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Some Historical Extracts

There is no doubt that the writers of various schools of thought, and those having different ideas, have expressed varied opinions about the peace treaty of Imam Hasan (as). Contradictory views and controversies raised by them, which reflect a biased opinion, have made the reality obscure. As a result, the treaty has become historically and politically vague.

Therefore, it is necessary that the old and reliable Islamic record should be presented to the intelligentsia, so that they may refer to it before reaching a true conclusion and any doubt or misgiving may not remain. This way the historians' views about Imam Hasan (as)'s peace treaty would also be clear. We reproduce below some relevant extracts for consideration:

"When he (Imam Hasan (as)) reached the area of Sabaat, he noticed a sort of helplessness and dejection in his army about war. So he stayed there. In a sermon to his army he said: 'O men, in my heart I do not see any evil whatsoever from any Mus lim. I will protect your rights just like those of my own. I have an opinion about you which you should not oppose.

It is that the unity and agreement which you do not like is better than the dissension and disagreement which you like, especially when I notice that the majority among you are avoiding to fight and trying to keep away from it. I have made up my mind not to force you to do something which you do not like ...' and when Imam Hasan (as) saw unwillingness and weakness among his forces, he sent a message to Abdullah bin 'Amir that he was ready for a conditional treaty." 1

"Muawiya, through his spies in the army of (Imam) Hasan, would on the one hand spread the rumour that Qais bin S'ad had made a peace treaty with Muawiya and was with him (Muawiya), while in the army of Qais bin S'ad he would spread the rumour that Imam Hasan (as) had made peace with Muawiya and that he had given a positive response to this offer of Muawiya.

(Apart from this), Muawiya sent Moghira b. Sh'oba, Abdullah b. Aamir b. Kerez and Abdel Rahman b. Umme Hakam towards the army of (Imam) Hasan (as). They met him (Imam Hasan (as)) in Madain while he was in his tent. While coming out, these persons started announcing that all praise be to Glorified God who has saved the lives of Muslims through the Holy Prophet (saw)'s son the fire of

mischief has been extinguished and he has accepted the offer of peace.

On hearing this, there was commotion in the army; no one doubted the truth about what they were saying. Therefore, they plundered the tent of Imam Hasan (as) and robbed all that was in it. Seeing this, Imam Hasan (as) rode on his horse ... When (Imam) Hasan (as) saw that his army had become infirm, his companions had left him and were not willing to fight for him, he made peace with Muawiya." 2

"Zuhri says that the people of Iraq paid allegiance to Hasan bin ‘Ali (as) as the caliph. Hasan (as) started imposing a condition on them that they will remain obedient to him, make peace with one with whom he would make peace and would go to war with one with whom he would go to war.

On such conditions being imposed on them, the Iraqis started doubting about his caliphate. They said that neither he was their caliph nor did he intend to go to war. Not long after, they attacked Hasan (as) with a dagger and severely injured him. Due to this Hasan (as) started doubting their intentions towards him.

He was fearful of them and started correspondence with Muawiya. Zuhri narrates that Hasan (as) did not intend to wage war. However, before reaching any conclusion, he wanted to have the best of terms with Muawiya. When Obaidullah became aware of his intentions, he wrote to Muawiya and sought protection from him.

Having no worries from Obaidullah bin Abbas and Hasan (as), Muawiya got busy in deceiving a person whom he considered to be very important as he (Qais bin S'ad) had forty thousand soldiers as well under his command." 3

"The public accepted Hasan bin ‘Ali (as) as the caliph and paid allegiance to him. He marched (for war) and continued forward up to Madain. Simultaneously, he sent the vanguard unit of twelve thousand soldiers towards the enemy.

While Hasan (as) was in Madain, someone announced that 'Qais bin S'ad has been killed; so rise and run'. Hearing this, the soldiers started running away and started to plunder the tent of Hasan (as).... When Hasan (as) realized that the soldiers had betrayed him, he sent his representative to Muawiya to seek peace." 4

The historian Ibn. Athir quotes the narrations of Tabari. Apart from that, he also refers to the historical sermon of Imam Hasan Al-Mujtaba (as) in which while addressing his army, the Imam (as) had warned them of the dangers of peace and had given them the choice between war against Muawiya and peace. When they had chosen peace, then the Imam (as) decided in its favour. The text of the sermon has been reproduced in an earlier chapter.5

"The tribesmen of Iraq, one after another, started to go towards Muawiya till very few remained in the vanguard unit (of the Imam). Assessing the situation, Qais bin S'ad wrote to Hasan bin ‘Ali (as),

informing him of the current situation. After reading his letter, Hasan (as) invited the nobles in his army and addressed them thus: 'O men of Iraq! what has your group done to me. This is Qais bin S'ad's letter in which he says that your nobles too have gone towards Muawiya.

