

Khalifa Uthman bin Affan - Governors of Uthman

The evil genius

In most of the accounts that have come down to us, Marwan b Hakam is painted as the "evil genius" who was responsible for the troubles of Uthman. The issue needs objective examination. Marwan was the son of Hakam. Hakam was the paternal uncle of Uthman. When Uthman was converted to Islam, Hakam put considerable pressure on Uthman to retract from his faith in Islam. Uthman remained firm in his faith in Islam, and thereafter Hakam left Uthman to himself. Hakam and his son Marwan were converted to Islam at the time of the conquest of Makkah. Hakam and Marwan then came to Madina. In Madina, the Holy Prophet felt annoyed at the conduct of Hakam and exiled him to Taif. Marwan consequently came to be called "Ibn Tarid", the son of the expelled one. It is reported that Uthman interceded with the Holy Prophet for the recall of Hakam from exile. The Holy Prophet agreed to rescind the orders of exile, but before the orders were passed the Holy Prophet was dead. In the time of Abu Bakr and Umar, Uthman requested for the recall of Hakam. As no evidence other than the evidence of Uthman was available to the effect that the Holy Prophet had agreed to rescind the orders of exile, the Caliphs did not agree to recall Hakam from exile. When Uthman became the Caliph he recalled Hakam from exile. As Caliph, Uthman was competent to act on the basis of information available to him. In some quarters, Uthman was criticized for rescinding the order passed by the Holy Prophet. Uthman declared that the Holy Prophet had agreed to his recall. Uthman was not the man to speak a lie and whatever he said must be true. The orders of exile were recalled after more than twelve years and as every sentence must be for a specified period, Uthman was justified in passing the orders of recall after twelve years. Hakam did not stay in Madina for long, and went back to Makkah and Taif. Uthman requested Hakam to leave Marwan at Madina in order to assist him. Marwan accordingly remained at Madina and he acted as Uthman's Minister and Secretary. It cannot be denied that as Caliph Uthman needed assistance in running the affairs of the State. He could appoint only such persons to such office who enjoyed his absolute confidence.

It may be recalled that in the time of Uthman, there were no developed institutions for running the affairs of the State. Loyalties depended on blood relationship and tribal considerations alone. In the circumstances of the age in which he lived Uthman had no option, but to invoke the assistance of his relatives. It is alleged that Uthman allotted one fifth of the revenues of Egypt to Marwan. The allegation is preposterous. If there had been any substance in the allegation Marwan should have been extraordinarily rich. As a matter of fact he was a man of ordinary means, and this shows that no undue payments were made to him. It is probable that some allowances may have been paid to Marwan out of the public funds, but such payment was justified because Marwan served as Minister or Secretary to the Caliph. Marwan is generally painted as the evil genius of Uthman. Sir William Muir has explained in his book regarding the history of the Caliphs that such allegations are based on partisan motives and are void of substance. It is made out that on several occasions Ali gave his mind to Uthman and Uthman promised to follow the advice of Ali, but that on the advice of Marwan, Uthman would again revert to his objectionable ways. All such allegations were made with a view to projecting Uthman as a man of fickle and feeble character who had no will of his own, and was led by the nose by unscrupulous advisers. As a matter of fact, Uthman was neither feeble nor fickle, nor were his advisers unscrupulous. They were as good Muslims as other persons, and they served the State as best as they could.

[View Page](#)