THE MARKET OF THE PROPHET

BY

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The reasons given by the Arabic sources for the assassination of Ka'b b. al-Ashraf are that he stirred up the Meccans to fight the Prophet and to avenge their defeat at Badr, that he composed anti-Muslim verses defaming Muslim women or that he plotted with a group of Jews to kill the Prophet 1). These reasons are also accepted or quoted in the works of scholars, analysing the attitude of the Prophet towards Ka'b b. al-Ashraf 2).


A passage in Samhūdi's *Wafāʾ al-Wafā* reveals another aspect of the enmity between Ka'b b. al-Ashraf and the Prophet and sheds some light on the economic activities of the Prophet and the Muslim community in Medina. The event recorded in this passage on the authority of Ibn Shabba runs as follows:

Ibn Shabba-Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān: "The Prophet pitched a tent in the *Baqiʿ* al-Zubayr and said: This is your market. Then Ka'b b. al-Ashraf came up, entered inside and cut its ropes. The Prophet then said: Indeed, I shall move it into a place which will be more grievous for him than this place. And he moved into the place of the "Market of Medina" (scil. the place which was later the Market of Medina -K).

Then he said: This is your market. Do not set up sections in it and do not impose taxes for it".

The problem that faces us is why did Ka'b b. al-Ashraf cut the ropes of the tent of the Prophet. Some conclusion can be drawn from another fragment of this tradition of 'Umar b. Shabba, stating that al-Zubayr asked the Prophet to grant him *al-Baqi* after the assassination of Ka'ab.

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1) I 540.
4) Samhūdi, op. cit., II, 265.