CHAPTER II

DETERIORATION OF RELATION BETWEEN SHI'ITE AND SUNNITE

1. Beginning of the differences

2. Rising of the Fatimids

3. Safavid Dynasty

4. Definition of a Sahabi

5. Accession of Uthman

6. Battle of Siffin
As I shall have occasion to relate that the Muslims were badly divided soon after the death of the Prophet into two camps as a result of the difference of opinions on the question of the succession to the Prophet. The Hashimites led by Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet considered themselves as the most natural successor of the Prophet. The immigrants also supported them, but the Ansār (the citizens of Medina) thought otherwise, stressing their right to succeed the Prophet, as Islam could be established with their help and co-operation alone. Abū Bakr and Umar rushed to the hall of Banī Saidah where the Anṣārī had met to elect a successor to the Prophet from among themselves. Abū Bakr made a speech on the occasion supporting it with a tradition of the Prophet to the effect that Imāms, i.e., leaders of the Muslim community would be from the Qurāsh. As it happened the Ansār were divided into two parties, the Ansār and the Khasraj, between whom there was keen rivalry; and since the candidate of the Ansār, ʿAbd ibn ʿAbdah happened to belong to the Khasraj party, the Ansār, their rivals thought that, if a Khasrajite was chosen the successor of the Prophet, i.e., the ruler of the Muslims, they would have to be subservient to the Khasrajite. They, therefore, preferred a caliph who would belong neither to themselves, nor to Khasrajite, and hence when Abū Bakr called upon the assembled Muslims th
Immigrants as well as the citizens of Medina, to take the oath of allegiance to either Umar or Abū Ubaid, and on the refusal of these two to be elected while Abū Bakr lived the Immigrants immediately rushed to take the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr. The Khazrajites now had no option but to submit to the unanimous decision of the Muslims and themselves took the oath of fealty. Thus was Abū Bakr elected the first successor to the Prophet, but the Hashimids and their candidate Ali felt greatly disappointed. Besides the Hashimids and some other members of the Immigrants party and citizens group believed that Ali was better entitled to succeed the Prophet. This belief was corner stone of the party which later on came to be known as the Shiā or the partisans of All

All tried thrice to be elected caliph but was disappointed due to his failure. But as a good Muslim he remained loyal to the caliph elected and always co-operated faithfully with him although his partisans grew more and more bitter with the passage of time. As it will be seen with the accession of Othman, the third caliph who was an Umayyad, matters began to deteriorate all the more. After the murder of Othman by the malcontents, the Umayyads, the traditional rival of the Hashimids led by Umayyah ibn Abī Sufyān rose against All. Their leader Muʿawiyah went even to the extent of accusing Al
of complicity in the murder of Uthmān, Mu‘āwiya refused to take
the oath of allegiance to Aḥī when called upon the latter to do
so, which led to a war between them culminating in the assassina-
tion of Aḥī. The Umayyads who now became sole rulers of the
Muslim world adopted now a policy of persecution and systematic
repression towards the followers of Aḥī, with the result that the
relations between the two parties became extremely embittered.
This persecution did not spare even children and women.¹⁰ The
Umayyads were finally overthrown by the Abbāsid who followed a
policy of persecution no less merciless than that of the Umayyads.

As everything in those days assumed the tinge of religion,
this political struggle between two parties also became a religious
creed of their respective followers. None of these two parties had
a whit behind the other in its tenacity of their belief and desire
to wipe out the other. It was thus that the Muslim community now
divided in two distinct religions sects, the Sunnite and the
Shiite, hating bitterly each other. As the Umayyads and the
Abbāsids were the persecutors of the Shiās, they were accepted as
the champions of orthodoxy and through religion by the Sunnites
who now constituted the majority community of the Muslims, let us
note that Gūrūṭi was an orthodox Sunni and therefore, an adherer

¹⁰. (During the expedition of Yemen, Ubaīdullāh’s two sons were
slaughtered by Busr ibn Artāh, which caused their mother to
lose her reason). Ellhausen, J. : The Arab Firmament and Its
Fall, p. 109.
of the Abbasids and a hiter of the Shi'is will not be understood without some knowledge of the religious feuds of the two parties, it will not be besides the point to give in some detail a history of the origin and development of these sects. I give below a history of them to facilitate the understanding of the events related in my thesis regarding Suyūtī.

