

The betrayal of the Kufans

It had been reported to them that their colleague had been killed, and they regarded that as a great crime. Ubayd Allah was told that Madhhij were at the gate. He told the qadi Shurayh, *“Go in to their colleague, look at him and then go out and inform them that he is still alive and has not been killed.”*

Shurayh went in and looked at him. When Hani' saw Shurayh, he said, with blood flowing down his beard, *“Oh what a God! Oh what Muslims! Has my clan been destroyed? Where are the people of religion? Where are the people of the town?”* When he heard the tumult at the door of the palace he said, *“I think those are the voices of Madhhij and my group of the Muslims. If ten of them got in, they would be able to rescue me.”*

After Shurayh had listened to what he had to say, he went out to them and told them, *“When the governor learnt about your attitude and your statements concerning your colleague, he ordered me to go and see him. I went and I saw him. Then he ordered me to meet you and inform you that he is still alive and that the report that he had been killed was false.”*

“Praise be to God since he has not been killed,” answered Amr Ibn al-Hajjaj and his colleagues. Then they went away.

Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad went out and went up on the pulpit. (He had brought) with him the nobles of the people, his bodyguard (shurat) and his entourage. He said, *“O people, seek refuge in obedience to God and your Imams. Do not cause division, for you will be destroyed, humiliated, killed or harshly treated and deprived. Your brother is he who speaks the truth to you. He who warns is excused.”*

After he had finished, he was about to go down but had not gone from the pulpit, when the look-outs at the date-sellers' gate of the mosque rushed in yelling, *“Muslim Ibn Aqil has come!”* Ubayd Allah quickly went into the palace and locked the gates.

Abd Allah Ibn Hazim reported:

By God, I was Ibn 'Aqil's messenger at the palace to see what was done to Hani'. When he was beaten and imprisoned I mounted my horse and was the first to enter the house to bring information of him to

Muslim Ibn Aqil. There the women of Murad had gathered and they were crying out, *“O tears of grief for him! O bereavement of him!”*

I went in to see Muslim and gave him the news of him (Hani¹). He ordered me to summon his supporters. The houses around him were full of them; there were four thousand men there. He told his messengers to cry out, *“O victorious, kill!”* so I cried out, *“O victorious, kill!”* Then the Kufans gathered and assembled before him. Muslim, may God have mercy on him, appointed leaders over the quarters, over the tribes of Kinda, Madhhij, Tamim, Asad, Mudar and Hamdan. The people had answered the call and gathered, except for a few who had delayed so that the mosque and the market place were full of people. They were full of enthusiasm until the evening.

Ubayd Allah's situation was grim. All his energy was concentrated on holding the door, for he only had thirty members of his bodyguard with him in the palace, twenty nobles of the people, and his family and entourage. The nobles who had not been with him began to come to him through the door which adjoined the building of the Romans. Then those of the nobles who were with Ibn Ziyad began to look down on them (the people outside). (These) were looking at them, while they hurled stones at them and cursed them and abused 'Ubayd Allah and his father.

Ibn Ziyad summoned Kathir Ibn Shihab and ordered him to go out among those of Madhhij who obeyed him and to go round Kufa and make the people desert Ibn Aqil; he should make them afraid of (the possibility of) war and threaten them with the punishment of the authorities. Then he ordered Muhammad Ibn al-Ashath to go out among those of Kinda and Hadramawt who obeyed him; he should raise a standard which would guarantee security to those people who came to him. He gave similar instructions to al-Qa'qa al-Dhuhli, Shabath Ibn Rib'i al-Tamimi, Hajjar Ibn Abjar al-'Ijli and Shamir Ibn Dhi al-Jawshan al-Amin. He kept the rest of the nobles of the people with him, not wishing to be without them because of the small number of people who were with him.

Kathir Ibn Shihab went out (and began) making the people desert Muslim. Muhammad Ibn al-Ashath went out until he reached the houses of the Bana Umara. Ibn 'Aqil sent 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Shurayh al-Shibami to Muhammad Ibn al-Ashath from the mosque. When Muhammad Ibn al-Ashath saw the great number of those who had come to him (Muslim), he lingered where he was (i.e. he did not carry out Ibn Ziyad's instructions). Then he- Muhammad Ibn al-Ashath- Kathir Ibn Shihab, al-Qaqa Ibn Shawr al-Dhuhli, and Shabath Ibn Rib'i began to make the people withdraw from their close adherence to Muslim for they made them afraid of the authorities so that a great number of their tribesmen and others gathered to them and they went to Ibn Ziyad through the house of the Romans. The tribesmen went in with them.

“May God make the governor prosperous,” said Kathir Ibn Shihab, *“you have many of the nobles of the people with you, (as well as) your bodyguard, family and servants. Let us go out against them.”*

Ubayd Allah refused but he gave Shabath Ibn Rib'i a standard and he sent him out. The people with Ibn

Aqil remained numerous until evening.

Their situation became strong. 'Ubayd Allah sent for the nobles and he assembled them. They (went up to the roof to) look down on the people. They offered additional (money) and kind treatment to those who would obey and they terrified the disobedient with (threats of) dispossession and (dire) punishment. They told them that the army from Syria was coming against them. Kathir Ibn Shihab spoke until the sun was about to set.

He said, "O people, stay with your families. Do not hurry into evil actions. Do not expose yourselves to death. These are the soldiers of the Commander of the faithful Yazid, who are approaching. The governor has given God a promise that if you persist in fighting him and do not go away by nightfall, he will deprive your children of their (right to a) state allotment of money fate¹) and he will scatter your soldiers in Syrian campaigns. He will make the healthy among you responsible for the sick and those present responsible for those who are absent until none of those rebellious people will remain who has not tasted the evil consequences of what their hands have earned."

