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Purpose of the first Tradition

Firstly: When the people of Madinah accepted Islam, the Prophet (S) sent Musab bin Umayr as his emissary teach them the tenets of religion. This was due to the fact that though some of the people of Madinah had been present for Hajj and had taken the oath of fealty at the hands of the Messenger of Allah (S), they were quite ignorant of the Islamic teachings. Hence it was necessary to teach them the rules of religion that had been promulgated till then.

The people had come for Hajj and some of them who were Muslims, reached Uqbah and took the oath of fealty at the hands of the Holy Prophet (S). It was at a time when Islam had not spread to other areas. Subsequently, the Holy Prophet (S) migrated to Madinah and Imam Ali (a.s) followed him after three or more days. The circumstances of their arrival at Madinah are well documented.

The Holy Prophet (S gradually initiated the steps for the governance of Madinah after signing the treaties with Jews of Qurayza, Bani Nadir and Bani Qainqa.

Gradually, the people of Madinah entered the fold of Islam. So when the Holy Prophet (S) sent Imam Ali (a.s) to attend a funeral in Madinah, and to break the idols, level the graves and erase the pictures like a ruler whom no one can disobey. Moreover, the first person who had gone, returned without achieving anything. Therefore, the Holy Prophet (S) sent Ali (a.s) and he (Ali) was present at the funeral most of the time so how could he have carried out the commands of the Holy Prophet (S)?

Secondly: In another tradition Imam Ali (a.s) told Abil Hayyaj Al Asadi: "I assign you a task which the Messenger of Allah (S) assigned me: Level every grave and obliterate every idol."[1]

Imam Ali (a.s) could not have sent Abil Hayyaj Al Asadi except during the tenure of his Caliphate.

Now, this raises many questions.

When did he order it? Was it during his Caliphate when Islam had triumphed and the three Caliphs had passed away? And towards which city did he send Abil Hayyaj to carry out the above instructions?

And lastly, even if we consider the traditions to be correct, they must be with regard to the graves of the

polytheists. How can we apply them to the graves of Muslims?

1. Musnad Ahmed 1:89 and 96.

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