As religion dominated the life of medieval men, it did that of Suyūtī too, and as such his works and writings bear a strong stamp of his religious views. It will not be, therefore besides the point to say something about the history of the sects in Islam which will show that in spite of being staunch Sunnī, he did not fail to realise his duty as a historian.

A study of religious history of the Muslim world will show that at first during the life-time of the Prophet naturally and even for ten or three generations after his death there were no doctrinal or ritual differences among the Muslims and that they all could say their prayers together, led by a common imām, unlike our age when the forms of the prayers among the Sunnis and the Shiites are so different that for a follower of the Sunni sect, it is not possible to say his prayers under a Shi'ī imām, as it is absolutely incumbent for one offering prayers to follow the movements of the leader of prayers, i.e. imām and vice-versa. Similarly the time for taking pre-fasting breakfast (sahūr) and breaking the fast are among both the sects quite different, for instance the Sunnī sect recommends the delay of taking the pre-fasting
breakfast and breaking the fast early as soon as the sun sets
though apparently there may be still light, while the practice among
the Shiites is just the reverse, as they finish their breakfast
earlier and do not break their fast unless it is dark enough. To
quote another instance the rules and the ways of contracting a
marriage among both the sects are different. However, the hatred
between the two sects grew so strong that according to the British
historian Edward Gibbon, a sectarian is worse than an infidel. We
see in our own days that the Shiites and the Sunnites view in
accusing each other of infidelity. 11

Beginning of the Differences:

The difference started on the point of succession to the
Prophet, whether any body, i.e. a Muslim of whatever race or tribe,
black or white could be chosen by the Muslims to look after their
affairs temporal or spiritual, or the ruler of the Muslims must
necessarily be either Ali himself or one of his descendents. As
time went on and specially after the accession of Hisham of
Umayyad branch of the Quraish to power, the struggle between the
partisans of Ali and the other party which did not believe in
any special right of the house of Ali became more and more bitter,
the suppressed party trying its utmost to gain for the house of
Ali temporal power as well, while the ruling party strained every

11. Edward Gibbon: The History of the Decline & Fall of the Roman
Empire, vol. 5, p. 521.
nervous to put them down. This, in course of time, gave rise

to the idea of imitating or to divine right of Ali and his

house. The Shiä, literally means a party, it now came to

be applied henceforth always to the followers of the house of

Ali. It was from this time onwards ritual and doctrinal differen-
ces, political rivalry between the two groups went on not only

