

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Ali During the Caliphate of Othman

Activities of Ali during the caliphate of Othman

During the caliphates of Abu Bakr and Othman, Ali held the dual offices of Chief Justice as well as Chief Secretary. Othman conferred the office of the Chief Secretary on his cousin Marwan. Ali remained as the Chief Justice. He continued to be a member of the Majlisi-Shura. The accounts that have come down to us are mostly silent about the activities of Ali. In the various history books we come across the judgments that Ali delivered during the caliphate of Umar, and marvel at the highly developed sense of judgment of Ali. I have not come across any judgment delivered by Ali during the caliphate of Othman though Ali is said to have held the office of the Chief Justice during this period. Although the Hashimites and the Umayyads belonged to the same stock, there was rivalry between the two houses. After the death of Abdul Muttabb, power passed on to Umayyads who enjoyed greater wealth. When the Holy Prophet declared his mission, the Umayyads led the Quraish in hostility against the Holy Prophet and the Muslims. The Umayyads accepted Islam after the conquest of Makkah in 680 C.E. thereafter the Umayyads acknowledged the superiority of the Hashimites. This position lasted for a short period of two years only as the Holy Prophet died in 632 C.E. Abu Bakr and Umar who were elected as the Caliphs thereafter did not belong either to the Hashimite or Umayyad section of the Quraish. Othman was an Umayyad and during his caliphate the Umayyads gained in power at the cost of the Hashimite. There is a passage in Nabj-ul-Balagha wherein Ali complains that the Umayyads were withholding from him what was his due as the camelman withholds the like of the she camel from her young one. It appears that during the caliphate of Othman, Ali led a more or less retired life, and did not take any active part in politics. By this time Ali had four wives and a number of children. During this period Ali devoted most of his time to religious exercises and domestic activities. After the death of the Persian emperor Yezdjurd his daughters were taken captive, and brought to Madina. When put to open auction the oldest princess slapped the auctioneer on the face. Ali advised that it was not proper that such distinguished persons should be put to open auction. The proper line of action was that the standard price should be faced, and whosoever paid the amount should get the princess. Ali purchased two princesses. He married one of them to his son Husain and the other to his step son Muhammad bin Abu Bakr. This shows that by this time the financial condition of Ali had considerably improved.

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