

1 Abū Bakr: the Successor of the Messenger of God and the caliphate of Quraysh

The fundamental account about the assembly at the Saqīfat Banī Sā'ida, in which the succession of Abū Bakr to Muḥammad was decided, goes back to 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās. All other reports make use of information drawn from it or are later elaborations of it.¹ Slightly variant versions with different chains of transmission are provided by Ibn Hishām, al-Ṭabarī, 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām, al-Bukhārī and Ibn Ḥanbal. The *isnāds* meet in al-Zuhrī, who related the report of Ibn al-'Abbās on the authority of 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Utba b. Mas'ūd.² The account clearly reflects the characteristic point of view of Ibn al-'Abbās, and there is no reason to doubt the reliability of the chain of transmitters.³

Ibn al-'Abbās narrated that on the occasion of the last pilgrimage led by the caliph 'Umar, that is in Dhu l-Ḥijja 23/October 644, he, Ibn al-'Abbās, was visited at his campsite (*manzil*) at Minā by 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf,⁴ whom he used to assist in the recitation of the Qur'ān (*uqri'uhu l-Qur'ān*). 'Abd al-Raḥmān reported that he had witnessed the caliph on that day being approached by a man who addressed him: 'What are you going to do about a man who says: By God, if 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb were to die, I would swear allegiance to so-and-so (*fulān*). By God, the oath of

¹ The account that Abū Mikhnaf received from the Khazrajite 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī 'Amra, quoted at length by al-Ṭabarī (I, 1837–44), has been briefly analysed by M. Muranyi ('Ein neuer Bericht über die Wahl des ersten Kalifen Abū Bakr', *Arabica*, 25 (1978), 233–60, at 233–4). It was composed in the late Umayyad age and reflects clear awareness of the account of 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās. The lengthy account discussed and partly edited by Muranyi (*ibid.*, 234–60) is later and filled with fictitious speeches and poetry.

² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidina*, 1013–16; Ṭabarī, I, 1820–3; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, 439–45; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥudūd*, 31; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, I, 55–6. The transmitters from al-Zuhrī are respectively: Ibn Ishāq, Ma'mar, Ma'mar, Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān, Mālik b. Anas.

³ Caetani recognized the basic importance of the report. He ignored, however, the vital introductory section and considered the fact that the caliph 'Umar is quoted in direct speech to be 'suspicious' (*Annali*, II/1, 511–14).

⁴ That 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf accompanied 'Umar during the pilgrimage in 23/644 is independently confirmed (Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III/1, 95; *Annali*, VII, 549).

allegiance for Abū Bakr was merely a precipitate deal which then was carried out (*mā kānat bay'at Abī Bakr illā falta fa-tammāt*).⁵ 'Umar grew angry and said: 'God willing, I shall stand up tonight among the people and shall warn them about this clan who want to usurp the rule from the people (*fa-muḥadhdhiruhum hā'ulā'i l-rahṭa lladhīna yurīdūna an yaghṣubū l-nāsa amrahum*).' 'Umar's answer referring to the ambitions of 'this clan' leaves no room for doubt that the unidentified candidate for the caliphate was 'Alī. It was Ibn al-'Abbās' consistent contention that 'Umar was greatly worried about the Banū Hāshim arrogating the reign to themselves and depriving 'the people', Quraysh, of their collective right to it.⁵

'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf advised the caliph against speaking out immediately, since the pilgrimage season brought together the riff-raff and the rabble of the people who might misinterpret his words and cause serious trouble. 'Umar should wait until his return to Medina where he would be among the Companions of the Prophet, Muhājirūn and Anṣār, who could be trusted to understand his speech properly and to act accordingly. The caliph took the advice.

On the Friday after 'Umar's return to Medina, Ibn al-'Abbās hastened to the mosque and sat down next to the pulpit, eager to hear what the caliph would have to say. He confided to 'Umar's brother-in-law, Sa'īd b. Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl,⁶ who sat there already before him, that today the Commander of the Faithful would make a revelation he had never made before, a suggestion angrily brushed aside by the other. After stressing the special importance of his speech, the caliph first reminded the community that the punishment of stoning for adultery had been part of the Qur'ān and was practised by the Prophet; let no one go astray therefore by neglecting a religious duty (*farīḍa*) and saying: 'We do not find stoning in the Book of God!' 'Umar went on: 'We also used to recite in the Book of God: Do not desire fathers other than your own, for it is

⁵ That 'Alī was alluded to in the report of Ibn al-'Abbās was generally assumed. In a version quoted by al-Balādhurī (*Ansāb*, I, 583) he is expressly named. According to Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd (*Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, ed. Muḥammad Abu l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm ([Cairo] 1959–64), II, 25), al-Jāhīz identified the person making the statement as 'Ammār b. Yāsir and the man intended as 'Alī. In another version quoted by al-Balādhurī (*Ansāb*, I, 581), al-Zubayr is identified as the one who said: 'If 'Umar were to die, we would pledge allegiance to 'Alī.' According to Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd (*Sharḥ*, II, 25) some of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* rather asserted that Ṭalḥa was the unnamed candidate for the succession. If that were the case, however, Ibn al-'Abbās would hardly have suppressed his name, and Ṭalḥa was not backed by a clan trying to deprive Quraysh of their collective right. 'Alī is also correctly identified by E. Shoufani, *Al-Riddah and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia* (Toronto, 1972), 57.

⁶ Sa'īd b. Zayd, of the Qurayshite clan of 'Adī, is counted among the ten of whom Muḥammad had testified that they would enter paradise. He was converted to Islam before 'Umar, whose grandfather, Nufayl, was his great-grandfather and to whose sister Fāṭima he was married. 'Umar's conversion took place in his house (Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, III, 96–7).

infidelity for you.⁷ Surely the Messenger of God also said: Do not extol me [excessively] as Jesus, son of Mary, has been extolled, but say: the servant of God and His messenger.'

Then 'Umar turned to the main subject. 'It has reached me that one of you has said: By God, if 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb were to die, I would swear allegiance to so-and-so. Let no one be seduced to saying: The oath of allegiance for Abū Bakr was a *falta*, yet it succeeded. It was indeed so, but God has warded off its evil (*waqā sharrahā*).⁸ Towards no one among you have necks been stretched out as for Abū Bakr. Whoever were to swear allegiance to any man without consultation (*mashwara*) among the Muslims, his oath of allegiance would be invalid and both of them would be subject to being killed.'

'Umar then gave an account of the events after the death of Muḥammad. While the Anṣār with their noble men (*ashraf*) assembled in the Saqīfat Banī Sā'ida, 'Alī, al-Zubayr and 'those with them' gathered in Fāṭima's house. 'The Muhājirūn' joined Abū Bakr, and 'Umar suggested that they go to 'our brethren' the Anṣār. On the way there they met two 'upright' men of them who told them about the plotting of the Anṣār and advised them to turn back and settle their own affairs, but 'Umar insisted on proceeding.⁹ They found the Anṣār and in their midst Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, distinguished Companion and chief of the Banū Sā'ida and of all of Khazraj, a sick man wrapped in a mantle. One of the Anṣār stood up and addressed the Muhājirūn: 'We are the Helpers and the legion (*katība*) of Islam, and you, company of Quraysh, are the clan of our Prophet, and a group (*dāffa*) of your people have made their way to us.' 'Umar realized that they intended 'to cut us off from our root [i.e. the Quraysh of Mekka] and to usurp the rule from us'. He wanted to give a speech which he had prepared in his mind, but Abū Bakr stopped him and spoke himself. He said what 'Umar had ready in his mind, only better than he could have done. Abū Bakr stated: 'O group of Anṣār, every virtue you mention of yourselves you are worthy of, yet the Arabs will not recognize the rule of

⁷ See Nöldeke and Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, I, 248.

⁸ 'Umar's admission that the election of Abū Bakr at the Saqīfat Banī Sā'ida had been a *falta* was obviously hard to accept for Sunnite supporters of the caliphate. In the version of Ibn al-'Abbās' account reported by al-Balādhurī (*Ansāb*, I, 584), 'Umar is quoted as saying: 'By God, the oath of allegiance for Abū Bakr was no *falta*. Rather, the Messenger of God set him up in his own place and chose him for his religion over anyone else stating: God and the believers refuse anyone but Abū Bakr.' This is quite remote from 'Umar's real views. Likewise in a report quoted by al-Balādhurī (*ibid.*, 581), the statement that the election of Abū Bakr was a *falta* is ascribed to al-Zubayr and is rejected by 'Umar as a lie.

⁹ The later tradition rather suggests that the two men, 'Uwaym b. Sā'ida and Ma'n b. 'Adī, were opponents of Sa'd b. 'Ubāda and friends of Abū Bakr. They went to urge Abū Bakr and 'Umar to take action, and Ma'n b. 'Adī led them to the Saqīfa. See Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, VI, 19.

anyone but this tribe of Quraysh. They are the most central [= noble] of the Arabs in lineage and abode. I am satisfied with either of these two men for you, so swear allegiance to whichever you want', and he took both 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāh by the hand. 'Umar commented that this was the only matter in his speech that he found loathsome, since it was inconceivable for himself to command a people that included Abū Bakr.

Al-Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir of the Anṣār, a veteran of Badr, now proposed to settle the dispute fairly by agreeing that the Anṣār and the Quraysh should each choose an amir. As tempers flared and voices were raised, 'Umar told Abū Bakr: 'Stretch out your hand', and gave him the handshake of the pledge of allegiance (*bay'a*). The Muhājirūn and the Anṣār followed suit. 'Then we jumped upon Sa'd until one of them called out: 'You have killed Sa'd b. 'Ubāda.' I said: 'May God kill Sa'd!'' 'Umar concluded: 'By God, we did not find any case stronger than for the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr. We feared that if we left the people without a pledge of allegiance they might after our departure suddenly make a pledge. We would then have had either to follow them in [a choice] with which we were not pleased, or to oppose them, and evil (*fasād*) would have resulted.'