unabated but also assumed greater and greater dimensions. While

the Umayyads were inveterate enemies of the Hashimids or Aliids

in the present context. The Abbasidae, it must be said to their

credit, were prepared to a certain degree to tolerate the

existence of the Aliids, as Harûn, the sixth caliph of the

Abbasid house once said, but had also great regard for them re-

12* Tarikhul-Khalifah, p. 203.
But since the belief of the followers of Ali in the divine right of the family of Ali has now become an article of faith and a religious tenet, hence they were in no mood to forgo their claims. The more they were suppressed, the more and with greater force they emerged. Abbasid rulers like al-Mutawakkil attempted to drown their claims in a sea of blood and with this end in view he followed a general policy of persecution towards the Shi'ahs. Unfortunately the policy adopted by him, only added to the animosity of the Shi'ahs. For instance, he ordered the tomb of Husain, son of Ali at Karbala which was an object of great veneration to the Shi'ahs, to be demolished and the course of river euphrates to be so changed as to flow over Husain's tomb and to sweep away all the traces of the same. Not contenting himself with this step, he ordered the site of tomb to be converted into a field and ploughed. This political animosity slowly developed into a religious one and he now adopted his policy of persecuting the Shi'as for no other reason than that they were Shi'as. The story of his execution of Yaqub ibn al-Sikkît, the tutor of his sons is well known, but it may be repeated here to illustrate the point. While one day Mutawakkil sat with Ibn al-Sikkît, the sons of Mutawakkil came on playing. Seeing them Mutawakkil asked Ibn al-Sikkît, "Who are dearer to thee - these sons of mine or Hasan and Husain?" "Nothing to say of Hasan and Husain, they are not equal even to their slave Harb.," came the prompt
reply. This reply threw the monarch into a fit of rage and he ordered the tongue of Ibn al-Sikkit to be pulled out of the back of his neck and his body to be thrown on a dung-hill. Such events only steeled the determination of Shiites to have their revenge.

**Rising of the Fatimids:**

Mutawakkil was assassinated in 247 A.H. and the caliphate after him followed a rapid downward course. It was already no longer a religious institution but a temporal power in which the caliph had full authority to dispose of the public treasury in any way he chose and would spend the public money, which, according to the teaching of Islam was the right and the property of the people at large whether Muslims or the Jews and Christians. The Muslims had, indeed, a great claim to the public money, as the empire was built by their efforts and swords. With the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty, things began to change, but under the Abbasids they grew worse and the Abbasid caliphate assumed the shape of a full-fledged temporal power after the Persian model. The common man could not demand any right under it and the system that every Muslim was recipient of a stipend from the public treasury was now completely discontinued. To cap the climax the Abbasid calilhe were pleasure-loving men who spent all the money, they could get, on their pleasures; and to obtain money they would go to
extent, they would sometimes, when in need of money dismiss
their ministers and would lay them under a heavy fine throwing
them into prison. To achieve their end, they would subject them to
all sorts of inhuman tortures unless they paid the fines.
Another evil from which the Abbasid caliphate suffered, was
the forming of taxes, i.e. provinces would be given for realiz-
ation of taxes to one who would offer the highest sum of money.
After the man has paid the sum, he was free to put the peasants
to any torture or to resort to any means, however cruel and
it might be to make them pay the money demanded of them, with a
result that agriculturists were ruined and reduced to sore
straits. This state of affairs led to great misery and discontent
among the peasants. It was at this time that the Cormathians
and some Shiite extremist parties whose object was to get rid
of the Abbasid tyranny only appeared on the scene. They carried
on an extensive propaganda among the mal-contented to instigate
them against the Abbasid rule to their own advantage. One
of these parties was led by ancestors of the Fatimids. They
claimed to be descended from Ali, through the Prophet’s
daughter Fatimah, as against other descendants of Ali by other
wives, they crossed into Africa and contacted the Berber tribes
which Shites proclivities and turbulent enough to join the
leader of a party who would offer them an opportunity of
fishing in troubled water. It was with the help of these
Berber tribes that they captured the present day Tunisia and
established an extremist Shiite state there and finally
captured Egypt where they established a Shiite state first time
in history.
It has been already hinted that the Fatimids were extremist Shi'a and certainly fanatical towards the majority community of the Muslims. With the establishment of their power in Egypt, they set themselves unhesitatingly to the wreaking their vengeance on the majority community for the wrongs they had suffered at their hands and the suppression which had been their lot under the Sunnite rulers. I shall quote here only a few examples of their persecution of the members of the Sunnite and the insulting treatment which they meted out of them. Mu'awiyah, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty greatly loved a certain kind of vegetable, called Mulukhiyya which was now declared as unlawful and people taking it were to be punished. Certain prayers are performed after the day rise, called in Arabic 'Salātul-adhā', since the tradition recommending these prayers has been handed down on the authority of Aishah, the favourite wife of the Prophet, but against whom Shi'ites have certain grudges, for on one occasion Ali had advised the Prophet to divorce her. Aishah never forgave Ali for this advice to the Prophet and even led the army against Ali in the battle of Camel in Basrah. A certain man was found to be saying those prayers and was immediately apprehended and paraded throughout the city and whipped while a crier proclaimed to the people, "This is a punishment which is awarded to the people acting on the tradition of the women". Besides the three first caliphs were regularly reviled and openly insulted to the great shock of the Sunnites. It is superfluous to say that the relations between the two communities became more and more strained.
After a rule of lasting more than two hundred years, the Fatimid dynasty was ultimately overthrown by Salahuddin Awhul•n orthodox Sunni yuslitn. Orthodoxy was soon restored in Egypt. Friday sermon was again preached in Egypt in the name of the Abbasid caliph as a mark of his supremacy, but the legacy of illwill and bitter feeling between the followers of the two sects were left which continued smouldering slowly like fire. The Abbasid caliphate too soon fell before the Tartars and is asserted by all the historians except Ibn Tiktique TabatabaI that the Shute minister of the last Abbasid caliph invited the Tartars to invade Iraq, the seat of the Abbasid power. It is related by certain historians that there had been just on the eve of Baghdad, a riot between the two sects in which the Shutes suffered heavily. It was to avenge this insult that Ibn al-AloomI, the minister of the last caliph invited the Mongol Sultan, Hulagu Khan, promising him all help and co-operation. Baghdad fell in 1258 and although, a third nation or people who were supposed to be neutral in religious affairs, the relation between these two sects continued deteriorating as it was a Shute who had invited the Tartar invasion which resulted in the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate so sacred in the eyes of the Sunnis.

