then rushing forward in a mass, the others did likewise...

Shi'i sources maintain that Ali did not in fact give his allegiance to the new Caliph until after Fatima's death, which occurred six months after the death of the Prophet.

(“An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism”; by Moojan Momen, pp.18-20)

It should be noted that this book is on Al-Islam.org's recommended reading list.

Conclusion

Our Shia brothers make an issue out of nothing, creating an incident out of a non-incident, an event out of a non-event. They insist on creating dissension and disagreement over an event that took place over a thousand years ago. Is it not time already to put the past behind us? Why must our Shia brothers live in

the past forever, crying over spilt milk? Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) did more for the Muslim empire than any of the millions of Shia alive today have done.

In any case, the event of Saqifah does nothing at all to further the Shia cause, and in fact, an analysis of said event only strengthens the position of the Ahlus Sunnah. Neither Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) nor Umar (عنه الله رضی) conspired to steal the Caliphate, and they did not proceed towards Saqifah with this intention. Our Shia brothers cannot reproduce even a single authentic narration to indicate that this was their plan; instead the Shia rely on silly conspiracy theories that hold no weight. Abu Bakr (عنه الله رضی) and Umar (عنه الله رضی) saved the Muslim Ummah from self-destruction, and in fact, it would be these two who would transform the Arabs into a world power, one that would destroy the Persian empire and vanquish the Roman empire. It was these two men who brought glory to the Muslim Ummah, and instead of sending curses upon them like the Shia do, we should ask Allah to bestow His Mercy and Grace upon them.

Article Written By: Ibn al-Hashimi, www.ahlelbayt.com