

Muhammad Ibn Sa‘d’s
Kitab at-Tabaqat al-Kabir
Volume VI:
The Scholars of Kufa

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Sects in Kufa

In general Kufa was a turbulent unruly city which easily succumbed to the lure of insurrection. As well as the various tribes interacting and the conflict over wealth there also was some Persianisation – even in language. For instance crossroads were called *chaharsuj* and a market *wazar* (rather than *suj*). There were the northern Arabs who had no tradition of hereditary kingship and the southern Arabs who did. And there were many southern Arabs in Kufa.

Umayyad Shi‘ism is a veritable chaos of ideas. The early ‘Alid movement was a political movement, partly consisting of those who followed ‘Ali for religious reasons, and partly of the *rawadif*, the later arrivals or those who had participated in the Ridda, or the still later *lawahiq*, who wanted a larger slice of the pie: which was the fertile agricultural land of the Sawad.

There was no widespread recognition that the imamate went through al-Husayn. It could go through al-Husayn, al-Hasan, children of ‘Ali not by Fatima, or the wider Hashimite family, i.e. al-‘Abbas. Al-Mukhtar claimed to act for Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, the son of ‘Ali by a Hanafi woman. When he died, some claimed that the imam was his son Abu Hashim. Some took Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiyya, a great grandson of al-Hasan. There was the movement of ‘Abdullah ibn Mu‘awiya, a descendant of the brother of ‘Ali. The ‘Abbasids first claimed their right from Abu Hashim, but later from al-‘Abbas.

The first Shi‘ites, or ‘Alawites, were distinguished by their acceptance of ‘Ali rather than ‘Uthman without having any position about Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. Then when Mu‘awiya designated Yazid as his successor, opposition to him took various forms. The Kharijites rejected the idea that the imamate was only for Quraysh. Others said that it was for Quraysh alone, which allowed for Ibn az-Zubayr to claim the caliphate. The Shi‘ite position was that it was only for the house of Hashim (and hence not the Banu Umayya).

There also a stronger position called *rafid* (rejection) which led to the use of the term ‘Rafidites’ which developed in in the 680s. Those

who espoused this position held that ‘Ali should have been the caliph and that all of the Community (with the exception of six people) fell into error when they accepted Abu Bakr and ‘Umar as caliphs. And we see this beginning in the movement of al-Mukhtar although the term Rafidite came into use somewhat later. They condemned the first three caliphs as usurpers, said that the community had gone astray by accepting them, and that ‘Ali and his three sons, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, were the divinely appointed successors to the Prophet and possessed supernatural powers. This led to cursing the first three caliphs and those who supported them.

Initially there was a general feeling that the world would come to an end in the year 100 AH and then, when it did not happen, everyone but the Shi‘a largely ignored the idea of the Mahdi until many years later. The idea of a reviver of the *deen* every hundred years took greater prominence. As we said, al-Mukhtar was also the first to use the term “*mahdi*” in a real messianic sense. He called himself the *wazir* of the Mahdi. He called for vengeance for the family of the Prophet and protection of the weak (i.e. the *mawali*). The personal followers of al-Mukhtar, who were known as “the Khashabiyya” because they were armed with wooden staffs (*khashab*), or “the Kaysaniyya” after Kaysan, the former *mawla* of al-Mukhtar and the head of his bodyguard.

The *mawali* who supported this position incorporated various ideas into their beliefs. One was that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya was the Mahdi and had secret knowledge about souls and the celestial spheres which he had received from al-Hasan and al-Husayn. After his death in 81/700, various Kaysani groups emerged. The Kuraybiyya believed that he was alive, but concealed (*ghayba*) at Mount Radwa north of Madina, guarded by lions and tigers and fed by mountain goats and that he would return and emerge from his hiding place, gather his followers and establish the authority of true Islam. (This concealment was meant to be as penance for giving allegiance to ‘Abd al-Malik.) Various ideas seeped in to this line of thought, including reincarnation and transmigration of souls which resulted in numerous extreme Shi‘ite sects, known as *ghulat*.

The other branch became the Hashimiyya who said that the imamate passed to his son, Abu Hashim, and the line went on to the 'Abbasids. An illustration of the oscillations of the time is found in the poet as-Sayyid al-Himyari (d. 171/787-8). He started as a Khariji, became a Kaysani and then became a follower of Ja'far as-Sadiq when the 'Abbasids came to power. He said that he had "Ja'farised himself."

There were a series of people who were called *mahdis* by their followers. The second prominent *mahdi* was Muhammad an-Nafs az-Zakiyya (100-145/718-762). When he died, his followers said that he was in concealment in 'Ilmiyya, a hill on the route between Makka and Najd and would return. A group called the Nawusiyya said that Ja'far as-Sadiq (d. 765) was the Mahdi and would return. After his son, Musa al-Kazim, died in 183/799-800 in an 'Abbasid prison, another group claimed that he was the Mahdi. Isma'il, another son of as-Sadiq, was also believed to be the Mahdi. Others said that it was his son, Muhammad ibn Isma'il, who would not die until he had conquered the world. This was the start of Isma'ilism.