SAFAVID DYNASTY:

The second Shite dynasty in the history of Islam extremely fanatic which make shiism, the state religion of persia; and did not hesitate even to make use of force to convert the people to
Shi'a the creed which unfortunately added to the bitterness already existing. Suyūṭī died in 1505, while the Safavid dynasty had been fully established in 1499, i.e. 1500. This dynasty adopted Shi'ism as a state religion of Persia and made it its policy to propagate that creed by force, and consequently took to the persecution of the learned men or doctors of the Sunni sect.

This naturally led to the further bitterness and bad blood between the followers of the two sects, and now the Muslim world was distinctly divided into two hostile camps, the Shi'ite world being represented by Iran under the Safavids, while the rest of the Muslim world which followed the Sunni creed was represented by the Ottoman Turks. As for India it can be said to its credit that it followed a policy of toleration towards all the religions, there being no systematic policy of religious persecution; if there were any stray cases of persecution, they were exceptions rather than a rule.

Such was the Muslim world in which Suyūṭī was born, lived and wrote and it is the reason that we find him a staunch follower of the Sunni faith and betraying signs of bigotry. Perhaps this fanaticism is excusable and it was the order of the day everywhere in the world, even in Europe where such terrible religious wars between the Protestant and the Catholics, as the Thirty Years War had been fought. However, the redeeming feature of Suyūṭī's character is that he does not allow when writing history his personal beliefs to stand between them and quoting views which run counter to the cherished beliefs of the Sunnites, wherein
lies his importance or greatness as a historian and which makes his historical works worth relying on, for instance let us take the following view of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, one of great traditionist and the founder of the founders of the four schools of law among the Sunnis.

1. أخرج البهذق وابن عسقلان عن إبراهيم بن سعيد.

2. أخرج عن أبي الطفيل عامر بن وثيلة الصحابي أنه دخل.

3. أخرج معاوية فقال له معاوية: أرسلت من قتلة عثمان قتلها?

4. لا وليك من حضره، فلم ينصره، قال: وما فعلتك من نصره؟ تال: فلم ينصرهم أن ينصره قال: فما فعلك بإمر المؤمنين.

5. أخرج فقال أهل الشام فقال معاوية: أما تظلي بدمه.