Several aspects of the report deserve closer attention. 'Umar accused the Anṣār of plotting to seize the reign in succession to Muḥammad and to deprive the Muhājirūn of their right. Modern historians generally understand the initiative of the Anṣār in the same sense. This interpretation must, however, be questioned. The idea of the caliphate, the succession of Muḥammad in all but his prophetic mission, had not yet been born. It is difficult to see how the Anṣār, meeting alone among themselves, could have aspired to it. Like so many of the Arab tribes involved in the *rida*, the Anṣār, while firm in their Muslim faith, no doubt considered their allegiance to Muḥammad as lapsing on his death. Expecting the political community founded by Muḥammad to fall apart, they met to restore their control over their own city. This is why they met without consulting the Muhājirūn. They assumed that these, having no longer any good reason to remain in Medina, would return home to Mekka. Those who might wish to remain in Medina would presumably accept the rule of the Anṣār. The suggestion that the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn should each choose a leader for themselves was evidently meant as a fair compromise proposal rather than a devious ploy to split the Muslim community, as it was seen by later Muslim tradition. It was only Abū Bakr and 'Umar, if his claim of having intended to give much the same speech as the former can be trusted, who were thinking in terms of a succession to Muḥammad entailing rule over all the Arabs. Such a succession, Abū Bakr argued,

could be provided only by Quraysh since the Arab tribes would not submit to anyone else.

By those who assembled together with ‘Alī and al-Zubayr in the house of Fāṭima, ‘Umar evidently meant al-‘Abbās and the Banū Hāshim. Of other prominent Companions, only Ṭalḥa is mentioned, probably erroneously, by Ibn Ishāq as having joined the Hashimites.¹⁰ That ‘the Muhājirūn’ at that time joined Abū Bakr was, on the other hand, an apologetic obscuration on ‘Umar’s part. Aside from Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and his friend Abū ‘Ubayda certainly none of the prominent Mekkan Companions was present at the Saqīfa meeting. It is reasonable to assume that the three men were accompanied by a few personal attendants, family members and clients. Yet not even a middle-ranking or lowly Mekkan Companion is recorded as having later claimed the honour of participating in this so crucial event for the future of Islam. Various later sources report the presence of Sālim, the client (*mawlā*) of Abū Ḥudhayfa, among the first who pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr at the Saqīfa.¹¹ Although his attendance is not confirmed by any of the early standard sources, the reports may well be reliable. Sālim, a Persian client first of a Medinan woman and then of her husband, the Mekkan Companion Abū Ḥudhayfa, who later adopted him, became himself a Companion at an early date. He was counted among both the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn and had close relations to both Abū ‘Ubayda, with whom he was associated as a brother by the Prophet during the *mu’ākhāt*, and to ‘Umar.¹² ‘Umar is known to have held him in high esteem. Thus he could either have been present at the meeting as a member of the Anṣār or have come along with Abū ‘Ubayda and ‘Umar as a close associate. The absence of the great majority of the Muhājirūn, in any case, explains the lack of reports independent of ‘Umar’s own about the meeting and Ibn al-‘Abbās’ excited eagerness to hear it first hand. The Anṣār present were evidently reluctant to report about an ignominious defeat in a cause that soon came to be considered as anti-Islamic even by most of them. After the early deaths of Abū Bakr,

¹⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidīnā*, 1013. Ibn Ishāq’s mention of Ṭalḥa among those joining ‘Alī is not corroborated by other sources. It may well be a case of mistaken association of Ṭalḥa with al-Zubayr which is common in later sources because of their joint action in the Mekkan revolt against ‘Alī.

¹¹ Al-Mufīd, *al-Ṭamal wa l-nuṣra li-sayyid al-‘itra fī ḥarb al-Baṣra*, ed. ‘Alī Mīr Sharīfī (Qumm, 1413/[1993]), p.91; al-Mawardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, ed. R. Enger (Bonn, 1853), 6–7; Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, VI, 18. According to al-Mufīd, the Mu’tazilite Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī held that Sālim was among the five men whose initial pledge of allegiance to Abū Bakr was binding for the rest of the Community. Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd expresses his conviction (*thabata ‘indī*) that Sālim was the third man after ‘Umar and Abū ‘Ubayda to swear allegiance to Abū Bakr before any of the leaders of the Anṣār. In this case, his master Abū Ḥudhayfa was presumably not present, for as a *mawlā* and adoptive son Sālim would hardly have preceded him.

¹² On Sālim see especially Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, III/1, 60–2.

Abū 'Ubayda and Sālim, who was killed at al-'Aqrabā' during the *rida* war, there was only 'Umar left to tell the true story.

'Umar judged the outcome of the Saqīfa assembly to be a *falta* because of the absence of most of the prominent Muhājirūn, including the Prophet's own family and clan, whose participation he considered vital for any legitimate consultation (*shūrā, mashwara*). It was, he warned the community, to be no precedent for the future. Yet he also defended the outcome, claiming that the Muslims were longing for Abū Bakr as for no one else. He apologized, moreover, that the Muhājirūn present were forced to press for an immediate oath of allegiance since the Anṣār could not have been trusted to wait for a legitimate consultation and might have proceeded to elect one of their own after the departure of the Mekkans.

Another reason for 'Umar to censure the Saqīfa meeting as a *falta* was no doubt its turbulent and undignified end, as he and his followers jumped upon the sick Khazrajī leader Sa'd b. 'Ubāda in order to teach him a lesson, if not to kill him, for daring to challenge the sole right of Quraysh to rule. This violent break-up of the meeting indicates, moreover, that the Anṣār cannot all have been swayed by the wisdom and eloquence of Abū Bakr's speech and have accepted him as the best choice for the succession, as suggested by Caetani.¹³ There would have been no sense in beating up the Khazrajī chief if everybody had come around to swearing allegiance to 'Umar's candidate. A substantial number of the Anṣār, presumably of Khazraj in particular, must have refused to follow the lead of the Muhājirūn.

The question must arise as to the identity of the supporters of Abū Bakr and 'Umar who enabled them to impose their will on the assembly by force, given that there was only a handful of Mekkan Muhājirūn present and the Khazraj presumably made up the majority of the Anṣār. Caetani accepted the statement of Ibn Ishāq that the Anṣārī Usayd b. Ḥuḍayr and his clan, the 'Abd al-Ashhal of Aws, had already joined Abū Bakr together with the Muhājirūn before the meeting and suggested that in fact all of the Aws opposed the initiative of the Khazraj from the beginning.¹⁴ This is clearly at variance with 'Umar's account and quite unlikely. It would obviously not have been reasonable for the Khazraj, whatever their majority, to meet alone to decide the future government of the town. Usayd, however, appears to have decided soon after the arrival of the Muhājirūn to back Abū Bakr, carrying with him the 'Abd al-Ashhal and perhaps the majority of the Aws. Among the Khazraj, Bashīr b. Sa'd, rival of Sa'd b. 'Ubāda for the chieftainship, is said to have

¹³ *Annali*, II/1, 528.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 510–11.

been the first to break ranks with him and to support Abū Bakr.¹⁵ It is, however, most unlikely that he or the Aws, whatever their lack of enthusiasm for Sa'd, would have followed 'Umar in physically attacking him.

Decisive for the developments probably was, as duly noted by Caetani, the arrival, during the meeting, of the Banū Aslam. They came forward, according to a report, 'in full number such that the streets became narrow through them. They then swore allegiance to Abū Bakr, and 'Umar used to say: It was only when I saw the Aslam that I was certain of victory.'¹⁶ The Banū Aslam, a branch of Khuzā'a, were known as enthusiastic supporters of Muḥammad who had rewarded them for their loyalty by granting them the status of Muhājirūn irrespective of whether they had performed the *hijra* to Medina or stayed in their own territory. A sizeable number of them had come to dwell near Medina, ever ready to back the Prophet. They were known to be enemies of the Anṣār and thus could be counted upon to oppose Sa'd's aspiration to power.¹⁷ It was evidently they who, by their large number, provided momentum to the *bay'a* of Abū Bakr and who readily responded to the signal of 'Umar to give the recalcitrant Sa'd b. 'Ubāda a mauling.

After the general pledge of allegiance, Abū Bakr sent to Sa'd b. 'Ubāda demanding that he do homage. Sa'd answered defiantly: 'No, by God, I shall not pledge allegiance until I have shot every arrow in my quiver at you [pl.] and fought you with those of my people and tribe who will follow me.' Bashīr b. Sa'd advised Abū Bakr not to press him since all of Khazraj and Aws would stand in solidarity with him before he be killed. When 'Umar succeeded to the caliphate, he met Sa'd by chance and asked him whether he still held on to his position. His answer was: 'Yes, I do so, since 'this matter' [the reign]¹⁸ has devolved on you. Your companion, by God, was preferable in our eyes to you, and I have come to loathe your

¹⁵ Ṭabarī, I, 1842–3. According to al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (quoted by Ibn Abi l-Hadīd, *Sharḥ*, VI, 18), Ibn Ishāq reported that the Aws asserted that Bashīr b. Sa'd was the first of the Anṣār to swear allegiance to Abū Bakr while the Khazraj claimed that it was Usayd b. Ḥuḍayr. Each side thus blamed the other for breaking ranks first. The later standard view was that Bashīr b. Sa'd was the first of the Anṣār to back the supremacy of Quraysh and that he pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr even before 'Umar. See the account in the *Kitāb al-Saqīfa* of Abū Bakr al-Jawharī, a pupil of 'Umar b. Shabba (Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden, 1967–84), I, 322), in Ibn Abi l-Hadīd, *Sharḥ*, VI, 9–10, 40; see also Mufīd, *Jamal*, 91, 115.

¹⁶ Ṭabarī, I, 1843; *Annali*, II/1, 514. Did the Aslam appear on the scene entirely by chance or were they warned of the threatening conduct of the Anṣār by Abū Bakr or 'Umar? There is no information to answer the question.

¹⁷ On the Banū Aslam see J. Wellhausen, *Muhammad in Medina: Das ist Vaidis Kitāb al-Maghāzi in verkürzter deutscher Wiedergabe* (Berlin, 1882), 373–4; al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-Maghāzi*, ed. M. Jones (London, 1966), 939–40; *Annali*, II/1, 94–5, 180; M. J. Kister, 'Khuzā'a', *EI* (2nd edn).

