

Muslim Ibn Aqil in Kufa

In the morning the call was made among the people: “*Al Salat jamia (the prayer is a general prayer which all should gather for).*”

The people gathered and he went out to them. He praised and glorified God and said: “*The Commander of the faithful (Yazid) has appointed me to be in charge of your town and your frontier-station and the distribution of your booty (fay). He has ordered me to give justice to the oppressed among you, to be generous to those of you who are deprived, and to treat the obedient among you with generosity like a good father, but to use the whip and the sword against those who abandon my command and oppose my appointment. Let each man protect himself. True belief (sidq) should declare itself on your behalf, not the threat of punishment (wadis).*”

Then he went down, he took the group leaders (arifs) and (some of) the people forcibly and he said:

“*Write to me about the strangers, those among you who supported the Commander of the faithful (i.e. ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib), those among you who support the Haruriyya (i.e. Kharijites), and the trouble-makers whose concern is discord and turmoil. Whosoever of you makes these lists for us will be free from harm. But those of you who do not write anyone, will have to guarantee that there is no opponent in his group (irafa) who will oppose us, and no wrongdoer who will try to wrong us. Anyone who does not do so, will be denied protection and his blood and his property will be permitted to us. Any group leader (arif) in whose group is found anyone with partisanship for the Commander of the faithful, who has not been reported to us, will be crucified at the door of his house, and I will abolish the pay (atal) of that group (irafa).*”

When Muslim Ibn Aqil heard of the coming of Ubayd Allah to Kufa, of the speech he had made and his treatment of the arifs and (other) people, he left the house of al-Mukhtar and went to the house of Hani' Ibn Urwa and went in (to stay) there. The Shia began to visit Hani's house secretly to keep it hidden from Ubayd Allah and they enjoined that it should be kept secret.

Ibn Ziyad summoned a retainer (mawla) of his called Maqil.

“Take three thousand dirhams,” he told him, “and look for Muslim Ibn 'Aqil and search out his followers. If you get hold of one or a group of them, give them these three thousand dirhams. Tell them to use it to help in the war against your enemy. Let them know that you are one of them. For if you give them it, they will be sure of you and have confidence in you, and they will not keep any of their information from you. So go (looking) for them and continue until you find where Muslim Ibn 'Aqil is staying and you have met him.”

He did that. He came (to a place where) he sat near Muslim Ibn Awsaja al-Asad; in the great mosque. The latter was praying, and he (Maqil) heard some people saying that this (was one of those who) had pledged allegiance to al Husayn. He went up and sat right next to him until he had finished praying.

“O servant of God,” he said, “I am a Syrian whom God has blessed with love for the House and love for those who love them.”

He pretended to weep (in front of) him. Then he continued:

“I have three thousand dirhams with which I want to meet a man from them (the House) whom I have learnt has come to Kufa to receive pledges of allegiance on behalf of the son of the daughter of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family. I have been wanting to meet him but I have not found anyone who will direct me to him and I don't know the place (where he is staying). While I was sitting (here), I heard a group of the faithful saying that this is a man (i.e. Muslim Ibn Awsaja) who is acquainted with this House. Therefore I have come to you so that you may take this money from me and introduce me to your leader (sahib); for I am one of your brethren and someone you can trust. If you wish, you may receive my pledge of allegiance to him before my meeting him.”

“I thank God for you meeting me,” replied (Muslim) Ibn 'Awsaja, “and it gives me great joy to get (you) what you desire, and that God should help the House of His Prophet, peace be on them, through you. Yet the people's knowledge of my (connection) with this affair before it is finished troubles me, because of (my) fear of this tyrant and his severity.”

“It would be better (if) you took the pledge of allegiance from me (now),” Maqil told him. So he took his pledge of allegiance and testaments heavily supported by oaths that he would be sincere and keep the matter concealed. He (Maqil) gave him whatever would make him content in that way.

“Come to visit me at my house for (a few) days,” said (Muslim Ibn 'Awsaja), *“for I will seek permission for you (to visit) your master.”*

He began to go to visit him frequently with the people (i.e. the other members of the Shia) and sought permission for him (to visit).

