

OMAR IBN AL-KHATTAB THE MUSLIMS IN IRAQ

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The essential purpose of the Iraq Crusade since the reign of Abu-Bakre Al-Siddiq was to proliferate and promote the doctrines of Islam into lands outside the Arab Peninsula. The achievement of that purpose would also provide territorial security against any alien interference from the Roman Empire or the Persian Empire both of which were highly potential military powers of great superiority and strength. The regions stretching north of the Arab Peninsula into Palestine, Syria, and Iraq were inhabited by nomad tribes of essentially Arab descent. Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (prayers and peace from Allah upon him), it was conceived that these territories were the natural geographic and racial extensions of the Arab Peninsula. The spread of the Islamic creed would take a natural course to the north. The same concepts of thought were adopted by the Khalifah of Rassul-Allah Abu-Bakre Al-Siddiq, and were continued with the same adamant intention by Ameer Al-Moumineen Omar ibn Al-Khattab.

During the early reign of Omar ibn Al-Khattab, Muslim warriors under Saad ibn Abi Waqqas had reached Ab-Qadissiyah and Al-Mada'in, and were scouting news of the retreating and defeated Persian forces who were assembling at Galola'a north of Al Mada'in, while emperor Yazdegrid 3 was residing at Helwan further north of Galola'a. News reached Saad ibn **abi** Waqqas that the Persians were rigidly determined to make the last *stand* against the Muslim warriors at Galola'a. Yazdegrid ordered Mehran to command the Persians at Galola'a and supported them with reinforcements military equipment, provisions and needs for a long campaign. The details of the Persian masses and preparations at Galola'a reached Saad, who in turn wrote to Qmar ibn Al-Khattab the exact situation. Omar wrote to Saad to advance Hashem ibn Utbah at the head twelve thousand men, with a vanguard commanded by Al-Qaqaa ibn Amre, and also specified the names commanding the flanks and the main body of the army.

Hashem ibn Utbah marched with his men to reach the well defended city of Galola'a where the Persian forces were very well entrenched. Hashem established a tight siege on the city however, provisions drained profusely to the Persians from Heiwan; and came continuously uninterrupted to the Muslims from Al-Madain. For such reasons of a stable situation, the siege remained for eighty days. During that period, the Persians went out to fight the Muslims, but always returned defeated. Their commander Mehran finally ordered a massive attack against the Muslims, which ended by an utter Persian defeat after very fierce and savage violent fighting on both sides. However, the Muslim warriors finally triumphed and entered Galola'a. The Persian troops retreated to Helwan followed by Al-Qaqaa ibn Amre and part of the Muslim army. Yazdegrid fled from Helwan to distant places east into the plains of Persia. Al-Qaqaa entered Helwan overcoming the resistance put by the defeated retreating Persian forces. Galola'a and Helwan were occupied by Muslim warriors who penetrated further north to reach Al-Musel nearing the Syrian desert from the north. News of the triumph at Galola'a and Helwan were sent to Omar ibn Al-Khattab with one fifth of the spoils of War: and asking

permission for the Muslim warriors to advance east into Persian mainland. Omar ibn Al-Khattab instructed Saad ibn Abi Waqqas not to advance any further. Omar said in his words to Saad "I wish there were an impermeable barrier an obstructing intersection between the valley of the rivers, and the vast plains east, through which we cannot penetrate to them, and they cannot penetrate to us. The opinion of Omar ibn Al-Khattab was very wise indeed. He was mostly concerned about the safety of Muslims, about the stability of Muslim presence in the lands occupied; and most of all about establishing the teachings of the new creed in the territories of Iraq. The policy of Omar ibn Al-Rhattab was to unite all the tribes of Arab descent in one theopolitical unity extending from the Indian Ocean south to the north of Iraq and Syria. In these regions, Islam would dominate as the new ecumenic way of life for the advancement and promotion of the human race in these regions.

The Muslim warriors were freely moving through the lands between Masbathan east to Qarqysia" a north west. They had defeated all Persian resistance, and had subjected the inhabitants of these districts to the justice of Muslim administration in all walks of life. The South of Iraq was reoccupied by Utbah ibn Ghazwan who was commissioned by Omar ibn Al-khattab to crusade into the south of Iraq and eliminate Persian presence in these regions. Utbah succeeded to reach Al-Ahwaz to the east and Al-Abullah at the delta of the Euphrates river. At thjs stage of events, the whole Arab

Iraq had been liberated from the yoke of Persian occupation rule and its despotic injustice. The inhabitants of these territories came to realize that Muslim administration had tile fundamentals to establish social rights, justice, right of property, freedom of worship, and maintain a system of human equality and respect. For such reasons, these local inhabitants gradually developed a progressive desire to know and embrace the teachings of the new faith of Islam. Many of these inhabitants joined the new faith and the rest remained free practicing their beliefs. Omar ibn Al-Khattab had to develop the suitable policy by which he could realize his intention and purpose of combining the north of the Arab Peninsula to the mainland in one geographical, political unity under the domain of Islam.

