

Khalifa Uthman bin Affan - Political Administration

Governors of Uthman

The Governors were appointed by the Caliph. Every appointment was made in writing. At the time of appointment an instrument of instructions was issued with a view to regulating the conduct of Governors. On assuming office, the Governor was required to assemble the people in the main mosque, and read the instrument of instructions before them.

One of the main allegations against Uthman was that he had appointed his relatives as Governors. Another allegation was that he exercised little check over the Governors.

As the Caliph, Uthman had the absolute right to appoint the Governors of provinces at his discretion. In theory this discretion could not be questioned. There was no legal bar to the appointment of relatives as Governors. Abdullah b Sa'ad a foster brother of Uthman had been appointed as the Governor of Egypt by Umar. Uthman merely continued him in office. Uthman consolidated Egypt in one province and placed the enlarged province under the charge of Abdullah b Sa'ad. This was an administrative reform in the right direction, and any criticism against the measure was misplaced.

In Syria, Muawiyah was the Governor under Umar. Uthman allowed him to continue in office. Uthman consolidated Syria into one province. In view of the threat from the Byzantines this reform was necessary and very much in public interest.

In Kufa, Uthman appointed Saad b Abi Waqas as the Governor in the first instance. Saad was not related to Uthman and he made the appointment in deference to the will of Umar. Later Saad was deposed and Uthman appointed his step brother Walid b Uqba as the Governor. Sa'ad was not deposed because Uthman wanted to make room for his step brother. Saad was deposed because of his failure to control the situation, and Walid was appointed because Uthman considered that a young man who enjoyed his confidence could alone deliver the goods in Kufa. Walid justified this selection, and during the first five years of his rule he was most popular with the people of Kufa. Later there was agitation in Kufa, and Uthman deposed him in public interest. As a matter of fact the agitation against Walid was not due to the fact that anything had gone wrong with Walid; the reality was that the people of Kufa being fickle by nature were won over by the conspirators, and wanted a change. Uthman accepted their demand even though he was convinced that Walid was not to be blamed in any way and that during the tenure of his office he had served the people of Kufa to the best of his ability.

In Basra, Abu Musa Asha'ari was deposed at the demand of the people of Basra. Uthman asked the representatives of the people of Basra to suggest a person who could be appointed as their Governor. They said that some young person who enjoyed the confidence of the Caliph should be appointed as the Governor. It was in deference to the wish of the people of Basra that Abdullah b Aamar was appointed as the Governor of Basra. He was a cousin of Uthman and he justified his selection in every way.

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