6. نصره له؟ فضحك أبو الطفيل ثم قال: أنت وعثمان كما قال...
Here are some quotations from Tarikhul Khulafa to substantiate my statement about Suwaidi's honesty as a historian:

...
Muawiyyah is a great personality and object of veneration as a companion of the Prophet among the Quraysh. He who are highly sensitive in case Muawiyyah is adversely criticised and react most violently to it. His personality is an object of great controversy between the two sects, one extolling him as an honourable companion of the Prophet, the other condemning as the usurper of the legitimate right of the Ali, the rightful successor of the Prophet. This controversy is still alive. Suyuti does not hesitate in quoting traditions which only support the beliefs and their claims on behalf of Ali. Here are four quotations from the same source.

1. أخرج الطبراني والحكم عن ابن مسعود أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال:


2. أخرج الطبراني في الأوسط عن ابن عباس قال: كنت لعلي ثمان عشرة منقبة ملكته لأحد من هذه الأمة

3. أخرج الطبراني ينسد صحح عن أعم سلامة عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: احب عليّ فقد أحبني، من أحبني فقد أحب الله و من أغض عليّ فقد أغضني و من أغضني فقد أغض الله.

18. Ibid, p.121.
20. Ibid, p.121.
Definition of a Sahabī:

According to the Sunni belief in general, no one who has seen the Prophet, believing in him, is a companion of the Prophet, i.e., Sahabī. The word 'Sahabī' is derived from the infinitive Sahiba yashabu Sahban which means to associate, to keep company with, hence the definition of a Sahabī must be narrower and not so broad as to include any one who might have seen the Prophet, though even once after embracing Islam as enthusiastically the Sunni doctors, but only one who has constantly or at least for a considerable time associated with the Prophet deserves to be called a Sahabī or a companion of the Prophet, and not one who has seen the Prophet once or even has visited him occasionally. However, if the current definition as accepted commonly by the Sunnites, is taken as the correct one, all our differences arise. That is why the Sunnites hold that Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan and his closest associates Amr ibn al-As are associates or companions of the Prophet and as such entitled to all the respect of the Muslims. However, the Shi’as refuse to accept this point of view and declare Muawiya as well as Amr ibn al-As as the worst of sinners, for having fought Ali and conspiring to wrest from him his lawful right. These charges are indignantly rejected by the

doctors of the Sunnite sect who hold Ali, Muawiya as well as Amr ibn al-As as companions of the Prophet, and hence deserving the same respect. This position seems to a historian a bit difficult to hold and reconcile. Suyuti inspite of a staunch follower of the Sunnite sect does not hesitate as a historian to accept such traditions on reliable authority as he thinks, although these traditions support the contention of the Shiites who consider Ali to be the only legitimate successor of the Prophet. However, Suyuti has quoted them without allowing his personal belief to interfere with what he thinks his duty as a historian. It seems so on the first sight that he supports the claim of the Shiites as regards Ali, but to establish his position, perhaps as a Sunnite he quotes another tradition as if to neutralise the effect of the tradition already quoted by him which the Shiites can quote with profit and advantage in support of their beliefs.

The author as a Sunnite has tried to retrieve his position by quoting the following traditions:

و أخرج البخاري والبيهقي والحاكم عن علي قال: دعاني رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال: إن نيك مثلك لم ي保护ه

الايام حتى بينت نتم أمه و احبته النعاه حتى أنزلت

بالمنزل الذي ليس به 0 إلا أنه يملك في أن عن

مفرط يفي علي بما ليس مي ومتغنى يحمله شتاين على

إن سمتني 0

22. Ibid. p. 121.
By quoting the tradition Aayuti means to say that his position is that of an orthodox Sunni, while it is the Shiites and the Khairjites who are meant in the tradition quoted above and condemned.

