

Muslim at the House of Taw'a

Ibn 'Aqil's feet took him to the quarters of Banu Jiblah of the tribe of Kindah. He stood at the door of a house of a freed bondmaid named Taw'a who had a number of sons. She used to be the bondmaid of al-Ash'ath Ibn Qays who freed her.

Asid al-Hadrami married her, and she gave birth to his son Bilal who was in the crowd when his mother was standing at the door waiting for him. Muslim requested her to give him some water, which she did. He then requested her to host him, telling her that he was a stranger in that land without a family or a tribe, that he belonged to a family capable of intercession on the Day of Judgment, and that his name was Muslim Ibn 'Aqil.

She took him to a room that was not the same one where her son used to sleep, and she served him some food. Her son was surprised to see her entering that room quite often, so he asked her about it. She refused to answer his question except after obtaining an oath from him to keep the matter to himself.

But in the morning he informed Ibn Ziyad of where Muslim had been hiding. Ibn Ziyad dispatched al-Ash'ath accompanied by seventy men who belonged to the Qays tribe in order to arrest him. Upon hearing the horses' hoofs ploughing the ground, Muslim realized that he was being pursued¹, so he hurried to finish a supplication that he was reciting following the morning prayers. Then he put on his battle gear and said to his hostess Taw'a:

“You have carried out your share of righteousness, and you have secured your share of the intercession of the Messenger of Allah (S). Yesterday, I saw my uncle the Commander of the Faithful ('a) in a vision telling me that I was going to join him the next day.”²

He came out to face them raising his unsheathed sword as they assaulted the house, succeeding in repelling their attack. They repeated their attack, and again he repelled them as he recited these poetic

verses:

It is only death; so, do whatever you devise,
For you shall no doubt meet your demise;
So I shall be patient about the Command
Of Allah, His Glory is Grand!
Allah's decree is always done
In His creation; this is well known.

He killed as many as forty-one of their men³, and he was so strong that he would take hold of one man then hurl him on the rooftop.⁴

Ibn al-Ash'ath sent a messenger to Ibn Ziyad requesting re-enforcements. The messenger came back to him carrying the latter's blame of his incompetence. He, therefore, sent him this message:

“Do you think that you sent me to one of Kufa's shopkeepers or to a Nabatean from Hira?! Rather, you sent me to one of the swords of [Prophet] Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdullah (S)!” Ibn Ziyad then assisted him with additional soldiers.⁵

Fighting intensified. Muslim and Bakir Ibn Hamran al-Ahmari exchanged blows. Bakir struck Muslim on the mouth, cutting his upper lip, wounding the lower one and breaking two of his lower teeth. Muslim fiercely struck him with one blow on his head and another on his shoulder muscle, almost splitting his stomach, killing him instantly.⁶

Then they attacked him from the house's rooftop, hurling rocks at him. They kept burning reed bales then throwing them at him. He attacked them in the alley as he quoted the following *rajaz* verses composed by Hamran Ibn Malik:

I swore not to be killed except as a free man,
Though I found death something repelling;
Every man will one day face evil,
And what is cold will be mingled with what is hot.
The soul's ray returned, so it did settle,
I fear only being charged with lying or being tempted.⁷

His wounds were numerous; he bled extensively, so he supported his body on the side of the house. It was then that they assaulted him with arrows and stones. “Why do you hurl stones at me,” he asked them, “as non-believers are stoned, the member of the household of the pure Prophet (S) that I am?”

Do you not have any respect for the Messenger of Allah (S) with regard to one of his own descendants?" Ibn al-Ash'ath said to him, "Please do not get yourself killed while you are under my protection." Muslim asked him, "Shall I then be captured so long as I have some strength in me? No, by Allah! This shall never be."

Then he attacked Ibn al-Ash'ath who fled away before him. They attacked Aqil from all directions. Thirst had taken its toll on him. A man stabbed him from the back, so he fell on the ground and was arrested.⁸

Another account says that they dug a hole for him that they covered then fled before him, thus luring him into falling in it, then they arrested him.⁹ When they took his sword away from him, he cried. 'Amr Ibn 'Ubaydullah al-Salami was surprised to see him cry.

1. Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin*. al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 6, p. 210. al-Khawarizmi, *Maqatal al-Husayn*, Vol. 1, p. 208, chapter 10.

2. Shaikh 'Abbas al-Qummi, *Nafs al-Mahmum*, p. 56.

3. Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Manaqib*, Vol. 2, p. 212.

4. Shaikh 'Abbas al-Qummi, *Nafs al-Mahmum*, p. 57.

5. Shaikh Lutfallah Ibn al-Mawla Muhammad Jawad al-Safi al-Gulpaygani), *Al-Muntakhab*, p. 299, tenth night.

6. al-Khawarizmi, *Maqatal al-Husayn*, Vol. 1, p. 210, chapter 10.

7. These verses are mentioned by Ibn Tawus on p. 30 of his book *Al-Luhuf* (Saida's edition), and by Ibn Nama in his book *Muthir al-Ahzan*, in reference to what he calls the Battle of the Qarn. They are also cited on p. 209, Vol. 1, chapter 10, of al-Khawarizmi's book *Maqatal al-Husayn* with the author providing the name of the poet who composed them. Ibn Shahr Ashub cites six lines of the original poem on p. 212, Vol. 2, of his book *Al-Manaqib* (Iranian edition).

No historian who wrote about battles during the jahiliyya period makes any reference to such a battle. But on p. 64, Vol. 7, of Yaqt al-Hamawi's encyclopedia *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, on p. 1062, Vol. 3, of al-Bakri's *Mu'jam bima Ista'jam*, and p. 310, Vol. 9, of Taj al-'Arus, this name is given to a mountain where a battle, in which Banu 'Amir lost, took place. On p. 321 of al-Qalqashandi's book *Nihayat al-Arab*, the author says, "Banu Qarn are one of the branches of the tribe of Murad. Among them is Oways al-Qarni."

Yet all of this does not really tell us the whole truth. Yes, Muhammad Ibn Habib, the genealogist, on p. 243 of *Risalat al-Mughtalin* [a dissertation about those assassinated], which is listed among the seventh group of rare manuscripts researched by 'Abd al-Salam Harun, it is indicated that [the tribe of] Khath'am killed al-Samil, brother of Thul-Jawshan al-Kilabi, so Thul-Jawshan raided them assisted by 'Ayeenah Ibn Hasin on the condition that the latter would take the booty. They fought Khath'am at Fazar, a mountain, killing some of their men and taking booty. Hamran Ibn Malik Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Khat'ami was fought at the mountain. He was ordered to surrender, whereupon he recited these lines:

I swore never to be killed except as a free man;

I saw death something abominable;

I loathe being deceived or tempted.

Then he was killed. His sister composed a poem eulogizing him in which she said:

Woe upon Hamran, one who did not give himself away,

He did more than his share of goodness,

He owed others nothing at all,
A valiant fighter who stubbornly fought:
How could he possibly accept the shame?

8. Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Manaqib*, Vol. 2, p. 212. al-Khawarizmi, *Maqatal al-Husayn*, Vol. 1, pp. 209–210.

9. al-Turayhi, *Al-Muntakhab*, p. 299 (published by the Hayderi Press, Najaf, Iraq), in the discussion of the tenth night.

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