Remember this step of yours is undeniable as on the day of war in Siffin you had forced my father to arbitration. Later you gave an unconditional allegiance to me and agreed to follow me. I accepted the same and moved forward (for war). Almighty God knew my intention in this regard. But after that you know what has happened! O men of Iraq! Enough is enough. Do not cheat me any more in my religion as I intend to hand over the authority (the reign) to Muawiya.'" 6

"'Awana bin Hakam narrates that Hasan (as) was in Madain when someone announced that Qais bin S'ad had been killed. On hearing this, the soldiers looted the tent of Hasan (as) and went as far as snatching the sheet under his feet. A Kharijite of Bani Asad stabbed him with a dagger and injured him. ... And Hasan (as) wrote to Muawiya about the peace treaty." 7

"Abul Faraj narrates ...
Hasan (as) camped at Sabaat. At morning time he asked his men to gather together. When they assembled, he climbed on the pulpit and said: 'All praise be to Glorious God. (the words of this sermon are more or less the same as narrated by Dinawari). When the soldiers listened to him, they started to stare at one another and said: "he wants to make peace with Muawiya." So they attacked the camp of Hasan (as)."8

"In 'Hayate Haiwaan (Damiri)' it is recorded that after the death of his (Imam Hasan (as)'s) father, allegiance to him for caliphate was given. After that he marched towards Madain and camped there. While he was still there, someone shouted: ' Qais bin S'ad has been killed. So run for your life.' Hasan (as) had made Qais the commander of his vanguard troops. While Hasan (as) was going out of his army, Jarrah bin Asad joined him.

Suddenly he attacked him with a dagger on the thigh, intending to martyr him. At that moment Hasan (as) remarked: 'Earlier you had martyred my father and today you are after my blood so that you may show your disinclination towards those who are just and fair and inclination towards the traitors. By God, you will learn the truth about this after some time.' After that he wrote a letter to Muawiya indicating that he may take over the reigns." 9

"While Hasan (as) was camping at Madain, it was rumoured in his army that Qais bin S'ad had been killed. Hearing this, his army took to flight in panic and they dispersed. At the same time they attacked the camps of Muawiya. He (Imam Hasan (as)) was taken to the city of Madain lying in bed. He was on the verge of being killed. So, through a letter to Muawiya, he offered to resign. He also addressed the Iraqis. And when he heard the voices of 'life, life' coming from all directions, he accepted the offer of peace." 10

"There is no doubt that the main reason for the defeat of the Iraqis was their difference of opinion and

disagreements with the ruler. If they had political consciousness they would have been grateful to God for his bounties granted to them in the shape of allegiance to a person among the Companions of the Holy Prophet, who was very learned, the grandson of the Holy Prophet (saws), a leader of Muslims, humble, visionary and undoubtedly an ideal planner.

In support of his being one of the true Islamic caliph ('Rashidin Caliph') is the tradition of the Holy Prophet (saws) which I have quoted under 'the arguments for prophethood' from the Holy Prophet's slave Safina.

The Holy Prophet (saws) said:
'The caliphate will last only 30 years after me. After that it will be monarchy.' Without any doubt, these 30 years end after the caliphate of Hasan bin 'Ali (as) when he gave up the caliphate and handed over the rule (monarchy) to Muawiya. 11

"In Rabi-II (41 A.H.) the leader of the faithful Hasan bin 'Ali (as) marched with his army in pursuit of Muawiya. On the other side, Muawiya entered Iraq with his army. The two armies met in Maskin in the Abnaar area. Hasan (as) noticed that there were different opinions about him in his army. In such a situation, there was not much hope from such an army.

Moreover, his army was suffering from extreme indiscipline and disorder. It reached such a level of plunder that it pulled even the sheet under the feet of Hasan (as). One person among the Khawarij attacked him. In the circumstances, he realized that it was better to seek peace and proved the tradition of his grandfather, (the Holy Prophet (saws)), to be true. So, he wrote to Muawiya and imposed many conditions on him." 12

"Hasan (as) had got busy in the treatment of his wounds. During this period various tribal leaders had secretly written to Muawiya, assuring him of their acceptance of his leadership. They had advised him to march towards them quickly and had stated that either they will hand over Hasan (as) to him or would kill him (Hasan (as)).All this news had reached Hasan (as) and it was abundantly clear to him that the majority of his followers had rebellious intentions and were not prepared to support him.