¹⁸ The expression *hādha l-amr*, this matter, was often used in early texts in the meaning of the reign or the caliphate. When used in this sense, it will be placed in quotation marks.

neighbourhood.’ ‘Umar suggested that he leave, and Sa’d went to Syria, where he died in Ḥawrān, probably in the year 15/636. His grandson ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Sa’īd reported that the jinn were heard chanting from a well that they had killed the lord of Khazraj.¹⁹ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz did not speculate whether the jinn were acting at the behest of God or of ‘Umar. Sa’d b. ‘Ubāda’s son Qays was to become one of the most loyal supporters of ‘Alī.

That many of the Anṣār failed to pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr at the Saqīfa meeting is affirmed at the end of an account of it by the Kufan Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī (d. 96/714–15). After mentioning that, following ‘Umar’s example, the people swore allegiance to Abū Bakr, he added: ‘But the Anṣār, or some of them, said: We will not swear allegiance to anyone but ‘Alī.’²⁰ Caetani dismissed this notice as ‘of tendentious Shi‘ite character’.²¹ Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī is, however, not known for Shi‘ite sympathies, and the tenor of the whole account is distinctly Sunnite. Whether the Anṣār raised the name of ‘Alī during the Saqīfa meeting in response to Abū Bakr’s bid for power must remain uncertain, though it is not unlikely.²² That they did so soon after Abū Bakr’s succession is proven by some of the elegiac poetry of the Khazrajī Anṣārī Ḥassān b. Thābit on the Prophet’s death preserved by Ibn Iṣḥāq.

In one of his elegies Ḥassān bitterly complained about the fate of the Anṣār and of the Prophet’s kin after his death:

Woe to the Helpers (*anṣār*) of the Prophet and his kin (*raḥl*) after his absence in the midst of the grave.

The land has become narrow for the Anṣār and their faces have turned black like the colour of antimony.

We have given birth to him and among us is his tomb, we have not denied the overflow of his bounty to us.

God has honoured us through him and through him has guided his Anṣār at every moment of witness.²³

¹⁹ Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, III/2, 144–5; *Annali*, III, 623–4.

²⁰ Ṭabarī, I, 1817–18.

²¹ *Annali*, II/1, 513.

²² Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār in his *al-Akhhbār al-Muwaffaqiyyāt* (ed. Sāmī Makkī al-‘Ānī (Baghdad, 1972)) quoted Ibrāhīm b. Sa’d b. Ibrāhīm (d. 183/799), great-grandson of ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Awf, as stating that many of the Anṣār after the *bay‘a* for Abū Bakr regretted their oath of allegiance. They blamed each other, mentioned ‘Alī, and called out his name. This led to a renewed dispute with the Quraysh (Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, VI, 18). Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār’s detailed story about the conflict between the Anṣār and Muhājirūn (*ibid.*, 17–38) does not inspire confidence, however, and the poetry quoted in the context generally gives the impression of late fabrication. See further the discussion of the attitude of the Anṣār during and after the meeting at the *saqīfa* by I. Hasson, ‘Contributions à l’étude des Aws et des Ḥazrağ’, *Arabica*, 36 (1989), 1–35, at 29–32. Hasson takes a more positive view with respect to the reliability of sources such as the *Muwaffaqiyyāt* of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār and the *Kitāb al-Saqīfa* of al-Jawharī than is taken here.

²³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, 1025; A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Iṣḥāq’s Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (London, 1955), 797–8.

The claim of the Anṣār to have given birth to Muḥammad was based on the fact that the wife of Hāshim, mother of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, was Salmā bt ‘Amr of the Banu l-Najjār of Khazraj. They viewed the Prophet and his kin, the Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, as belonging to them as much as to Quraysh. They had provided shelter to Muḥammad on that basis at a time when few of them had become Muslims and when they could not be considered under any other obligation to protect him. The other Qurayshite Muhājirūn, who had no blood ties with them, were given shelter merely as followers of Muḥammad. Yet now they claimed the right to rule their former protectors while pushing aside the Prophet’s kin. It was only natural that the Anṣār, in particular the Khazraj, should turn to ‘Alī as soon as a succession to Muḥammad was proposed. The faces of the Anṣār and of the Prophet’s kin were thus, in Ḥassān’s view, blackened by the usurpation of their title to the succession.

In another elegy for Muḥammad, Ḥassān attacked Abū Bakr and the Quraysh more openly:

Would that on the day they covered him in the grave, removed him and
cast earth on him
God had not left a single one of us, and neither man nor woman had
survived him.
The Banu l-Najjār altogether have been humiliated, but it was a matter
ordained by God:
The booty (*fay’*) has been divided up to the exclusion of all the people
and they have openly and wantonly squandered it among themselves.²⁴

The last line clearly alludes to Abū Bakr’s deprivation of the Banū Hāshim of the Prophet’s inheritance and of the Prophet’s and their Qur’anic shares of the *fay’*.²⁵ Yet there was resignation in Ḥassān’s caustic charge. The usurpation had been decreed by God. The resistance of the Anṣār did not last long.

The Banū Hāshim themselves did not remain silent. According to Ibn Iṣḥāq, one of the descendants of Abū Lahab responded to the boasting of Abū Bakr’s clan Taym b. Murra about the success of their kinsman with the following lines of poetry:

I did not think that ‘this matter’ would turn away from Hāshim, and
then among them from Abū Ḥasan [‘Alī].
Is he not the first who prayed towards your *qibla* and the most learned of
men about the Qur’ān and the norms (*sunan*)?
The last of men in touch with the Prophet and the one whose helper was
Gabriel in washing and shrouding him. Whatever is in them is in him,
they have no doubts about him, but what there is of good in him is not
in the people.

²⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, 1025; Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, 690.

²⁵ Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, (690 n.1) evidently did not understand the significance of the line when suggesting that its connection with the preceding was obscure.

What is it that has turned them away from him? Let us know! Surely, we have been cheated in the most monstrous way.

The poem is probably by al-‘Abbās b. ‘Utba b. Abī Lahab, who was married to Āmina, daughter of al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib,²⁶ and seems to have been a poet of no mean talent. Because of his close relationship to Muḥammad’s uncle cursed in the Qur’ān, however, most of his poetry was forgotten, and what is left is attributed to others, in particular his son al-Faḍl.²⁷ ‘Alī sent to him and forbade him to recite this and similar poetry, commenting that the welfare of the faith was dearer to him than anything else.²⁸

‘Umar’s justification of the quick election of Abū Bakr, in what amounted to a *falta*, because of the danger that the Anṣār might otherwise have sworn allegiance to someone with whom the Muhājirūn would not have been pleased, thus raises another question. Was it perhaps not only the possibility that the Medinans would have elected one of their own, but also that they might have put forward ‘Alī, that worried the Muhājirūn present and induced them to act without proposing a broad *shūrā* of all concerned? If ‘Umar’s summary account can be trusted on this point, Abū Bakr in his speech did everything to avoid the case of ‘Alī being raised. He based the right of Quraysh to rule solely on the claim that only they would be obeyed by all the Arabs, not on their relationship to Muḥammad. In the later elaborations of the events at the Saqīfa, Abū Bakr is, in contrast, described as basing the case of Quraysh primarily on their being Muḥammad’s kin. Such an argument, however, would have been an invitation to raise the question of the right of the Banū Hāshim as the closest kin of Muḥammad, a line ever pursued by Shi‘ite polemicists

²⁶ Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 28; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī (Beirut, 1974), III, 22.

²⁷ The present lines were attributed by al-Ya‘qūbī (*Ta‘rikh*, ed. M. T. Houtsma (Leiden, 1883), II, 138) to ‘Utba b. Abī Lahab; by the Mu‘tazilite Abū Ja‘far al-Iskāfī in his *Kitāb al-Uthmāniyya* to the Umayyad Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb (Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, XIII, 232); by the Shaykh al-Mufīd in his *al-Irshād* (ed. Kāzīm al-Mūsawī al-Miyāmawī (Tehran, 1377/[1957–8])), 14–15, on the authority of the Basran Ibn ‘Ā’isha, d. 228/843 to Khuzayma b. Thābit al-Anṣārī; in his *al-Jamal* (p. 118) to ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Sufyān b. al-Hārith b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib; and in his *al-Uyūn wa l-maḥāsīn* (see al-Murtaḍā, *al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra min al-Uyūn wa l-maḥāsīn* (Najaf, 1365/[1964]), II, 61) to Rabī‘a b. al-Hārith b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib; in the *Kitāb al-Saqīfa* (Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, n.d.) ascribed to Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī (p. 78) to al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib; and by Ibn al-Athīr (*Uṣd al-ghāba fī ma‘rifat al-ṣahāba* [Cairo, 1285–7/1869–71], IV, 40) to al-Faḍl b. al-‘Abbās b. ‘Utba b. Abī Lahab (who can hardly have been born at this time). I am obliged to Prof. H. Modarressi for providing some of these references. Ibn Ḥajar’s note on al-‘Abbās b. ‘Utba b. Abī Lahab (*Iṣḫāb*, IV, 30–1) is ambiguous as to whether he attributed the poetry to al-‘Abbās b. ‘Utba or to his son al-Faḍl. For other examples of al-‘Abbās b. ‘Utba’s poetry being attributed to his son al-Faḍl see below, pp. 186, 221 with n.312.