**Accession of Uthman**

Omar, the second caliph, did not nominate any particular person as his successor (while he lay on his death-bed); he nominated a board consisting of six men amongst whom were such illustrious companions of the Prophet as Uthman, Ali, Abdul Rahman ibn Auf, Talha and Zubair Awama etc. etc. Abdul Rahman withdrawing his candidature on condition that they allow him full liberty to exercise his discretion in the selection of the caliph. After some consideration his choice fell on Uthman and 'Ali. Taking aside 'Ali, he asked him if he would follow the Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition as well as those of the Sheikhain i.e. Abu Bakr and 'Umar; but as 'Ali did not consent to follow the tradition of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, Abdul Rahman dissatisfied with this answer taking Uthman aside repeated the same question to him who promptly agreed to follow the traditions of his predecessors. 'Abdul Rahman therefore, first took oath of allegiance and called upon the Muslims to do likewise, and thus Uthman became the third caliph. 'Ali who had been certainly nurturing ambitions to succeed his cousin, the prophet, also took the oath of fealty without any demurring on his part in
the interest of Islam which, as is clear from his all his actions, will always dear to his heart.

According to some versions when 'Uthman succeeded to the pontifical chair he was already a man of sixty or even, according to some, seventy which means that he had already lost his energy and was too kind hearted to look after the affairs of the state with any degree of vigour. At any rate, the first six years of his reign were very successful, during which North Africa as well as Turkistan and Afghanistan were conquered. But as he was a lenient man and very kindly disposed towards his kinsmen whom he treated with great indulgence, for instance he allowed Abdullah ibn abi Sahl, his foster brother who had played a prominent part in the conquest of North Africa to have the whole fifth instead of surrendering it to the public treasury. Similarly he allowed other relatives many concessions by giving them high posts and to allow them to grow rich at the expense of the state or the public treasury which was the property of all the Muslims. Consequently great discontent spread against him throughout the Muslim empire, particularly those of Egypt and Basrah. The malcontents of Basrah and Egypt made a common cause and marched to Medina to
lay their grievances before the caliph to get them redressed. At a public meeting the caliph made an attempt to clarify his position and to refute the charges brought against him. He said that what gave to his relatives was not out of the public treasury, but out of his own resources and that it was quite natural for a man to love his kith and kin, and the Prophet did the same. He, therefore, had committed no crime if he had been indulgent toward the members of his family. However, if he had committed any sin, he repented of the same to God and asked for them pardon. Ali mediated in the matter and persuaded the mutineers to go back to their respective countries.

While going back to their countries they came across a slave who was going towards Egypt at a great speed. On interrogating and searching him they discovered a letter addressed by Uthman to the governor of Egypt to execute to the ring leaders of the mutineers when they arrive in Egypt. With this letter they returned to Medina in great anger and calling upon Uthman and other great companions of the Prophet as witnesses, they asked to Uthman if the slave who carrying the letter was his, and Uthman replied in the affirmative. They again asked him if the letter was his, but he denied and on their asking if the seal and the letter were his. After some discussion between these two parties that the letter was not indeed addressed by Uthman to the governor of Egypt, though the seal and the slave were undoubtedly his. It
transpired eventually that Marwan ibn al-Hakem, a very close relative of Uthman who kept the caliph's seal in his custody, was the author of this letter and all this mischief. The mutineers therefore demanded of Uthman that Marwan be handed over to them, so that they might punish him for his mischief as they thought fit, but Uthman fearing lest they put him to death, an unlucky mob as they were, refused to comply with their demand. The mutineers were highly enraged and rejected all efforts to come to a compromise. Ali again mediated but in vain, the mutineers remaining adamant. They besieged the house of Uthman stopping all supply of food and water to his family. Ali foresaw the evil that was likely to happen. He therefore posted his own sons Hasan and Husain to keep guard there, i.e. at the door of the caliph's house with a purpose of preventing the insurgents from getting into the caliph's house and murdering. The insurgents discovered that food and water were laid down into the caliph's house from the wall of the house adjoining the caliph. They made a plan of descending into the caliph's house down that wall with a rope. Some of the insurgents including Muhammad, son of Abu Bakr entered the house from the back wall and murdered the aged caliph while he sat reciting the Qur'an in his lap. On learning of the caliph's murder, Ali came hurrying and slapped his sons for their failure in the discharge of their duty entrusted to them.