Al-Mukhtar's group were also accused of being "Saba'ites", after 'Abdullah ibn Saba', a Jew from San'a who converted to Islam in the time of 'Uthman and travelled about espousing the idea that Muhammad would return and that 'Ali was his executor and hence no one else had the right to the imamate. He was exiled by 'Ali and his followers joined up with al-Mukhtar.

***Irja'* and the Murj'ites**

This is a term which began to be used after the revolt of al-Mukhtar. It was first used by al-Hasan, the son of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, stating approval of Abu Bakr and 'Umar and "postponing" judgement about 'Uthman, 'Ali and Ibn az-Zubayr and leaving judgement to Allah. So it was, as many things are, originally a political position. Then it was later applied to doctrine.

Some said that the term means that a grave sinner is a believer and his judgement is up to Allah and that it means "giving hope." This moved to the definition of faith and the statement that a believer

is the one who recognises Allah and the Messenger, believes this to be true and professes it with the tongue, whether or not he acts by it. Opponents to this called them Murji'a or Murji'ites.

The Murji'ites arose in opposition to the Kharijites who believed that if someone committed a major wrong action he was no longer a believer. The more extreme Murji'ites went so far as to say that no Muslim would enter the Fire and for them faith does not increase or decrease.

The term also had different meanings for different people. The Shi'a used the term 'Murji'ites' for those who did not put 'Ali above 'Uthman (unless they were Kharijites). The Kharijites said that anyone who did not assert that 'Ali was a grave sinner was a Murji'ite. The Hanbalis applied it to someone who believed that faith did not increase or decrease according to one's actions.

There is also the issue of saying, "I am a believer if Allah wills" or "I am truly a believer." The Murji'ites objected to saying this and claimed that it expresses doubt. The Ash'arites agreed with including the conditional phrase and point out that it is a manifestation of being a humble servant and subject to Allah's will and what He decrees the ultimate seal will be.

Ahl as-Sunna wa al-Jama'a

The concept of *Ahl as-Sunna wa al-Jama'a* as a title developed slowly. We find it around the time of Sulayman at-Taymi, Ayyub as-Sakhtiyani, Ibn 'Awn and Yunus ibn 'Ubayd. Various terms were used before this one gained popularity: *Ahl as-Sunna*, *Ahl as-Sunna wa al-Athar*, *Ashab al-Hadith*, *Ahl al-Kitab wa as-Sunna*, *Ahl al-Haqq* and others. Al-Ash'ari used *Ahl as-Sunna wa al-Jama'a* once and *Ahl as-Sunna wa al-Istiqaama* several times.

The impetus for this originated in Basra. The concept of *Sunna wa Jama'a*, the people of the *Sunna* and the Community, developed in opposition to the numerous sects which abounded in Iraq, but inclusion of rivals into the term took some time. It really solidified as a definitive term after al-Mutawakkil and then of the *Mihna* or Inquisition and represented communal solidarity (*jama'a*), not pass-

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ing becoming embroiled in events of the civil wars, and accepting all the Companions.

Chapter One: Makka

The Names of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who settled in Makka

Abu Sabra ibn Abi Ruhm

Abu Sabra ibn Abi Ruhm ibn Abi Qays ibn ‘Abd Wudd ibn Nasr ibn Malik ibn Hisl ibn ‘Amir ibn Lu’ayy. His mother was Barra bint ‘Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn ‘Abd Manaf ibn Qusayy.

Muhammad ibn ‘Umar said, “We do not know of any of the Muhajirun among those who were present at Badr who returned to Makka after the death of the Prophet ﷺ and took up residence there other than Abu Sabra. He returned to Makka after the death of the Prophet ﷺ and settled there. His son and the Muslims disliked him doing that. They objected to it and tried to dissuade him from returning to Makka and settling there after he had emigrated from it and they were angry about that. Abu Sabra ibn Abi Ruhm died while ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan was caliph.

‘Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi’a

‘Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi’a ibn al-Mughira ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar ibn Makhzum. His mother was Asma’ bint Makhrama ibn Jandal ibn Ubayr ibn Nahshal ibn Darim of the Banu Tamim. He was the brother of Abu Jahl ibn Hisham by the same mother. ‘Ayyash was one of those who emigrated to Abyssinia and then returned and stayed in Madina until the Prophet ﷺ died. Then he went to Syria and performed *jihad* in the Cause of Allah. Then he returned to Makka and stayed there until he died. His son, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Ayyash, remained in Madina until he died.