²⁸ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, VI, 21, quoting the *Muwaffaqiyyāt* of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār. See al-Zubayr, *Muwaffaqiyyāt*, 581.

against the Sunnite doctrine that the caliphs must be of Quraysh, the Prophet's broader kin. It is thus likely that Abū Bakr avoided the argument of blood relationship.²⁹

Did the three Muhājirūn at the Saqīfa meeting act spontaneously or according to a concerted plan? More specifically, had they discussed the question of the succession among themselves even before Muḥammad's death and perhaps even agreed on putting forward Abū Bakr as the most reasonable choice, as Lammens' thesis of the 'triumvirate' seems to imply? Good arguments can be raised against such an assumption. An immediate one is provided by 'Umar's stand right after Muḥammad's death in which he vigorously denied it and harangued the assembled Muslims with warnings against accepting the false rumours spread by some hypocrites. According to Abū Hurayra, 'Umar asserted that Muḥammad had gone to his Lord as Moses had done, leaving his people for forty days and returning after he had been pronounced dead. Muḥammad would do likewise and would cut off the hands and feet of those who claimed that he was dead.³⁰ If there had been previous agreement, it would have to be assumed that 'Umar's action was calculated and planned in order to gain time. Abū Bakr's immediate repudiation of 'Umar's position shows that this was not the case. It rather seems that 'Umar was partly sincere in his apology on the next day to the Muslims assembled for the general *bay'a* that he had believed the Prophet would 'manage our affairs until he would be the last one of us (*sa-yudabbiru amranā hattā yakūna ākhiranā*)'.³¹ Even later, during his caliphate, he confided to 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās that he had been misled by Sūra II 143: 'Thus we have made them a community in the middle that you may be a witness about the people and the Messenger may be a witness about you' into thinking that the Prophet would remain among his community so that he would be the witness about their last acts.³² 'Umar, to be sure, can hardly have not thought at all of the possibility that Muḥammad would die. It was a thought, however, that he, an impetuous and ardent champion of the cause of Islam, strove to keep off his mind. His reaction denying the Prophet's death was certainly spontaneous; he did not want to believe it.³³ 'Umar thus had scarcely envisaged the consequences of

²⁹ Caetani went further to deny that Abū Bakr argued for the right of Quraysh at all. He held that Abū Bakr was not elected for his kinship, but solely for his moral qualities (*Annali*, II/1, 540). That the exclusive right of Quraysh to the caliphate was instituted by Abū Bakr is, however, hardly questionable. ³⁰ Ṭabarī, I, 1815–16. ³¹ *Ibid.*, 1828.

³² *Ibid.*, 1829–30; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 568.

³³ Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd (*Sharḥ*, II, 42–3) found it incredible that a man of 'Umar's rank could have failed to realize that the Prophet was dead and suggests that he tried to conceal it on his own initiative, fearing anarchy and rebellion and trying to calm the people. That 'Umar's public action was motivated by such fear and concern is obvious, but this does not mean that he personally must have been convinced that Muḥammad was dead. If that

Muḥammad's death, not to mention having agreed on plans for the succession.

Quite different was the case of Abū Bakr. Although he did not expect the death of Muḥammad when it happened, as is evident from his being away in his family home in al-Sunḥ,³⁴ he cannot have had any doubts that Muḥammad would some time die. As a consummate, coolly calculating Mekkan businessman and politician, closely involved in managing and planning the affairs of the Muslim community as the Prophet's trusted adviser, he must have carefully contemplated what would happen if the latter should die before him. Deeply committed to the commonwealth founded by Muḥammad in the name of Islam, he was most eager to see it continue to grow and expand its authority over all the Arabs and, as far as possible, beyond. If it was not to fall apart, the Prophet must have a political successor, a *khalīfa*. But who should he be? Abū Bakr had decided, no doubt well before Muḥammad's death, that he was the man. He also recognized that, without a nomination by the Prophet, he would have to neutralize potentially strong opposition in order to realize his ambition. Most obviously Muḥammad's own *ahl al-bayt*, who had been accorded a rank above the rest of the Muslims by the Qur'ān, would have to be prevented from putting forward their claim.

The initiative of the Anṣār gave Abū Bakr the opportunity for which he was looking. It was he who provoked the *falta* by proposing two candidates for election in a manoeuvre to have himself proposed. That his own proposal was not meant seriously was plain enough from his offering two nominations for the assembly to quarrel about. Abū Bakr was well aware that neither of the two candidates stood a chance of being accepted. Abū 'Ubayda, although a respected early Companion, did not have the prominence and stature to be seriously considered. He was present primarily as a close friend of 'Umar. 'Umar, although most closely associated with the Prophet, prominent in the community, and used to command, had just discredited himself by publicly denying the death of Muḥammad. Abū Bakr was sure that 'Umar, shattered by the loss of the Prophet and having since twice allowed himself to be pushed around by

had been the case, there would have been no reason for him to conceal it afterwards and to admit that he had been mistaken. It is evident that his honest admission damaged his political standing, at least temporarily, whereas a claim that he had in fact been acting in the interest of the community would have raised it. For later Muslims, no longer aware of the intense religious feeling of the approaching end of the world and of the closeness of the Hour created by the Prophet's message, it was naturally difficult to believe that 'Umar had been so 'naive'.

³⁴ Abū Bakr's home in al-Sunḥ was located among the houses of the Banu l-Ḥārith of Khazraj (Ibn Shabba, *Ta'riḫ al-Madīna*, 243; M. Lecker, *Muslims, Jews and Pagans: Studies in early Islamic Medina* (Leiden, 1995), 6). He had also an apartment opening into the Prophet's mosque where he could have stayed if he had expected Muḥammad's death.

Abū Bakr, would again defer to him. ‘Umar took the hint and offered Abū Bakr the handshake of allegiance. Abū Bakr did not hesitate a moment to accept. He had what he wanted.

The precipitate move of the Anṣār to choose a leader among themselves was thus a true stroke of luck for Abū Bakr. It gave him the chance to make himself the spokesman for the continued unity of the Muslim community under a single leader which was threatened by the action of the Anṣār. Equally important from his point of view, it gave him the chance to secure an oath of allegiance to himself before there could be a general discussion about candidates for the succession. Abū Bakr was well aware that a *shūrā* of those most directly involved, Quraysh and the Anṣār, would not have been in his interest. It would have almost inevitably led either to failure or to the choice of ‘Alī as the closest relative of Muḥammad. The great majority of the Anṣār would have backed ‘Alī, if he had been proposed as a candidate for the succession, since they considered him, like Muḥammad, as partly belonging to them. Among Quraysh, the situation was evidently less clear cut. ‘Umar’s later assessment of it, as reported by Ibn al-‘Abbās, that the Quraysh were not willing to countenance the hereditary reign of one clan which had already been privileged by having been divinely chosen for prophethood, carries some weight. There were certainly many who would not have liked the prospect of dynastic rule of the Prophet’s family and who were flattered by Abū Bakr’s initial claim that Quraysh was collectively entitled to the rule and that he was acting in their name. Once this claim had been made and Abū Bakr had secured the backing of a few dedicated men, it was apt to swing the majority support among Quraysh quickly behind him. But in a *shūrā* on the succession, the purely negative principle of avoiding dynastic rule and therefore excluding Muḥammad’s kin from consideration would have been difficult to promote. Once the name of ‘Alī had come up, the ‘Abd Shams, one of the two most powerful clans of Quraysh, would have been honour bound by the tribal code of ethics to back him. For although the conflict between the Banū Hāshim and the Banū ‘Abd Shams was older than Islam and the majority of the latter under Abū Sufyān had played a leading part in the opposition to Muḥammad, the two clans were nevertheless closely related. So long as the ‘Abd Shams could not hope to put forward a candidate of their own, it would have been shameful for Abū Sufyān, the chief of ‘Abd Shams, not to back ‘Alī, especially since the Prophet had treated him and his clan most generously after the conquest of Mekka.

There is indeed good evidence that Abū Sufyān, immediately after the election of Abū Bakr, offered ‘Alī his support in order to counter the decision. In a letter ‘Alī later reminded Mu‘āwiya of his father’s offer,

explaining that he, 'Alī, had not accepted it because Abū Sufyān and his people had only recently been infidels and their involvement might have provoked division among the Muslims.³⁵ Western scholars have usually treated reports that Abū Sufyān in fact offered 'Alī support against Abū Bakr, but was dismissed by him as a mere troublemaker, as sheer anti-Umayyad fiction.³⁶ Yet even if such reports reflect a bias against the father of the founder of the Umayyad dynasty and regardless of whether he actually made such an offer under the circumstances of Abū Bakr's *fait accompli*, they clearly show what was generally considered as reasonable on Abū Sufyān's part. The refusal of the Umayyad Khālid b. Sa'īd b. al-'Āṣ, one of the earliest converts to Islam and a prominent Companion, to swear allegiance to Abū Bakr when he returned from the Yemen to Medina a month after the latter's succession and his insistence on the rights of the Banū 'Abd Manāf (including both Hāshim and 'Abd Shams) are significant.³⁷ Khālid's brother Abān b. Sa'īd is also reported to have refused to swear allegiance to Abū Bakr in solidarity with the Banū Hāshim and to have done so only when these decided to swear allegiance.³⁸ The joint backing of the Anṣār and 'Abd Shams for 'Alī would no doubt have persuaded otherwise uncommitted clans and individuals to support his candidacy. The other powerful clan of Quraysh, Makhzūm, although certainly opposed to hereditary rule by the Banū Hāshim, would have found it extremely difficult to unite the opposition behind a counter-candidate.

The plain logic of dynastic succession would thus almost certainly have asserted itself in a general consultation. For the principle of heredity clearly provides the most natural, simple and uncontentious basis for

³⁵ Naṣr b. Mūzahim al-Minqarī, *Waq'at Šiffīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo, 1382/[1962]), 91; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī (Beirut, 1974), II, 281. Concerning the question of the authenticity of the letter see below, p. 210 n. 280.

³⁶ So *Annali*, II/1, 518. Caetani's contention that Abū Sufyān in fact contributed vitally to the election of Abū Bakr (*ibid.*, VII, 479) lacks any foundation.

³⁷ Ṭabarī, I, 2079–80; H. Loucel, 'Khālid b. Sa'īd', *EI* (2nd edn) In the case of Khālid b. Sa'īd, too, Sunnite tradition presents 'Alī as a loyal supporter of Abū Bakr unable to understand how Khālid could have considered him as overpowered by Abū Bakr. He is quoted as stating: 'This is the order of God which He places wherever He wants' (Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 588). Yet this was at a time when 'Alī himself still refused to swear allegiance to Abū Bakr. Another prominent member of 'Abd Shams who refused to swear allegiance to Abū Bakr and sided with 'Alī was Abu l-'Āṣ b. al-Rabī b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. 'Abd Shams. He was married to Muḥammad's eldest daughter Zaynab before Islam, but became a Muslim only after having been captured by the Muslims first at Badr and again during a commercial trip to Syria. When he finally accepted Islam, Muḥammad allowed him to remarry Zaynab, who had come earlier to Medina. He accompanied 'Alī during his expedition to the Yemen. After Fāṭima's death he gave 'Alī his daughter Umāma, granddaughter of Muḥammad, in marriage. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, VII, 118–20; *Annali*, II/2, 1239–40. ³⁸ See *Annali*, VIII, 345.

succession to power. It is because of this that it has been so widely accepted throughout human history. The common argument of Sunnite Muslims and western scholars that 'Alī could not have been a serious candidate because of his youth and lack of experience compared to Companions such as Abū Bakr and 'Umar is quite beside the point. It would be valid only after an initial agreement to exclude the principle of hereditary succession. But such an agreement, as Abū Bakr well realized, would have been virtually impossible to reach in a *shūrā*.