There was a great turmoil in Mecca and utter chaos prevailed throughout the city. The Muslims were left without a
head to direct their affairs or even to lead their prayers. The people noticing that chaotic condition prevailing at Medina called upon Ali to accept the post of the caliphate. He refused at first, but on the insistence of the people he consented to shoulder the responsibility thus thrust upon him. By the common consent of the Immigrants (muḥājirīn) and the Citizens of Medina he was elected the ruler of the Muslims. But here the trouble begins, for when Muḥammad ibn Sufyān, the governor of Syria who was an Umayyad was called upon to take the oath of allegiance to Ali as caliph, feeling himself strong enough he refused to comply, whereupon Ali dismissed him, but again he refused to obey the new caliph, called Ali. On the other hand he accused Ali of complicity in Ḫurram's murder. Ali indignantly rejected the charge and again called upon him to take the oath of allegiance to him as the rightful caliph who had been elected by the consensus of the Immigrants as well as the Citizens of Medina as had Abū Bakr and Umar been elected. In any case he was to quit his post as the members of the house of Umayyah had been ruling the Muslim empire in their own interests, rather in the Muslims. A number of letters and envoys were exchanged between the two but to no effect.  

**Battle of Siffin:**

Allah found himself constrained by the continuous refusal…

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of Mu‘awiya to take up arms against him. At the head of a
large army he arrived at Siffin and found the enemy already
encamped there. Unwillingly as Ali was to begin the war, he
tried that peace between the two parties might still be made,
but unfortunately some mischievous people who were bent on
restoring to the judgment of the sword, spread the false
rumour that Ali's army had attacked that of Mu‘awiya; and
consequently when Mu‘awiya's army launched the attack Ali
had to order an attack. Ali would have surely won a decisive
victory, were it not for the stratagems advised by Sa‘id ibn ‘Alas
who knew well that there was a large number of bountiful and simple-
minded folk among the followers of Ali who could be easily
persuaded to withdraw from the battle-field. Ali, therefore,
 advised Mu‘awiya to order his soldiers to raise the copies
of the Qur’an on their spears and to call upon Ali's followers
to come to the judgement of the Book of Allah. Ali saw
through the plan of the enemy and did his utmost to persuade his
followers to continue the fight, but they refused and asked
Ali to call back his general, Malik ibn Ashtar, mediated imme-
diately. The general at first refused to comply with the
orders of his chief; but when his followers accused him of
having secretly sent instructions to Malik not to come back
and threatened him that if Malik failed to return, they would
mete the same treatment which they meted to Uthman. Seeing
such a position Ali sent emphatic orders to his generals to
Malik had to come back, leaving a battle which was almost won, as Muawiya had almost made up his mind to flee the battle-field.

After some negotiations between the two parties it was agreed that they should again meet at a place called 'Ashrūh' after eight months to enable the Muslims in the meantime to settle their affairs and to elect a new ruler in the light of the teachings of the Qur'an. Ali said that the Koran was only a book and did not speak; it requires competent men to interpret it. The Syrians, i.e. the party of Muawiya, appointed Amr ibn al-As who was one of the cleverest men of Arabia to interpret the Koran as their representative, while the pious followers of Ali insisted on the appointment of Shu'ayb al-Ashari, pious no doubt, but too simple to be a match for the astute Amr ibn al-As. Ali protested against his appointment and recommended the name of his cousin Abdullah ibn Abbas, but the pious element in the army of Ali had its way.

