

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Martyrdom of Ali-661 C.E.

Assassination of Ali

Abdur Rahman b Muljam al Sarimi, the designated assassin of Ali, reached Kufa well before the appointed date. Here he fell in love with a Kharijite girl Qataum by name. According to chronicles she was an outstanding beauty. She had a face as beautiful as the moon, and her flowing jet black tresses were most captivating. Her father and brother had been killed in the Battle of Nahrawan, and she was fired with the desire to avenge their death. She agreed to marry Abdur Rahman if he could present to her the head of Ali as her dower. As he was already committed to the assassination of Ali he readily accepted the condition laid down by his beloved. At the instance of Qataum, two more Kharijites joined with Abdur Rahman in the conspiracy to assassinate Ali. One of them was Werdan, who was related to Qataum. The other was Shaubib b Bijrah who belonged to the tribe of Anjah.

On the Friday morning of the seventeenth day of the month of Ramadan, the three conspirators went to the main mosque of Kufa just before the break of dawn. Here they took up their position in the narrow passage leading to the prayer hall. A little later Ali came, the mosque when it was still dark and there was no one else in the mosque. When Ali stood to pray, Werdan struck at Ali, but missed his mark. Then Abdur Rahman struck Ali on the forehead with this poisoned sword which penetrated on the brain through the scar of an old wound. Thereafter the assassins fled from the mosque.

When the faithful assembled in the mosque for prayers they found Ali lying wounded on the prayer mat. A hunt for the assassins was made. Werdan resisted being taken captive and was killed. Abdur Rahman was apprehended and taken into custody. The third conspirator escaped from Kufa. Abdur Rahman confessed his guilt. He said that he had struck his blow at Ali in the name of God for he considered that in seeking power, Ali had sinned and was guilty of killing thousands of innocent people. Ali cursed Abdur Rahman for his misguided views. He, however, instructed his men that the assassin should be kept in custody and should not be subjected to any hardship. He observed that if he recovered from the wound, he would himself decide what punishment should be awarded to him. If he died the assassin was to lose his life. He was, however, to be killed in one stroke, and was neither to be mutilated nor made to suffer languishing death.

The wounds of Ali proved to be fatal. No antidote could be found to counter affect the poison that had penetrated into the body of Ali. The condition of Ali steadily deteriorated and he breathed his last on the 24th of January 661 C.E. From God he came and to God he returned.

[View Page](#)

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