Abū Bakr's clear determination to seek the succession and to prevent the election of 'Alī requires further explanation. Abū Bakr was at the time an old man who could not expect to enjoy his reign for long. He had apparently no sons or close relatives suited to succeed him.³⁹ Would it not have been more reasonable for him to back the succession of the Prophet's cousin and father of his grandsons in the expectation that 'Alī, lacking political experience, would have continued to rely on Abū Bakr's counsel as Muḥammad had done? It was evidently the poor relationship, distrust and hostility between the two men that stood in the way of such a course. 'Alī's stand in the affair of 'Ā'isha's lost necklace and her unnoticed absence from the Muslim campsite, his advice to Muḥammad to divorce her and his attempt to press a confession of guilt out of 'Ā'isha's maid had brought upon him the life-long hatred of the Prophet's favourite wife which she never made an effort to conceal. Abū Bakr must have shared much of her ill feeling, although he was too refined a politician ever to vent it in public. The disgrace of 'Ā'isha would not only have stained the honour of his family but would also most likely have affected his own position of trusted friend of the Prophet. Rightly or wrongly, he no doubt assumed that 'Alī was motivated by jealousy of his influence on Muḥammad and was trying to undermine it by accusing his daughter. Abū Bakr thenceforth saw in him a rival and an enemy. He could expect nothing

³⁹ Neither of Abū Bakr's two grown-up sons joined him at the time of his *hijra* to Medina. 'Abd al-Rahmān, the eldest son and full brother of 'Ā'isha, was present at the battle of Badr on the side of the Mekkan enemies of Islam. He is said to have become a Muslim shortly before the conquest of Mekka. It is possible that he stood by Abū Bakr's father Abū Quḥāfa, who did not accept Islam until after the conquest. 'Abd al-Rahmān's relations with his father appear to have been strained, but he had later good relations with his sister. 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Bakr, borne by a different mother, is said to have supplied his father and the Prophet with provisions and news while they were hiding in a cave before their *hijra*. Still later he used to visit Medina secretly bringing information about the Mekkans and was concealed by 'Ā'isha. It is unknown when he definitely joined the Muslims. While fighting on the Muslim side at the siege of al-Ṭā'if, he was seriously wounded by an arrow. He died of the wound two years later at the beginning of his father's reign. Abū Bakr's third son, Muḥammad, was borne by Asmā' bt 'Umays, the widow of 'Alī's brother Ja'far, less than a year before Abū Bakr's accession. After Abū Bakr's death, Asmā' married 'Alī. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr thus grew up in 'Alī's household and became an ardent partisan of his step-father.

good for himself or for 'Ā'isha if the succession fell to 'Alī. 'Alī would presumably have relied rather on his uncle al-'Abbās for political advice and would have reduced the station of 'Ā'isha. Abū Bakr thus had sound reason for seeking to prevent 'Alī's succession, aside from his personal ambition. Whatever 'Alī's motivation, his youthful folly in trying to interfere in the Prophet's marital relations thus cost him dearly. Aided by the precipitate move of the Anṣār, Abū Bakr could realize the designs which he must have been harbouring ever since the unfortunate affair.

In spite of 'Umar's claim that 'the necks of all Muslims were stretched out for Abū Bakr', the situation of the caliph was at first highly precarious, and not only because of the *ridḍa* of numerous tribes. In Medina 'Umar took charge of securing the pledge of allegiance of all residents. He dominated the streets with the help first of the Aslam and then the 'Abd al-Ashhal of Aws who, in contrast to the majority of Khazraj, quickly became vigorous champions of the new regime. The sources mention the actual use of force only with respect to the Companion al-Zubayr who had been together with some others of the Muhājirūn in the house of Fāṭima. 'Umar threatened to set the house on fire unless they came out and swore allegiance to Abū Bakr. Al-Zubayr came out with his sword drawn, but stumbled and lost it, whereupon 'Umar's men jumped upon him and carried him off.⁴⁰ There is some evidence that the house of Fāṭima was searched (*futtisha*). 'Alī is reported to have later repeatedly said that had there been forty men with him he would have resisted.⁴¹ To what extent force was used in other cases must remain uncertain. In general the threat of it was probably sufficient to induce the reluctant to conform. Isolated reports about the use of force against 'Alī and the Banū Hāshim⁴² who, according to al-Zuhrī, unanimously refused to swear allegiance for six months,⁴³ are probably to be discounted. Abū Bakr no doubt was wise enough to restrain 'Umar from any violence against them, well realizing that this would inevitably provoke the sense of solidarity of the majority of 'Abd Manāf whose acquiescence he needed. His policy was rather to isolate the Banū Hāshim as far as possible. 'Ā'isha's comment that the prominent people ceased to

⁴⁰ Or: seized his sword. See Ṭabarī, I, 1818.

⁴¹ Minqarī, *Waq'at Ṣiffīn*, 163. According to the *Kitāb al-Safīna* of Abū Bakr al-Jawharī, 'Alī was led by 'Umar before Abū Bakr. He refused to pledge allegiance to him, arguing that he had a better title to the rule. Abū 'Ubayda tried to persuade him to change his mind on the basis that Abū Bakr was older and more experienced than he and that, if 'Alī survived him, he would certainly be most worthy to succeed because of his close kinship with the Prophet and his early merits. 'Alī insisted, however, that the authority of Muḥammad should not be removed from his house and did not pledge allegiance until after the death of Fāṭima (Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, VI, 11–12).

⁴² See, for instance, Ṭabarī, I, 1819–20 where it is claimed that al-Zubayr and 'Alī were both forced by 'Umar to pledge allegiance. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1825.

speak to 'Alī until he acknowledged his mistake and pledged allegiance to Abū Bakr is significant. The Banū Hāshim thus found themselves in a situation strangely reminiscent of the boycott that the pagan Mekkans organized against them in order to force them to withdraw their protection from Muḥammad. This time, however, it was the Muslims putting pressure on them to abandon their support of 'Alī who, in contrast to Muḥammad, gave in, surrendering his claim after the death of Fāṭima.

Crucial for Abū Bakr, however, was gaining the allegiance of the Mekkan Quraysh. With the loyalty of the Anṣār in doubt and many of the Arab tribes deserting, only Mekka, the former enemy city which had submitted to Muḥammad just two years before, could now save the Islamic commonwealth. In Mekka Abū Bakr could not rely on the use or threat of force. It was solely his diplomatic skills that counted. The Mekkans had since their surrender done very well under the rule of Islam. Muḥammad had treated them most generously and had appointed a number of their leading men, even though they had been among his most vigorous opponents, to powerful and lucrative positions as army leaders, governors and alms-tax collectors. The Mekkans had thus little reason to question the continuation of Islamic government in principle or to long for their former state of independence.⁴⁴ But Abū Bakr had more to offer them than Muḥammad could, or would, ever have done. The Islamic state was henceforth to be based on the rule of Quraysh over all Arabs. Their right to rule in the name of Islam derived from the claim that the Arabs would not obey anyone else. Abū Bakr had safeguarded their innate right by thwarting the ambitions of the Anṣār. The Anṣār, with whose backing Muḥammad had been able to humiliate them, would be put in their proper place and become, like the rest of the Arabs, subjects of Quraysh. Without a family or clan who could seriously aspire

⁴⁴ Not much is known about the events in Mekka at this time. According to Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī, the Mekkans, when learning of the death of Muḥammad, became agitated and were ready to apostatize from Islam. Then Suhayl b. 'Amr of the Banū 'Āmir stood up and delivered among them 'the like of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq's speech in Medina, as if he had heard it'. The people calmed down and accepted his guidance. Their governor at the time was, according to al-Zubayrī, 'Attāb b. Asīd of 'Abd Shams (Zubayrī, *Nasab*, 418). Suhayl b. 'Amr, well known as an orator, had been one of the most vigorous enemies of Muḥammad and Islam until the Muslim conquest of Mekka. He may have persuaded the Mekkans that now, after Muḥammad's death, Quraysh was destined to rule the Arabs in the name of Islam, just as Abū Bakr persuaded the Muslims in Medina. Suhayl and his family then joined the conquest of Syria where he and all of his sons were killed. The Banū 'Āmir (b. Lu'ayy) of Quraysh were, it may be noted, traditionally closely allied to 'Abd Shams and opposed to Hāshim. See further M. J. Kister, '... *illā bi-ḥaqqihī*, A Study of an Early *Hadīth*', *JSAI*, 5 (1984), 33–52, at 34–5. Kister quotes reports to the effect that Suhayl urged the Mekkans to pay their *zakāt* to their governor and promised to compensate them for any *zakāt* payment if Abū Bakr's government were to collapse.

to hereditary rule, Abū Bakr was truly their man, the caliph of Quraysh.

Abū Bakr's heavy reliance on the old Mekkan aristocracy for the leadership of the Muslim armies in the suppression of the *ridda* and the beginning of the conquests outside Arabia has been duly noted by E. Shoufani⁴⁵ and F. Donner.⁴⁶ In particular the two most powerful clans of Quraysh, Makhzūm and 'Abd Shams, were given preference. Among Abū Bakr's commanders in the *ridda* wars were 'Ikrima b. Abī Jahl of Makhzūm and Yazīd b. Abī Sufyān of Umayya, sons of the two former leaders of the Mekkan opposition to Muḥammad. Of Makhzūm were also Khālid b. al-Walīd and al-Muhājir b. Abī Umayya; of 'Abd Shams, Khālid b. Asīd b. Abi l-'Īs, Khālid b. Sa'īd b. al-'Āṣ and, by clientage, al-'Alā' b. al-Ḥaḍramī. Most of these Mekkan leaders had, to be sure, already been employed by Muḥammad in various functions. Yet their dominant position under Abū Bakr is put into proper relief by the complete exclusion of the Anṣār from leadership and the greatly reduced role of the early Muhājirūn. Among the Muslim army leaders during the *ridda* there was only one early Companion of Muḥammad, Shuraḥbīl b. Ḥasana, a confederate of the Banū Zuhra of Quraysh of South Arabian (Kinda) origin.