After eight months when the two parties, along with their representatives met Amr ibn al-As persuaded Abu Musa al-Ashari to speak first as an old and venerable companion of the Prophet. Amr ibn al-As also asked Abu Musa to tell the people they both were agreed and that their decision would be binding on both the parties. He suggested Abu Musa to
depose both Ali and Kuliwiyah and to select a new caliph as
was already agreed upon. With this understanding they went
to the foot of the pulpit, and Abu Basîh, according to the
agreement between themselves, ascended the pulpit and announced
that he had deposed both Ali and Kuliwiyah and they were both
agreed upon this point. Having made this announcement Abu Basîh
came down and Amr ibn al-As ascended the pulpit and said to the
people, "Men! You have heard that we are both agreed and our
decision would be final and binding on all. Therefore, depose
Ali and a point Kuliwiyah as caliph." With this announcement
there took place a lot of confusion and hue and cry, the
people cursing Amr, when the Syrian army arrived on the scene
and greeted Kuliwiyah as the commander of the faithful. Kuliwiyah's
election was now an accomplished fact, though it is doubtful
whether he would have been accepted as caliph by the Muslims
in general, had it not been for the arrival of the Syrian army.
However, Kuliwiyah was now the virtual ruler of the Muslim
world, Ali only holding Iraq and its dependencies. After the
assassination of Ali by a member of the Kharijite party which
had entered into a conspiracy to kill all the three i.e., Ali,
Kuliwiyah and Amr ibn al-As, whom they held responsible for all
the evils to which the Muslim world was now a subject, only
Ali fell to the dagger of the assassin, while Kuliwiyah escaped
with only a wound on his hip and was being ill that particular
night did not go out to lead the dawn prayers and thus escaped
death. The death of Ali did not solve the problem which had been
already complicated all the more by the election of Hāshim. The followers of Ali were greatly embittered against the ruling party; and although Hāshim, the eldest son of Ali, was once with Hāshim, relations between the followers of Ali and the supporters of Hāshim did not improve. Politically Hāshim was indeed a sagacious man and he did what he could to win over the malcontents, but to no avail. He had his son Yezid declared as his successor and the next caliph, a step which was rejected by Husain ibn Ali and his followers as well as by Abdullah ibn al-Suhair, an ambitious man who admired the caliphate himself. After the death of Hāshim Yezid called upon the leading citizens of the two Holy Cities - Mecca and Medina to acknowledge him as caliph, but not only Husain ibn Ali and Abdullah ibn al-Suhair rejected this demand, but also the people at large. Husain was invited by the people of Iraq to come over to him, promising to support him by all possible means. But when Husain actually arrived in Iraq, cowed down by the threats of the Umayyad governor, Ubaidullah ibn Sūfiyān, deserted him. Left alone only with seventy two followers he was crushed and martyred by the Umayyad army at Karbala. This event, i.e. the martyrdom of Husain, sent a wave of horror throughout the Muslim world and paved the way for the downfall of the Umayyad dynasty. Yezid sent also an army to Medina to punish its people for not taking oath of allegiance to him. The army captured the city, looted it for several days, out of the
modesty of its womenhood and brought upon itself the curse of
the virtuous Muslims by tying its horses in the "Prophet's mosque."

All these events made Naṣṣāriyyah who was held responsible
for them, all the more hateful in the eyes of the Muslims, not
only the Shiites but also the moderate people among the Muslims in
general, looked upon Naṣṣāriyyah as the father of all these evil acts
and as it seems, were not reconciled to Naṣṣāriyyah's policies,
inspite of an anti-Khaṭṭārites or anti-Ashiites propaganda by the
Umayyads.

Our author, Sayyid, though an orthodox Sunni, does not seem
to hold Naṣṣāriyyah in the same veneration as his secular in which he is
held by our contemporary Sunni Muslims. Not only as a historian
whose duty is to do justice to facts, but as a Muslim also he
quotes traditions and anecdotes which cast an aspersion on
Naṣṣāriyyah and his actions. However, we are not much concerned with
his religious views, but with his position as a historian who
owes a duty to truth and impartiality.