Only a selected few, who were the Shia of his father, were left with him. These persons had neither the ability nor the strength to fight the Syrian army. Therefore, he wrote to Muawiya about peace and understanding." 13

"Abu Makhnaf has narrated that when the allegiance to Hasan Bin 'Ali (as) was given, he made very extensive efforts to mobilize his forces, to march towards Muawiya and to challenge him. He sent an army of ten thousand for the purpose under the command of Abdullah bin J'afer. Following him, he sent Qais bin S'ad. 14

There are no two opinions among the Ulama that Hasan (as) had offered the kingdom to Muawiya till the end of his life only. After the death of Muawiya, the caliphate had to return to him and both had agreed

to it. Hasan (as) considered it better than shedding blood for the sake of caliphate although he considered himself more deserving for the said caliphate. 15

Though the historical extracts of different writers about the conditions prevailing in Iraq during the reign of Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) and the terms of agreement of the 'Peace Treaty of Imam Hasan (as)', given above, are very significant, yet we wish to discuss only two aspects in the following chapters, i.e.

(1) The stand taken by Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) regarding peace or war.
(2) The reasons and the factors responsible for the incident at Madain.

The stand taken by Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) regarding peace:

The most important question that arises in the mind about the peace treaty of Imam Hasan (as) is whether Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) had any other choice at the time of the appeal to cease fighting and to accept the offer of peace by Muawiya and whether he extended his hand for peace willingly and happily or is it that the cowardice and criminal breach of trust of his army had brought about a situation where the peace had been imposed on him and it had become unavoidable.

Additionally, would he have totally refused the offer of peace if his army had acted in accordance with his command? Without doubt, history gives a clear answer to the above question. If the extracts given above are studied carefully, it becomes abundantly clear that Imam Hasan (as) was very serious and determined to wage a war against Muawiya.

He ordered the best of his soldiers to march towards Maskin to check the forward movement of the army of Muawiya and set up his own war camp at Madain. He was not afraid of the breach of trust and betrayal of the leaders in his army till a stage was reached when he was attacked and injured and his tent was plundered.

When only a few loyal soldiers remained with him, then only he reluctantly talked about accepting peace. In this respect the historical sermon which he gave at Madain needs to be studied carefully. In the sermon which was delivered after the incident of Madain, when his wounds had healed and he was feeling better, he declared: "beware, Muawiya has made us an offer wherein there is neither respect nor justice." 16

These remarkable words, which have been quoted by so many historians, reflect his true feelings about peace. These words clearly indicate that Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) was not only aware of the dangers and adverse effects of the offer of peace, but he also considered it necessary to inform his soldiers accordingly.

The grandson of the Holy Prophet (saws) gave them the choice that if they wished, they could save their lives through peace but they should not expect any justice or honour from Muawiya. Alternatively, they could have continued the war but they would have to be prepared to sacrifice their lives for the same.

When the voices for peace and agreement rose from all sides, he agreed for peace with so many conditions.

At this difficult moment in the history of Kufa, the true follower of the Holy Prophet (saws), and rightful caliph, did not consider it appropriate to sacrifice the interests, choice and the freedom of the people, and to impose his personal opinion on them. This implies that Islam does not usurp the freedom and the right of the people, but a true leader shows the right path and provides them the atmosphere and opportunity to follow that path.

However, if the greater majority abandon the path of righteousness and true guidance, then the Imam keeps aloof from them. In a later chapter we will discuss the point in greater detail. A very important point in the historical extracts discussed earlier, which needs great attention, is that Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) was not the one who wanted to avoid war but it was the Iraqi nobles and the tribal leaders who were really against the war.

There might have been many reasons for the set back in the war, but history cannot ignore the treacherous character of the rich and the aristocrats of Kufa and their betrayal which provided all the means of success for Muawiya. Among so many historical extracts given here, we find a very different view about the issues relating to Imam Hasan (as), adopted only in Zuhri's narrations quoted in 'Tarikh al-Tabari' etc.

Analysis of Zuhris Narration

However, the point is whether Zuhri's narrations are so reliable that, leaving all other authentic sources, only those should be relied upon? It cannot be denied that Zuhri's narrations have been referred in some historical books. Yet, whatever incidents Zuhri has quoted have neither been confirmed from other sources nor do the later historians rely on those. Zuhri is not only biased but has gone beyond all standards of integrity in mentioning what is not even possible.

For example, while discussing the role of Ubaidullah, he tries to hide the treacherous role of Ubaidullah and says that when Ubaidullah learnt the stand taken by Imam Hasan (as), then only he wrote letter to Muawiya and sought refuge from him. On the other hand, all other historical records show that Muawiya had initiated the offer to Ubaidullah to join him. During that time he had neither the time to find out the truth nor had Imam Hasan (as) written to him about it!

