

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Deposition of Provincial Governors

Defection of Syria and Kufa

Thus at the outset of his rule as Caliph Ali had to face a crisis. The failure of the nominees of Ali to assume charge implied a political schism in the body politics of Islam. The situation that emerged on the ground was that the Governors appointed by Ali assumed office in Egypt, Basra and Yemen, and the people in these provinces took the oath of allegiance to Ali. The people of Kufa took the oath of allegiance to Ali, but did not want any change in their Governor, and they made the nominee of Ali go back. Syria refused to acknowledge the authority of Ali. In Makkah the position was confused. In Makkah some persons offered allegiance to Ali, but the majority of the Quraish withheld their allegiance to Ali. It appears that at that stage, Ali did not appoint a Governor for Makkah, and the Governor appointed by Othman continued in office. He did not offer allegiance to Ali. Syria was definitely hostile to Ali. Kufa was not hostile, but as the people of Kufa had played a leading role in the assassination of Othman and the election of Ali, they wanted that Ali should be subservient to them. Makkah did not want to defy Ali, but it did not want to support him either. At the outset of his caliphate Ali had to force an administrative crisis in the country. Among the historians there is some controversy on the point whether in the deposition of Governors' Ali acted rashly or otherwise. Some of the writers have taken the view that as advised by Ibn Abbas he should have bided his time and deferred the deposition of Governors. If we study the question in the light of what happened subsequently we arrive at the conclusion that there was nothing wrong in what Ali did. Muwayyah had no intention of owing allegiance to Ali and if had been allowed to carry on as a Governor of Ali, he would have been a source of greater trouble for Ali. By such deposition, Ali was able to establish his authority in a greater part of the country. If Ali had succeeded in consolidating his rule in those provinces where his nominees held the office, he could have overpowered Syria without much difficulty. Unfortunately other complications took place, and Ali had to face trouble even in provinces where his Governors held office.

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