When Abū Bakr later laid the plans for the conquest of Syria, he appointed as the first commander Khālid b. Sa'īd b. al-'Āṣ, who had previously refused to swear allegiance for some time. The reason for this choice was certainly not that he was one of the earliest Companions, but rather that he was an Umayyad. When he was dismissed because of strong representations by 'Umar against him, Abū Bakr replaced him by the Umayyad Yazīd b. Abī Sufyān. It is evident that the caliph intended to give the 'Abd Shams a stake in the conquest of Syria. Abū Sufyān is known to have owned some land near Damascus before Islam.⁴⁷ The aim of gratifying the powerful Mekkan clan evidently outweighed in Abū Bakr's eyes the slight he had been dealt by Khālid b. Sa'īd. On the other hand, the role given to Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ, who, as one of the two prominent Companions backing Abū Bakr at the Saqīfa assembly, could have expected a leading part, was quite limited. He was evidently not among the leaders of the three armies initially dispatched and in some accounts is not mentioned at all before the caliphate of 'Umar.⁴⁸ Most likely he was sent secondarily with some auxiliary troops to aid the first invading armies.⁴⁹ 'Umar later appointed him general commander in

⁴⁵ Shoufani, *al-Riddah*, 58–64.

⁴⁶ F. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), 86–8.

⁴⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje as *Liber expugnationis regionum* (Leiden, 1866), 129; Donner, 96.

⁴⁸ Shoufani, *al-Riddah*, 140–3; Donner, *Conquests*, 114–15.

⁴⁹ M. J. de Goeje, *Mémoire sur la conquête de la Syrie* (Leiden, 1900), 25.

Syria. In initially sending Khālīd b. al-Walīd to invade Iraq, Abū Bakr may have similarly had it in mind to give Makhzūm a stake in the conquest of that country.

With the Muslim armies mostly under the command of members of the old Mekkan aristocracy, Medina was virtually at the mercy of Muḥammad's recent enemies, especially during the *ridda*. If the leaders of Quraysh had chosen to conspire, they could have done away with the caliphate at a stroke. Abū Bakr's resolute rejection of 'Umar's demands for the dismissal, or at least censure, of Khālīd b. al-Walīd for his un-Islamic conduct may have been motivated by more than just the recognition of his superior qualities as a military leader. Yet Abū Bakr could also be generally confident that the Mekkan leaders would co-operate, realizing that they would profit more than anyone else from the Qurayshite caliphate in the name of Islam.

It was the declared intention of Abū Bakr to follow as caliph the policies and practices of Muḥammad in every respect. He adopted the official title *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, Successor or Vicegerent of the Messenger of God.⁵⁰ In order to comply with the Prophet's wishes, he immediately ordered the planned campaign towards the Syrian border area to go ahead, although the absence of the army would expose the caliphate, before it had been firmly established, to considerable danger. He insisted on retaining Usāma b. Zayd, son of Muḥammad's freedman, as the commander despite the unpopularity of this choice because of Usāma's youth and lack of experience. Breaking ranks with the Banū Hāshim, Usāma had evidently pledged allegiance to the caliph. Abū Bakr must have appreciated his stand at this time.

Abū Bakr also justified his immediate demand that all Arab tribes pay the Islamic alms-tax to him by his duty as Muḥammad's successor to follow the Prophet's path. The obligation of Muslims to pay a regular annual tax, rather than giving voluntary alms, seems to have been initiated in the year 9/630.⁵¹ Ibn Sa'd gives a list of the first tax collectors sent out by Muḥammad in Muḥarram (April–May) to some tribes in the Ḥijāz and north-east of Medina. The impression is created that initially only a few loyal tribes were asked to pay the tax. A number of the tax

⁵⁰ The Muslim sources may be trusted in this respect; Abū Bakr wished to be seen as acting in the name of the Prophet. The assumption of P. Crone and M. Hinds (*God's Caliph: Religious authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, 1986), 19–22) that the title of *khalīfa* meant from the beginning *khalīfat Allāh*, vicegerent of God, takes no account of the historical situation and the different circumstances that induced 'Uthmān to adopt the title *khalīfat Allāh*.

⁵¹ See for the following especially Shoufani, *al-Riddah*, 44–7. Shoufani's assumption that the first tax collectors were not sent out before the beginning of the year 10 H. and that no taxes were returned to Medina before Muḥammad's death seems untenable.

collectors were members of the tribes to whom they were sent, and it is unclear to what extent the rates of taxation were fixed.⁵² During the pilgrimage season at the end of the year (February 631) the proclamation of the Sūra of Renunciation (*al-Barāʿa*) was made that polytheists in general would no longer be granted protection and would be subject to Muslim attack unless they repented. Excepted were, however, those who had concluded pacts with Muḥammad and had kept them. These pacts were to be fulfilled until their expiration. While the pressure on the Arab pagans to submit to Islam and the Prophet was thus increased, the exception for treaty allies shows that Muḥammad was not yet prepared simply to impose Islam on all of them. The enforcement of the alms-tax was probably also handled with caution and discretion on the part of Muḥammad during the following, last, year of his life. There are no reports of any force used against tribes failing to pay, of which there must have been more than a few.

The significance of the alms-tax for the Arab tribes was indeed different from that of any other obligation previously imposed by Islam. Unlike the duty to pray, to fast, to join collectively in the *jihād* and to give voluntary alms as the Qurʾān and Muḥammad had demanded in the early days of Islam, the alms-tax potentially meant the surrender of tribal autonomy, the acceptance of tax officials with the right to inspect and assess private property, of governors with the right to force recalcitrant subjects. It meant the subjection of the tribes to a ruler or government, something the tribes had ever most vigorously resisted. Their fear of subjection no doubt contributed to the spread of opposition movements to Islam in the last year of Muḥammad's life.

At the beginning of Muḥarram 11/end of March 632, two months before his death, Muḥammad again sent out tax collectors to the tribes for the new year. The tribes named in the report were mostly the same as in the year 9/630, those relatively close to Medina and to Mekka.⁵³ In the outlying regions, it was evidently the Muslim governors who were generally responsible for the collection of the tax, but payment was probably largely voluntary and patchy.⁵⁴ The latent resentment against the levy came out into the open on the Prophet's death, as many of the loyal tribes offered to recognize Abū Bakr as his successor but refused payment of the alms-tax. Despite his precarious position, Abū Bakr immediately took a hard line in the matter. ʿUmar, Abū ʿUbayda and

⁵² There is evidence that the detailed rates of *zakāt* stipulated by Islamic law were not introduced before Abū Bakr. See J. Schacht, 'Zakāt' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1913–38). ⁵³ *Annali*, II/1, 575–6.

⁵⁴ For a list of the governors at the time of Muḥammad's death according to Sayf b. ʿUmar see *ibid.*, 569–70, where a separate tax official is mentioned for Najrān. The alms-tax in these outlying regions may have been spent locally rather than being delivered to Medina.

Sālim, the client of Abū Ḥudhayfa, urged him to rescind the tax for the year and to treat the tribes loyal to Islam leniently in order to enlist their support for fighting those who had abandoned Islam.⁵⁵ Abū Bakr rejected any compromise on the tax, making it the yardstick for the loyalty of the tribes to Islam itself. Going well beyond any precedent set by Muḥammad, he insisted that those refusing payment of the tax were to be treated and fought as apostates, just like those who had abandoned Islam and those who had never accepted it. Abū Bakr's attitude was well summarized in the statement widely attributed to him in the sources: 'If they withheld only a hobbling-cord of what they gave the Prophet, I would fight them for it.'

Later Muslim scholars found it difficult to explain and justify Abū Bakr's conduct. 'Umar was quoted questioning the caliph as to his right to fight the tribes since the Prophet had said: 'I was ordered to fight people until they say that there is no god but God. If they say this, they safeguard themselves and their property from me.'⁵⁶ Some speculated that Abū Bakr must have been acting on the basis of a hadith quoting Muḥammad as telling a tax collector who had been sent back empty-handed to him by a bedouin: 'Return to him, and if he does not give you the tax, cut his head off!'⁵⁷ Others argued that the Companions were calling the withholders of the tax apostates merely metaphorically. In reality they were Muslim rebels and as such deserved to be fought. Yet while later lawyers such as al-Shāfi'ī might be prepared to consider peaceable Muslims refusing to fulfil a previously accepted religious obligation as rebels whose blood could legitimately be shed, such a notion of 'rebellion' had in reality no basis in the Qur'ān⁵⁸ or the practice of the Prophet but arose out of the caliphate as conceived by Abū Bakr. Although the impact of Muḥammad's authority on the lives of the Muslims had steadily widened, it had remained essentially a moral authority. The Qur'ān frequently admonished them to obey God, the Prophet and those in command among them, and threatened the disobedient with severe divine punishment. The problem of nominal or lukewarm Muslims who resisted and contravened many of his orders and decisions was a serious one for Muḥammad, as is evident from the numerous denunciations of hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) in the Qur'ān. Yet the Qur'ān did not sanction the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 572–3.

⁵⁶ Shoufani, *al-Riddah*, 102. See further the detailed study of the dispute about Abū Bakr's conduct by Kister, '... illā bi-ḥaqqihī'. ⁵⁷ *Amalī*, II/1, 572.

⁵⁸ The Qur'anic proof text for the treatment of Muslim rebels (*bughāt*) was Sūra XLIX 9: 'If two groups of the believers fight, conciliate (*aṣliḥū*) between them, but if one of them transgresses (*baghā*) upon the other, fight the one which transgresses until it returns to the order of God. Then if it returns, conciliate between them with justice and act fairly.' It is evident that the verse could not be applied to the 'rebel' tribes.

shedding of their blood or physical coercion of them. By Qur'anic standards, Abū Bakr might at most have castigated the tribes withholding the alms-tax as hypocrites. He could not make war on them either as apostates or as rebels.