The (other) nobles spoke in a similar vein. After the people had heard what they had to say, they began to disperse. Women began to come to their sons and brothers (saying), *"Go, the people will be enough (without) you."* Men were going to their sons and brothers and saying, *"Tomorrow, the Syrians will come against you. What are you doing, causing war and evil? Come away."* Thus (a man) would be taken away or would leave.

They continued to disperse so that by the time evening came and Muslim Ibn Aq'il prayed the evening prayer, he had only thirty men with him in the mosque. When he saw that it was evening and he only had that group with him, he left the mosque and headed for the gates of Kinda. He reached the gates with only ten of them (left) with him. When he left the gate, there was no one with him to guide him. He looked around but could see no one to guide him along the road, to show him to his house and to give him personal support if an enemy appeared before him.

He wandered amid the lanes of Kufa without knowing where he was going until he came to the houses of the Banu Jabala of Kinda.

He went on until he came to a door (at which was) a woman called Tawa. She had been a slave-wife (umm walad) of al-Ashath Ibn Qays and he had freed her. She had, then, married Usayd al-Hadrami and had borne him (a son called) Bilal. Bilal had gone out with the people and his mother was standing at the door waiting for him.

Ibn 'Aqil greeted her and she returned the greeting.

"Servant of God, give me water to drink," he asked her. She gave him a drink and he sat down. She took the vessel inside and then came out again.

“Servant of God, haven't you had your drink?” she asked.

“Yes,” was the answer. “Then go to your people,” she said. But he was silent. She repeated it but he was still silent. A third time she said, “Glory be to God, servant of God, get up – may God give you health – (and go) to your people. For it is not right for you to sit at my door and I will not permit you to do it.”

(At this) he got up and said, “Servant of God, I have neither house nor clan in this town. Would you (show) me some generosity and kindness? Perhaps I will be able to repay it later on.”

“What is it, servant of God?” she asked.

“I am Muslim Ibn Aqil,” he replied. “These people have lied to me, incited me (to action) and then abandoned me.”

“You are Muslim,” she repeated.

“Yes,” he answered.

“Come in,” she said and he was taken into a room in her house but not the room she used. She spread out a carpet for him and offered him supper but he could not eat.

Soon her son returned. He saw her going frequently to and fro between the rooms and exclaimed: “By God, the number of times which you have gone into and come out of that room this evening, makes me suspect that you have something important (there).”

“My little son, forget about this,” she answered.

“By God, tell me,” he replied.

“Get on with your own business and don't ask me about anything,” she retorted. However he persisted until she said, “My little son, don't tell any of the people anything about what I am going to tell you.”

“Indeed,” he answered and she made him take an oath. When he swore (not to do) that, she told him. He went to bed without saying anything.

After the people had deserted Muslim Ibn 'Aqil, a long time passed for Ibn Ziyad without him hearing the voices of the supporters of Ibn Aqil as he had heard them before. He told his followers to look down at them and see whether they could see any of them. They looked down and did not see anyone. Then he told them to see whether they were in the shadows and were lying in ambush for them.

They removed the (bamboo) roof covers of the mosque and began to lower the torches of fire in their hands, and to look. Sometimes the torches gave light for them and sometimes they did not give (as much) light for them as they would have wished. They let down the torches and sticks of cane tied with

rope on which was fire. They were let down until they reached the ground. They did this in (places in which was) the deepest darkness, (as well as) those parts which were closer and those which were in between. They (also) did that in the darkness around the pulpit.

When they saw that there was nothing, they informed Ibn Ziyad that the people had dispersed. Then he opened the gateway which (went) into the mosque. He came out and went up on the pulpit. His followers had come out with him. He told them to sit for a little while before the night prayer.

He ordered 'Amr Ibn Nafi to call out that there would be no guarantees of security for any man of the bodyguard, the arifs, the supporters and the fighters who prayed the night prayer (anywhere) except in the mosque. Not an hour passed before the mosque was full of people. After ordering his caller (to call for prayer), he rose for the prayer. His guard rose behind him but told them to guard him against anyone coming in (to try) to assassinate him.

After praying with the people, he went up on the pulpit, When he had praised and glorified God, he said, *“Ibn 'Aqil, stupid and ignorant (man as he is) has attempted the opposition and rebellion which you have seen. There will be no security from God for a man in whose house we find him. Whoever brings him, will have the reward for his blood. Fear God, you servants of God, and keep to obedience and your pledge of allegiance. Do not do (anything which will be) against yourselves. Husayn Ibn Numayr, your mother will lose you, if any of the gates of the lanes of Kufa is open or this man gets away, and you do not bring him to me. I give you authority over the houses of the inhabitants of Kufa. Send lookouts (to inspect) people on the roads. Tomorrow morning clear out (the people from) the houses and search them thoroughly so that you bring me this man.”*

Al Husayn Ibn Numayr was in charge of the bodyguard and was of the Banu Tamim. After this, Ibn Ziyad went back into the palace. He gave Amr Ibn Hurayth his standard and put him in charge of the people. In the morning he held an assembly and gave permission for the people to come to him. Muhammad Ibn al-Ash'ath approached.

“Welcome to one of those whose loyalty is above suspicion,” he said to him and sat him by his side.

That same morning the son of that old woman went to 'Abd al- Rahman Ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Ash'ath and told him about Muslim Ibn 'Aqil being with his mother. 'Abd al-Rahman went to his father who was with Ibn Ziyad. He went to him and Ibn Ziyad learned his secret.

“Get up and bring him to me immediately,” said Ibn Ziyad to (Muhammad Ibn al-Ashath), poking a cane into his side. He sent (Amr Ibn) Ubayd Allah Ibn Abbas al-Sulam, with him, together with seventy men from the tribal group of Qays.

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