‘Abdullah ibn Abi Rabi’a

‘Abdullah ibn Abi Rabi’a ibn al-Mughira ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar ibn Makhzum. His mother was Asma’ bint Makhrama ibn Jandal ibn Ubayr ibn Nahshal ibn Darim. In the *Jahiliyya*,

‘Abdullah’s name had been Buhayr. When he became Muslim, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ re-named him ‘Abdullah. ‘Umar appointed him governor of Yemen.

Al-Harith ibn Hisham

Al-Harith ibn Hisham ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar ibn Makhzum. His mother was Asma’ bint Makhrama ibn Jandal ibn Ubayr ibn Nahshal ibn Darim. Al-Harith ibn Hisham became Muslim on the day of the Conquest of Makka and continued to live in Makka until the Messenger of Allah ﷺ died. He went to Syria while Abu Bakr as-Siddiq was caliph and was present at the battles of Fihl and Ajnadayn. He died in the ‘Amwas plague in 18 AH while ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab was caliph.

‘Ikrima ibn Abi Jahl

Abu Jahl’s name was ‘Amr ibn Hisham ibn al-Mughira ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar ibn Makhzum. His mother was Umm Mujalid bint Yarbu‘ of the Banu Hilal ibn ‘Amir. ‘Ikrima became Muslim on the day of the Conquest of Makka and lived in Makka. In the Farewell *Hajj*, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ appointed him over the tribe of Hawazin to collect their *zakat*. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ died while ‘Ikrima was at Tabala. Then he went on *jihad* to Syria and was killed as a martyr in the Battle of Ajnadayn while Abu Bakr as-Siddiq was caliph.

‘Abdullah ibn as-Sa’ib

‘Abdullah ibn as-Sa’ib ibn Abi as-Sa’ib ibn ‘Abid ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar ibn Makhzum. His *kunya* was Abu ‘Abd ar-Rahman. His mother was Ramla bint ‘Urwa Dhi al-Burdayn of the Banu Hilal ibn ‘Amr ibn Sa’sa’a. He became Muslim on the day of the Conquest of Makka and continued to live in Makka until he died there in the time of ‘Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr’s rule.

‘Abdullah ibn Numayr reported from ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Jurayj that ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Mulayka said, “I saw ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Ayyash when he finished the grave of ‘Abdullah ibn as-Sa’ib. The people rose from it and Ibn ‘Abbas stood at it and made supplication for him and then left.

Al-Fudayl ibn Dukayn reported from Ibn ‘Uyayna that Dawud ibn Shabur said that he heard Mujahid say, “We used to boast about ourselves in respect of other people for four reasons: our *faqih*, our qadi, our *mu’adhdhin* and our reciter. Our *faqih* was Ibn ‘Abbas. Our *mu’adhdhin* was Abu Mahdhura. Our reciter was ‘Abdullah ibn as-Sa’ib. Our qadi was ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr.”

Khalid ibn al-‘As

Khalid ibn al-‘As ibn Hisham ibn al-Mughira ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar ibn Makhzum. His mother was ‘Atika bint al-Walid ibn al-Mughira ibn ‘Umar ibn Makhzum. He was the father of ‘Ikrima ibn Khalid and the poet, al-Harith ibn Khalid. Khalid ibn al-‘As became Muslim on the day when Makka was conquered and lived there and had descendants.

Al-Fudayl ibn Dukayn reported from Ibn ‘Uyayna from Ibn Jurayj that ‘Ata’ said, “I saw that Abu Mahdhura did not give the *adhan* until he saw Khalid ibn al-‘As enter the door of the mosque.”

Qays ibn as-Sa’ib, the *mawla* of Mujahid

Muhammad ibn ‘Umar said that ‘Abd al-Hamid ibn ‘Imran reported from Musa ibn Abi Kathir that Mujahid said, “This *ayat* was revealed about my *mawla*, Qays ibn as-Sa’ib: ‘*For those who are able to fast [but with difficulty], their fidya is to feed the poor.*’ (2:184) He broke the fast and fed a poor person for each day.”

‘Attab ibn Usayd

‘Attab ibn Usayd ibn Abi al-‘Is ibn Umayya ibn ‘Abd Shams ibn ‘Abd Manaf ibn Qusayy. His mother was Arwa bint Abi ‘Amr ibn Umayya ibn ‘Abd Shams. He became Muslim on the day of the Conquest of Makka. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ left Makka for Hunayn, he put ‘Attab ibn Usayd in charge of the people in Makka and the prayer. He asked him, “Do you know whom I have put you in charge of?” He answered, “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said, “I have appointed you over the people of Allah.” ‘Attab established the *haji* for people that year, 8 AH. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ died while ‘Attab ibn Usayd was in charge of Makka.