Behind the front of merely claiming his due as the vicegerent of the Prophet, Abū Bakr thus brought about a radical change of policy. The full significance of his affirmation that the caliph must be of Quraysh because the Arabs would obey none but them now became apparent. The caliph was to be not so much the religious leader of the *umma*, the community of Islam, as Muḥammad had been, but the ruler of all Arabs, commanding their obedience in the name of Islam. For this reason peaceable Muslims withholding the alms-tax from the caliph, genuine renegades and other Arabs who had never become Muslims were all to be classed as apostates and to be fought until they would submit to both Islam and the rule of the caliph of Quraysh.

Among the official titles of the later caliphs, *amīr al-mu'minīn*, Commander of the Faithful, was the preferred and most commonly employed one.⁵⁹ According to historical tradition, it was 'Umar who first adopted it. It reflected most closely the concept of the caliphate established by Abū Bakr. The caliph was primarily the ruler of the faithful. Quraysh provided the ruling class, his aides, and the other Arab tribes were to be his subjects. Abū Bakr set out with unbending determination to subdue them.

The early Companions including even 'Umar, a man deeply committed to the expansion of the authority of Islam by force, initially had misgivings, especially about the flagrant aggression against fellow Muslims. Had not the Qur'ān admonished the Muslims that they were brothers and should strive to settle their conflicts by conciliation? Abū Bakr could again count on the backing of the Quraysh, who readily saw the benefits that the subjugation of the Arabs would bring for them. In order to secure their caravan trade, Quraysh had long relied on alliances with some Arab tribes. Yet such alliances with autonomous tribes were by nature unstable and often meant sharing of material benefits and the enmity of other tribes. The subjugation of all Arabs proposed by the caliph offered them safe and unimpeded trade relations and opened up new sources of material gain as leaders of Muslim armies and future governors and tax officials in the subjugated lands. Quraysh pursued the war against the 'apostates' with enthusiasm. The spirit with which it was waged is clearly reflected in the cold-blooded execution of Mālīk b. Nuwayra and others of the Banū Yarbū' after their surrender and confession of Islam and in

⁵⁹ Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 11.

the appropriation of his wife by Khālid b. al-Walīd. Earlier in the year Mālik had been entrusted by Muḥammad with the collection of the alms-tax among his tribe. When he learned of the Prophet's death he returned the camels gathered by him to his fellow tribesmen or, according to another report, raided and drove off the camels collected from various tribes as alms. According to both major accounts, Abū Bakr himself, infuriated by Mālik's evident refusal to recognize him as the legitimate successor of Muḥammad, instructed Khālid to kill him if he could lay his hands on him.⁶⁰

Abū Bakr's front of meticulously following the practice and precedents set by the Prophet in every respect was most difficult to maintain in his treatment of his predecessor's kin, the Banū Hāshim. It was evident that the primary purpose of establishing caliphal rule on a sound basis was inconsistent with maintaining the privileged status of Muḥammad's *ahl al-bayt*, of applying the Qur'anic rules of inheritance to them, and of continuing to pay their Qur'anic shares of the war booty and the *fay'*. Abū Bakr's solution was both radical and ingenious. According to 'Ā'isha's account, he told Fāṭima and al-'Abbās when they came to claim their inheritance from Muḥammad, and in particular his land in Fadak and his share of the land of Khaybar: 'As for me, I have heard the Messenger of God say: "We [the prophets] do not have heirs (*lā nūriṭh*). Whatever we leave is alms (*ṣadaqa*). The family of Muḥammad (*āl Muḥammad*) can eat from that property.'" Surely, by God, I would not leave any matter undone which I have seen the Messenger of God do."⁶¹ Abū Bakr's reply solved the problem of the *ahl al-bayt* in one stroke without his losing face. Not only had Muḥammad disinherited his family, he had also specifically affirmed that after his death his family should, if in need, accept alms which he had strictly forbidden them during his life because of their status of purity. As recipients of alms like ordinary Muslims, there was also no longer any justification for paying them their Qur'anic share of booty and *fay'*. All this the Prophet had confided to Abū Bakr, and no one else, thus confirming that he was his chosen successor charged with implementing his instructions. The daughter of the Prophet must have

⁶⁰ See E. Landau-Tasseron, 'Mālik b. Nuwayra' *EI* (2nd edn). The account of the fiction writer Sayf b. 'Umar, according to which Mālik backed the prophetess Sajāh, can be discounted, in spite of Caetani's acceptance of it (*Annali*, II/1, 654). 'Umar and other Muslims would hardly have protested against Khālid's treatment of someone 'who had become a true apostate'.

⁶¹ Ṭabarī, I, 1825; Ibn Shabba, *Ta'riḫ al-Madīna*, 196–7. The report transmitted by Ibn Lahī'a claiming that Abū Bakr granted Fāṭima the palm grove of al-A'wāf out of the property of the Prophet in Medina (Ibn Shabba, *Ta'riḫ al-Madīna*, 211) is certainly unreliable.

been dumbfounded. Not even she could openly question the word of her father's chosen successor. According to 'Ā'isha, she henceforth kept away (*hājarat*) from Abū Bakr and did not speak to him again about the matter until she died six months later. 'Alī buried her at night and did not inform the caliph of her death.⁶²

While the Prophet's daughter and kin were thus disinherited and demoted from their rank of religious purity, his widows were treated comparatively better. They obviously also could not be given an inheritance from Muḥammad's land in Fadak and Khaybar, which Abū Bakr claimed as public property. 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr reported, on the authority of 'Ā'isha, that the widows intended to send 'Uthmān to Abū Bakr to ask for their share of inheritance from Fadak and Khaybar, but 'Ā'isha reproached them: 'Don't you fear God? Have you not heard the Messenger of God say: "We do not have heirs; whatever we leave is alms. This money is for the Family of Muḥammad, [to provide] for them [in case of] misfortune and for their hospitality (*li-nā'ibatihim wa-ḍayfihim*). When I die it will belong to the ruler (*walī l-amr*) after me.'" ' The women desisted.⁶³ They no doubt understood that they would fare better if they admitted having heard the Prophet say so. Abū Bakr decided that they could keep their dwellings. In order to protect him against a possible charge that he acted arbitrarily with what Muḥammad had left for the public treasury, later tradition asserted that the Prophet had made a bequest of the houses to his wives.⁶⁴ Unlike the status of purity of the Prophet's kin, that of his wives was not to lapse after his death. No man was allowed to marry them. The highest respect was due to the 'Mothers of the Faithful'. They were now truly the only *ahl al-bayt* of Muḥammad whose purification from all filth was guaranteed by Sūra XXXIII 33. Abū Bakr recognized his obligation to provide generously for the widows.⁶⁵ To 'Ā'isha, as Muḥammad's favourite wife and daughter of his chosen successor, belonged the first place. Abū Bakr granted her some lands in the 'Āliya quarters of Medina and in al-Baḥrayn. The property in Medina was said to have been part of the land of the Banu l-Naḍīr which Abū Bakr had been given by Muḥammad.⁶⁶

⁶² Tabarī, I, 1825; Ibn Shabba, *Ta'riḫ al-Madīna*, 197.

⁶³ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 30; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, VI, 262.

⁶⁴ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 87, VIII, 120; *Annālī*, II/1, 521.

⁶⁵ Abū Hurayra remembered that Muḥammad, while leaving all his property as alms, had not completely forgotten his wives. He reported hearing the Prophet say: 'My heirs (*warathatī*) shall not divide up a single dinar or dirham among themselves. Whatever I leave, after sustenance (*naḥaqa*) for my wives and provision for my agent [executor of my will, *mu'nat 'āmilī*], shall be alms' (Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, II/2, 86).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, III/1, 138; Abbott, *Aishah*, 85.

From a political point of view, the confiscation of the Prophet's extensive land holdings, from which he himself had partly financed the Muslim military efforts, was certainly a necessity. The diplomatic skill with which Abū Bakr carried out the measure, asserting that the Prophet himself had left all his property to the public treasury, matched his clever political manoeuvre at the Saqīfa assembly. Ḥassān b. Thābit's protest against the usurpation of the Prophet's *fay*' quickly ceased and was forgotten. The prominent Companions would soon be vying with each other in attesting that they, too, had heard Muḥammad say that prophets have no heirs and that, on their death, their belongings become alms. Abū Bakr's policy of isolating the Banū Hāshim without the use of force proved a full success. After six months, by the time of Fāṭima's death, Abū Bakr's victory seemed complete. Yet the news of it and of her clandestine burial at night, in order to prevent the caliph's attendance, must have shocked him. Whatever his satisfaction about the humiliation of his personal enemy 'Alī, the realization of the deep offence that his political machinations and treachery had caused the daughter of the man whose best and most sincere friend he was acclaimed to be by the public, the awareness of her death in a state of embitterment, perhaps hastened by his conduct, could not easily be brushed off his conscience.⁶⁷

'Ā'isha reported: after Fāṭima's death, the few prominent men who had continued to see 'Alī while she was alive turned away from him. 'Alī humbly sued (*ḍara'a*) for reconciliation with Abū Bakr, sending him word: 'Come to us, but let no one be with you.' Knowing 'Umar's toughness (*shidda*), 'Alī did not want him to come along. 'Umar advised Abū Bakr not to go alone, but the latter insisted: 'By God, I shall go to them alone, what could they do to me?' The caliph thus came alone to 'Alī, who had assembled the Banū Hāshim in his house. 'Alī rose and,

⁶⁷ The Kufan loyalist 'Āmir al-Sha'bī, evidently stung by the Shi'ite contentions that the Prophet's daughter died in anger at Abū Bakr, countered with the following story: when Fāṭima fell ill Abū Bakr came to visit her and asked for permission to enter. 'Alī told Fāṭima: 'There is Abū Bakr at the door, will you not permit him to enter?' She answered: 'And you prefer this?' He said: 'Yes.' Abū Bakr entered, apologized to her, and talked with her. She was satisfied with him (Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, VIII, 17). Yet what was there to apologize for if he had simply said the truth? The same tendency is also apparent in another report of al-Sha'bī transmitted by 'Umar b. Shabba. Al-Sha'bī narrated that 'Umar and Khālīd b. al-Walīd, on Abū Bakr's order, went to Fāṭima's house in order to get al-Zubayr and 'Alī to pledge allegiance to Abū Bakr. 'Umar used force against both men, who were then led before Abū Bakr. Fāṭima loudly protested against the violence committed on the Family of the Messenger of God. After al-Zubayr and 'Alī pledged allegiance, Abū Bakr visited her and interceded on behalf of 'Umar. She accepted his apologies and expressed her satisfaction with 'Umar (Ibn Abi l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, II, 57, VI, 48–9).