Permission was given and Muslim Ibn Aqil received (Maqil's) pledge of allegiance. He told Abu Thumama al Saidi to take the money from him. The latter was the one who collected money from them and what

could be used to help each other, and he used to buy their arms.

He was a perceptive man and one of the knights (faris) of the Arabs and one of the notables of the Shi'a.

That man (i.e. Ma'qil) began to visit them regularly. He was the first to enter and the last to leave, in order to become acquainted with (everything of) their affairs which Ibn Ziyad wanted. He used to keep him informed about that at regular intervals.

Hani' Ibn Urwa began to fear for himself and he stopped attending Ibn Ziyad's assembly (majlis). He pretended to be sick. Ibn Ziyad asked those who did attend, *"Why is it I don't see Hani'?"* *"He is sick,"* they replied.

"If I had been informed of his illness, I would have paid him a sick visit," said Ibn Ziyad. Then he summoned Muhammad Ibn al-Ashath, Asma' Ibn Kharija and 'Amr Ibn al-Hajjaj al Zubaydi. Ruwayha, daughter of 'Amr was married to Hani' Ibn Urwa, she was the mother of Yahya Ibn Hani'.

"What prevents Hani' from coming to visit us?" he asked them.

"We don't know," they replied, *"but it is said that he is sick."*

"I have learnt," replied (Ibn Ziyad), *"that he is better and that he sits at the door of his house. Go and tell him that he should not abandon his duty towards us. For I do not like one of the Arab nobles like him to ill-treat me."*

They went until they stood before his (house) in the evening. He was sitting at his door.

"What is stopping you from seeing the governor?" they asked, *"For he has mentioned you and said that if he had been told you were ill, he would have paid you a sick-visit."*

"An illness has stopped me," he answered.

"He has been informed," they said, *"that you sit at the door of your house every evening. He finds you tardy and tardiness and churlish behaviour are things which the authorities will not tolerate. We adjure you to ride with us."*

He called for his clothes and got dressed. Then he called for a mule and rode (with them). When he got near the palace, he began to feel some apprehension. He said to Hassan Ibn Asma' Ibn Kharija, *"Nephew, by God, I fear this man. What do you think?"* *"Uncle, by God, I do not fear anything for you. Why do you invent a reason (for blame) against yourself?"* he answered, for Hassan did not know why Ubayd Allah had sent for him. (So) Hani' went on until he came to 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Ziyad. With him was a group (of people).

When he looked up, 'Ubayd Allah said (to himself), *"The fool's legs have brought him to you."* Then, when Hani' had drawn near Ibn Ziyad who had the qadi Shurayh, with him, Ibn Ziyad turned towards him

and recited, *"I want his friendship but he wants my death. The one who makes excuses to you is one of your own bosom friends from the tribe of Murad."*

He was referring to his earlier kindness and gentleness to him (Hani').

"What is that, governor?" asked Hani'.

"Yes, Hani', what are these matters which you have been plotting in your house against the Commander of the faithful and the general community of the Muslims?" asked Ibn Ziyad. *"You have brought Muslim Ibn Aqil and taken him into your house. You have gathered arms and men for him in houses around you. You thought that was hidden from me."*

"I have not done that and Muslim is not with me," he replied.

"Oh yes (you have)," was the answer.

After the argument between them had gone on for some time and Hani' persisted in contradicting and denying (the accusations), Ibn Ziyad summoned that spy, Maqil. He came and stood before him.

"Do you know this man?" (Ibn Ziyad) asked him.

"Yes," he replied.

At that (moment) Hani' realised that he had been a spy against them and had brought (Ibn Ziyad) all their information. For a moment he was bewildered, and then his spirit returned to him.