Omar ibn Al-Khattab consulted and discussed the details of the situation with several companions of the Prophet, men of knowledge and wisdom. He finally decided that Iraq must be cultivated by the farmers of Iraq, Arabs and non-Arabs alike. These farmers had to submit to the Muslim law of land taxation the "Kharaj"". There was a social administration system of justice, legality, honesty and equality. The Muslim warriors were granted special areas for their living. Omar ibn Al-Khattab ordered that certain sites should be selected which were qualified as having good dry climate suitable for the health of the nomad arab tribes who constituted the bulk of the Muslim warriors in Iraq. Omar wrote to Saad to instruct that such sites should be selected as residencies for the Muslim warriors in Iraq. Two main sites were chosen; the first was near Al-Hirah where a city was built named Al Koufah. The second site was Al-Basrah near Al-Abullah in the Delta of the two rivers, neighbouring the shores of the Arabian Gulf. Both places grew rapidly and were populated by Muslim warriors. Al Koufah was inhabited by the

men under command of Saad ibn. Abi Waqqas, and also migrating tribes from south of the Peninsula. Al - Basrah was inhabited by the men under command of Utbah ibn Ghazwan, and also migrating tribes from north of the Peninsula. These cities were erected from straw huts, but were later built into dwellings of mud bricks. *Each* of the two cities had a large Mosque for prayers, a neighbouring administrative building, and large market place. Omar ibn Al-Khattab developed a system of land reclamation and land reformation to be adopted in Iraq. All farmers reclaimed their lands for cultivation, and all land owners were given their property of land. The lands previously owned by members of the imperial house and other dignitaries who took part in the actual fighting was considered property of the Muslim State and was not subject to any transaction. Farmers could cultivate such lands of State property under conditions of lease. Public facilities such as rivers, roads, Were public property under State control not subject to bussiness negotiations. This economic system of administration Was very favorable to all the inhabitants of Iraq, even those of Persian descent who still remained in Iraq. The administrative policy was also highly approved and praised; giving the inhabitants of Iraq the full freedom under Islamic law of Shariah which specified and justified the social rights of Muslims and Non-Muslims. The whole country gained stable conditions of economy and social tranquility; The Muslim warriors remained as protective forces within Al-Koufah and Al-Basrah, with Saad ibn Abi Waqqas as the presiding Ameer, the representative of Omar ibn Al-Khattab in Iraq. The main duties of these forces were to safeguard the social politico economic system of the Muslim regime; and also to preserve Iraq from any future Persian invasion. Omar ibn Al-Khattab totally refused to give land ownership to the Muslim warriors. They were veterans of war, and must remain as such, wjt hout competing with the farmers in land cultivation or ownership.

The liberal progressive socioeconomic system of Muslim administration in Iraq established social sufficiency, and brought financial revenue returns to the Muslim treasury at Al-Madinah. The sources of these revenues were the "Kharaj" from the cultivated lands, the "Jiziah"" paid by the Non- Muslim fractions of the population, and the income from the State property on lease to some farmers. The State was responsible for establishment of irrigation systems, dams, bridges, roads and other such facilities of public interests. Education was basically and essentially Islamic, Muslim jurists of theology were appointed for the tutition of Islamic teachings and culture. This was mandatory to the Muslim population of the lands, and also to the Muslim warriors resident at Al-Koufah and Al-Basrah. There were also appointed commissioners responsible for the internal revenue funds and the financial administration for local regions, and for the whole country. Judicial tribunal matters were settled by magistrate arbitrators who implemented their function according to Islamic laws of jurisdiction and jursiprudence. Omar ibn Al-Khattab as the head of State at Al-Madinah was the person authorized to nominate the officers for these various functions.

Omar ibn Al-Khattab insisted, and gave strict orders to his army commanders at Al-Koufah and Al-Basrah to remain very vigilant and expedient to meet any counterattacks from the Persian forces. Such attacks did take place especially in the

southern sector of the country, where Al-Hormozan the Persian military commander tried several times to raid the Muslim warriors at Al-Basrah.

The Persian forces were always defeated by the Muslims, and retreated to the Persian plains east. The Muslims were under precise vigorous instructions from Omar ibn Al-Kattab not to follow the retreating Persians east into the Persian plains.

With such intentions, Omar ordered land surveys, new irrigation systems, reconstruction of bridges and roads, repair and restitution of all public facilities that were lost or destroyed during the hostilities. Persian technicians that remained behind help in such work of construction. These improvements and activities maintained an active justified life for the inhabitants of Iraq, where there was an atmosphere of stability, social security and justice, economic prosperity, freedom and respect of the human personality. The doctrines of Islamic faith succeeded to indoctrinate in the minds the spiritual elegance, charm of character, confidence of the self, and the feeling of individual and social integrity and fulfillment.