after giving due praise to God, said: 'What has prevented us from pledging allegiance to you, Abū Bakr, was neither denial of your excellence, nor consideration of you as unworthy of any bounty which God has conveyed to you. Rather we held that we had a right in "this matter" which you [pl.] have arbitrarily seized (*istabdadtum*) from us.' 'Alī then mentioned his kinship (*qarāba*) with the Messenger of God and the right of kin and continued until Abū Bakr wept. When he finished, the caliph pronounced the confession of faith (*shahāda*) and in turn gave due praise to God. Then he said: 'By God, my link to the kinship of the Messenger of God is dearer to me than my own kinship. Surely, I have not sought in these chattels which have come between me and you anything but the good. But I have heard the Messenger of God say: We have no heirs, whatever we leave is alms. The family of Muḥammad may only eat from this money. I seek refuge with God lest I remember anything which Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, did in respect to it, yet fail to do it.' 'Alī promised his public pledge of allegiance for the evening. When the afternoon prayer was over, Abū Bakr turned to the assembled people and offered some excuses for 'Alī. Then 'Alī rose and extolled the right of Abū Bakr, mentioning his excellence and prior merit (*sābiqa*). He went forward to the caliph and pledged allegiance to him. The people hastened towards 'Alī, congratulating him: 'You have hit the mark, well done.' 'Ā'isha added: 'The people thus drew near to 'Alī when he drew near to the truth and what is proper.'⁶⁸

'Alī's public act of submission put an end to the isolation of the Banū Hāshim and, on the surface, closed the ranks of the Muslims in support of Abū Bakr. Yet reconciliation there was none and could not be. Each of the two men looked through the other's motives and thoughts all too well to believe his reassuring words and gestures. Under the circumstances, 'Alī could see nothing but hypocrisy in Abū Bakr's tears and protestations of his love for the Prophet's kin. He knew that the caliph would continue doing all he could to keep the Banū Hāshim away from power and influence and above all to prevent him, 'Alī, from ever succeeding to the caliphate. Abū Bakr likewise understood the insincerity of the younger man's recognition of his prior title to the succession of Muḥammad and knew that 'Alī, if ever given the opportunity, would disavow the legitimacy of his caliphate of Quraysh and establish his own based on the rights of Muḥammad's *ahl al-bayt*. There could be no relationship of trust between them. 'Alī continued to keep away from

⁶⁸ Ṭabarī, I, 1826-7.

the caliph, and the latter was hardly eager to draw him into his company.⁶⁹

While predominant Sunnite doctrine has come to affirm that the Prophet died without having named a successor and that Abū Bakr was elected by the Muslim community at the Saqīfa, a minority of prominent scholars, among them al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Taymiyya, have always held that Abū Bakr was chosen as successor by Muḥammad. There is strong evidence that the latter view was officially backed during Abū Bakr's caliphate and that it was 'Umar who insisted that the Prophet had died without naming a successor. This is clearly implied in a comment of Abū Bakr's grandson al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad on the hadith of his aunt 'Ā'isha, according to which the Prophet just before his death, when hearing 'Umar pronounce the *takbīr* in the public prayer, had said: 'Where is Abū Bakr? God refuses this as do the Muslims.' Al-Qāsim commented: 'If it were not for something 'Umar said at the time of his death, the Muslims would not doubt that the Messenger of God appointed Abū Bakr as his successor (*istakhlafa*). But he ['Umar] said at his death: If I appoint a successor, someone better than myself [Abū Bakr] has appointed a successor. And if I leave them [i.e. the Muslims to choose the successor], someone better than myself left them [to choose]. Thus the people knew that the Messenger of God did not appoint anyone his successor, and 'Umar cannot be accused [of bias] against Abū Bakr.'⁷⁰ Abū Rāfi' al-Ṭā'ī, who had been converted to Islam by Abū Bakr and accompanied him during the raid of Dhāt al-Salāsīl in the year 8/629, is quoted as reporting that he asked Abū Bakr later about the *bay'a* for him at the Saqīfa. Abū Bakr told him that it was 'Umar's reminder to the people that the Prophet had ordered Abū Bakr to lead the prayer during his illness that swayed them to swear allegiance to him.⁷¹ The oath of allegiance thus merely confirmed Muḥammad's previous choice. 'Ā'isha,

⁶⁹ Later Sunnite sources on Abū Bakr's caliphate, especially Sayf b. 'Umar, mention 'Alī on various occasions as giving advice to the caliph (see *Annali*, II/1, 584, 594–5, 597, II/2, 1116, 1150, 1197). The unreliability of these reports is evident especially since most of the occasions mentioned were during the six months before 'Alī's pledge of allegiance. 'Alī is thus described as, together with 'Umar, urging the caliph not to lead the Muslim army in person at Dhu l-Qaṣṣa (*ibid.*, II/1, 594–5) and as being put in charge, together with al-Zubayr, Ṭalḥa and 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd, of the defences of Medina (*ibid.*, 597). The traditionalist Sunnite historian Ibn Kathīr insisted on the basis of such reports that 'Alī swore allegiance to Abū Bakr immediately after the Saqīfa assembly and that his pledge of allegiance after Fāṭima's death was merely an act of confirmation (*bay'a mu'akkida*), necessitated by the disloyalty of Fāṭima whose anger at Abū Bakr Ibn Kathīr found incomprehensible and inexcusable (*al-Bidāya*, V, 249–50, 286–7). But then, Ibn Kathīr commented with an anti-Shi'ite edge, Fāṭima was merely a woman who could not hope for infallibility (*hiya imra'a min al-bashar laysat bi-rājiyat al-'iṣma*, V, 249). 'Ā'isha's account, however, is incompatible with such an interpretation.

⁷⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, 1010.

⁷¹ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, I, 8. Abū Bakr added that he accepted out of fear that there might be discord (*fitna*) leading to apostasy.

as has been seen, consistently maintained that Abū Bakr was chosen by Muḥammad for the succession and apparently never mentioned the events at the Saqīfa. Only when asked pointedly whom the Prophet would have appointed if he had made an appointment she replied: 'Abū Bakr'; adding, upon further questioning: 'After him 'Umar and then Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ.' There she stopped.⁷²

Since Abū Bakr did not view the caliphate as an elective office, it was only natural that he appointed, without prior consultation, his successor, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Only after he had made up his mind is he reported to have confidentially asked 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf and 'Uthmān for their opinions. The former expressed some reservations on account of 'Umar's well-known harshness (*ghilẓa*). 'Uthmān answered more diplomatically that 'Umar's inside was better than his outside and that, in any case, 'there is no one like him among us'.⁷³ Ṭalḥa is reported, after the official announcement, to have protested at the ill caliph's bedside against the choice of 'Umar because of the latter's ill treatment of the people even during Abū Bakr's reign. Abū Bakr, however, angrily rejected this criticism, declaring 'Umar the best of God's people.⁷⁴

While some of the details may be unreliable, the tenor of these reports probably reflects the situation correctly, and the fact that Abū Bakr appointed his successor rather than leaving the choice to the Muslim community cannot seriously be doubted. In spite of the prominent part played by 'Umar in Abū Bakr's reign, he could not have simply taken over and been universally recognized as *de facto* caliph as suggested by Caetani and Levi della Vida.⁷⁵ For while the choice of 'Umar certainly must have appealed to many strict Muslims who appreciated his uncompromising loyalty to Islam and his vigorous insistence on enforcing its norms on everybody, he was far from popular. It was not only some of the early Companions, whom Caetani accused of petty jealousy, incompetence and unjustifiable personal ambition, who had misgivings about 'Umar. More importantly, the Qurayshite aristocracy, on whose support Abū Bakr had built the caliphate and who were now firmly in control of the Muslim armies, would hardly have accepted their old opponent 'Umar without formal appointment by Abū Bakr, whom they had come to respect. Khālīd b. al-Walīd, in particular, must have been aware that his days in powerful leadership would now be numbered.

Abū Bakr, on the other hand, realized that he could not afford to leave the succession open at a time when the Muslim armies were engaged in the decisive battles for the conquest of Syria. Despite the stunning

⁷² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, 9. ⁷³ Ṭabarī, I, 2137; *Annali*, III, 88.

⁷⁴ Ṭabarī, I, 2143-4; *Annali* III, 85.

⁷⁵ *Annali*, III, 128; G. Levi della Vida, "Omar b. al-Khaṭṭāb", *EI*.

success of his policies, the caliphate was, only two years after its foundation, far from being safely established and a divisive election for a successor might have been fatal. He recognized that above all he must prevent any discussion of the rights of the family of the Prophet just as he had done before. For while now, given the vested interest of all of Quraysh in the caliphate, an easy election of 'Alī was much less likely, his name could still have served as the rallying point of the opposition in the absence of an obvious candidate.

From Abū Bakr's point of view, the choice of 'Umar almost imposed itself, despite their substantial differences of opinion in political questions. Among the early Companions, only 'Umar was really closely associated with him and involved in the daily running of the government. Abū Bakr owed him a considerable debt. 'Umar had made the coup at the Saqīfa in his favour possible and had brought Medina firmly under control for him. Having backed Abū Bakr's concept of the caliphate of Quraysh from the outset with enthusiasm, he could be trusted not to jolt its foundations, whatever change of direction he might introduce. 'Umar continued to be in effective control of Medina and was presumably not the man to cede his power to any of the other early Companions. The only serious alternative would perhaps have been Khālid b. al-Walīd, now at the peak of his popularity after his recent victories. Khālid would have clearly been preferred by the Mekkan aristocracy and would have had the backing of the Muslim armies. 'Umar, his personal enemy, would have been unable to put up any resistance to him. Whether Abū Bakr ever seriously considered the alternative must remain a speculative question. When the time for the decision came, Khālid was in command in Syria and apparently indispensable for the war effort. The choice of 'Umar was the most reasonable.