

Khalifa Abu Bakr - Apostacy Campaigns in East and South Arabia

Campaign in Hadramaut

The revolt of the Kinda. Early in 633 C.E. the Kinda in Hadramaut broke into revolt. The people of the Kinda tribe did not apostatize, but something went wrong with the way they were handled. The Muslim Governor of Hadramaut was Ziyad bin Lubeid, and his headquarter was at Zafar. One of the Kinda chiefs offered a camel as Zakat. Later he found that the animal that he had offered in Zakat belonged to his brother. He approached the Governor with the request that the animal that he had offered in Zakat should be returned to him, and he would offer another camel instead. Ziyad the Governor rejected the request, and that led to trouble. The chieftain thereupon sent some persons to steal the camel in question. Ziyad had the camel lifters arrested. A riotous assembly of the Kinda people demanded the return of the arrested persons. Ziyad refused, and on such refusal the situation exploded.

Large sections of the Kinda revolted. In protest they apostatized from Islam and refused to pay any taxes. In defiance of the Muslim authority they took up arms. Ziyad sent a column against the rebels. There was a confrontation at Riyadh not far from Zafar. Here the apostates were defeated and many were captured. As the captives were being taken to Zafar, they passed through a settlement which belonged to Ash'as bin Qais, a Kinda chief. Ash'as was a typical Arab chief, a man of considerable charm and wit, and of a colorful personality. The captives appealed to Ash'as for his help. They cried "O Ash'as, we are of your clan and we invoke your help." Ash'as by that time had not apostatized, but his tribal loyalty proved stronger than his faith. With his men, Ash'as intercepted the Muslim column, and liberated the captives. When Ziyad took notice of this breach of faith on the part of Ash'as, Ash'as revolted and apostatized. The rebel Kinda flocked to the standard of Ash'as, and prepared for battle.

Campaign in Hadramaut. Ziyad wrote to the Caliph Abu Bakr for reinforcement. Abu Bakr directed Muhajir to march from Yemen to Hadramaut to the relief of the administration in Hadramaut. Muhajir marched with his force to Hadramaut. There was a battle in late January 633 C.E. in which Ash'as was defeated, though the defeat was not decisive. Ash'as withdrew his army from the battlefield and shut himself in the fort of Nujeir. Here other dissident tribes joined him. The Muslims besieged the fort of Nujeir. To strengthen the Muslims, 'Ikramah also marched with a column from Yemen to Hadramaut. The Muslims thereafter pressed the siege, and some time in February 633 C.E., Ash'as opened negotiations with Muhajir and 'Ikramah. Ash'as agreed to surrender if the lives of ten persons and their families were spared. The Muslims accepted the proposal and Ash'as was asked to write the names of the persons for whom he wanted amnesty. Ash'as went to his people, and prepared the document containing the names of the persons who were to be granted amnesty. It was his intention to write the names of other ten persons, and thereafter write his own name as the tenth. He did not notice that one man Jahdam stood over his head reading the names. As Ash'as was going to write his own name as the tenth person Jahdam drew his dagger saying "Write my name, or I will kill you." Overawed, Ash'as wrote the name of Jahdam as the tenth person, and the list of ten persons having been completed was handed over to Muhajir who had it sealed. In pursuance of the pact, Ash'as laid down arms and opened the gates of the fort. The Muslim forces thereafter entered the fort. Ash'as had not taken the garrison with him into his confidence. The garrison, therefore, opposed the Muslims. The apostates suffered from terrible slaughter, and the few who were left laid down their arms. All the men were taken captive. The Kindas now realized that Ash'as had betrayed them. As the captive men and women of the Kindas were led past Ash'as, they looked at him reproachfully and said "You traitor."

Ash'as bin Qais. When after the fall of the fort of Nujeir the sealed document with Muhajir was opened it was found that the name of Ash'as was not included in the list of ten persons who were to be granted amnesty. Muhajir felt delighted at this and said, "O enemy of Allah, your name is not included in the list, and thus prepare yourself for death." 'Ikramah came to the rescue of Ash'as, and at his instance, it was

decided that Ash'as should be sent to Madina, where Abu Bakr would decide his fate. Ash'as was accordingly put in chains, and taken to Madina along with other captives.

At Madina, Ash'as was presented before Abu Bakr. The Caliph reproached him for apostatizing from Islam. He also criticized his conduct in betraying his own people. Ash'as bore these reproaches without being ruffled in any way, and then pressing into service all the wit, eloquence, and charm of which he was master, made the Caliph believe that instead of having sinned, he had been sinned against. He tried to create the impression that he had been forced to take the stand that he had taken because the Muslim administration at Zafar had mishandled the affairs and acted tactlessly. He assured the Caliph that he was always a Muslim, and that even when forced to take up arms against the Muslim administration he had remained at heart a Muslim.

Abu Bakr felt that Ash'as was a man of great parts and that the proper course for the administration should have been to win his collaboration rather than drive him to the hostile camp. Abu Bakr granted him amnesty. Ash'as won the favor of the Caliph to such an extent that he was married to Umm Farwa a sister of Abu Bakr. It is related that in honor of the celebration of his marriage, Ash'as went to the camel market at Madina, and inflicted cuts with his sword on the hamstrings of every animal that came his way. In a few moments dozens of camels were thus disabled. When the owners protested he paid them the price that they demanded. A large crowd gathered, and he asked them to have the animals slaughtered and feast upon the meat to celebrate his marriage to the sister of the caliph. He said that if he had been in his hometown he would have celebrated the marriage on a grander scale. Ash'as settled at Madina. In later years of his life he fought with distinction in Syria, Iraq, and Persia. Under Usman he was made the Governor of Azarbaijan.

Treachery was, however, in the very blood of Ash'as. One of his daughters married Imam Hassan, and she poisoned her husband at the instance of Amir Muawiyah. On his death bed Abu Bakr gave expression to some of the regrets of his life. One of his regrets was that he should not have pardoned Ash'as, but should have beheaded him.

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