"Listen to me," he said, *"and believe what I say. I swear by God that I do not lie. By God, I did not summon him to my house. I did not know anything about his business until he came to me asking to stay with me. I was too ashamed to refuse him. As a result of that, the duty of giving (him) protection fell upon me. Therefore I gave him lodging and refuge. Then his affair developed as you have been informed. If you wish, I will give you strongly sworn testaments that I will not do you any harm and danger, and I will come to you and put my hand in your hand. If you wish, I will give you a guarantee which will be in your hand until I return to you. Then I will go to him and order him to leave my house for wherever in the land he wants to go. Then he will leave his right of protection."*

"You will never leave me unless you bring him," answered Ibn Ziyad.

"No, by God, I will not bring him to you," (the other) declared.

After the argument between them had gone on for some time, Muslim Ibn 'Amr al-Bahih rose (to speak). There was no other Syrian or Basran in Kufa except him.

"May God make you prosper, governor," he interjected, *"(please) leave me with him (for a time) so that I can speak to him."* He arose and took him (Hani') aside from Ibn Ziyad. They were (standing) where he

could see them and when they raised their voices, he could hear what they were saying.

"I adjure you before God, Hani'," said Muslim, *"you are killing yourself and bringing tribulation on your clan. By God, I hold you too precious to be killed. This man is the cousin of (your) tribe so they will not fight against him, nor harm him. Therefore give him (i.e. Muslim Ibn Aqil) to them (the authorities). There will be no shame and failure for you by that for you would only be handing him over to the authorities."*

"By God, indeed there would be shame and disgrace for me," answered Hani', *"were I to hand over one who has come under my protection and is my guest, while I am still alive and sound. I can hear; I see well; I have a strong arm and many helpers. By God, if I was the only one without any helper, I would not hand him over until I had died on his behalf."*

He began to shout at him saying, *"By God, I will never hand him over to him."*

Ibn Ziyad heard that. *"Bring him to me,"* he said. They brought him. *"Either bring him to me or I will have your head cut off,"* demanded Ibn Ziyad.

"Then there will be much flashing (of swords) around your house," replied Hani, thinking that his clan would prevent him (from being killed).

"Come near me," demanded (Ibn Ziyad). He came nearer and Ibn Ziyad struck his face with his cane and went on beating at his nose, forehead and cheeks so that he broke his nose and the blood flowed from it on to his face and beard and the flesh of his forehead and cheeks was sprinkled over his beard. Eventually the cane broke.

Hani' stretched out his hand towards the hilt of the sword of one of the armed attendants but the man pulled it away and prevented him.

"You have been behaving like one of the, Haruri (i.e. Kharijites) all day long!" yelled Ibn Ziyad, *"so your blood is permitted to us. Take him away!"* They took him and threw him into one of the rooms in the building.

They locked the doors on him. He had told them to put guards on him and that (also) was done. However Hassan Ibn Asma' arose and said, *"Are (we) messengers of treachery now? For you told us to bring the man to you. Yet when we brought him to you, you smashed his nose and face, and his blood flowed on his beard. Then you claimed that you would kill him."*

"You will be for it here (and now)," cried 'Ubayd Allah and he ordered him to be struck, shaken, and pushed aside.

"We are satisfied with the governor's attitude on our behalf and against (those of) us (who are wrong); the governor is only punishing (those who are wrong)," declared Muhammad Ibn al Ashath.

However when it was reported to Amr Ibn al-Hajjaj and he learnt that Hani' had been killed, he advanced with Madhhij and surrounded the palace. He had a great crowd with him.

"I am 'Amr Ibn al-Hajjaj," he called out, "and these are the knights of Madhhij, and their leading men. We have not broken away from obedience, nor have we separated from the community."

Ref:

- The History of al Tabari, Volume 19 The Caliphate of Yazid Ibn Muawiyah, Pages 22 – 65 (Abu Mikhna'f's Account on Muslim Ibn Aqil), Translated by I.K.A Howard, Paper back – ISBN 0-7914-0041-7
- Kitab al Irshad, Shaykh al Mufid, Pages 305 – 326, Translated by I.K.A Howard
- Tahrike Tarsile Quran, Paper back – ISBN 0-940368-11-0

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