Similarly, on other issues Zuhri's narrations are full of errors and create many problems in research and investigation. For that reason the researchers discard his version. The learned scholar Razi Ale Yasin commenting on Zuhri's narrations writes: Zuhri's narrations about the events relating to Ahlul Bayt (as) of the Holy Prophet (saw) are the weakest in which the topic is more entwined. The author of 'Darasaat fi al Islam' has termed him as the court slave of Bani Umayyah." [17]

Dr. Husayn Muhammad Jafri makes the following comments on Zuhri's narrations: "The historian Tabari, while referring to the events (relating to Imam Hasan (as)), has chosen two different sources i.e. Zuhri and 'Awana.

In these versions it is abundantly clear that Zuhri is opposing Imam Hasan (as) and is favouring Muawiya. It is not difficult to understand the reason for the same as Zuhri was associated with the court of Bani Umayyah and was giving shape to these versions under the influence of Muawiya's subordinates. As against him, the versions of 'Awana refer to the particular circumstances in which Imam Hasan (as) agreed to peace and seem to be relatively more balanced.

As against Zuhri, the version of 'Awana is more authentic from a historical point of view as well, and other sources like those of Yaqubi and Dinawari have supported Awana's version."

Similarly, the reason for attack on Imam Hasan (as), which Zuhri mentions, cannot be accepted by any scholar. Dr. Husayn Muhammad Jafri levels the following objection on Zuhri's version:

"As against other historical sources, Zuhri neither indicates the location nor the time when Imam Hasan (as) was attacked." After a thorough analysis of all the versions of Zuhri regarding Imam Hasan (as), Dr. Jafari reaches the following conclusion: "Zuhri's versions, instead of answering the questions about (Imam) 'Hasan's Peace Treaty', raise more questions. It is natural that living in the Umvi atmosphere prevailing in Damascus at the time, he had to choose the narration which would be more popular and acceptable in that situation. However, the events that formed the basis of Imam Hasan (as)'s peace treaty are not so simple as stated by Zuhri. 18

After what has been stated above, it is clear that if Zuhri presents a different version of the peace of Imam Hasan (as), that does not affect all the other historical sources and versions which are based on truth and reliability.

As stated earlier, Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) had sent a vanguard unit of twelve thousand soldiers towards Maskin so that they could restrict the movement of the enemy, while the Imam (as) himself had marched to Madain with the rest of the army and camped there. During that period, as Muawiya had reached Maskin and skirmishes between the vanguard unit and the Syrian soldiers were continuing, Imam Hasan (as)'s tent was attacked and whatever was in it, was looted.

While the Imam (as) was passing through the area of Sabaat and moving towards the city, a Kharijite attacked him with a dagger injuring him in the thigh. The incident at Madain is a tragic one in the Islamic history as the grandson of the Holy Prophet (saws) was attacked by his own men.
Though the history does not record any doubt about the incident itself, yet there is considerable difference of opinion about the cause and the factors responsible for the same.

Some prominent historians like Abul Faraj Isphahani and Ibn. Atham Kufi write that Imam Hasan (as) gathered his army soon after reaching Madain and suddenly decided to address them. In the address he

declared that unity and agreement among the Muslims was better than disunity and dissension, and knowing that his army was against peace, he emphasized the need for peace with Muawiya and advised them not to oppose his decision for it.

At this the Khawarij and others who were strongly in favour of war got enraged. So, they accused Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) of (God forbid) being a non-believer and attacked his tent which resulted in his being injured with the dagger.The historian Dinawari writes that Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) was marching towards the northern areas of Iraq when at Madain he noticed that his army was showing signs of weakness and was wavering, which implied that they had lost the zeal to fight.

Therefore, at Madain, he decided to stop the march and to address them. The incident occurred as a result of that address. Shaikh Mufid writes that Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) wanted to test his soldiers and to differentiate between friend and foe before the war with the Syrians, as he was not sure how far his army men would obey him.

The analysis by these historians is vague. In this regard the basic question which has been raised by some researchers is why did Imam Hasan (as) make such war preparations, commanded the people to be ready for it and covered the long distance from Kufa to Madain, and then suddenly decided in favour of peace? 19

The other historians, among whom Tabari, Ibn. Athir, Ibn. 'Asakir, Ibn. Kathir, Ibn. Khuldun, Husayn Dayar Bakri and other later historians can prominently be mentioned, analyze the incident differently. While describing in detail the causes of the incident, they write that the agents of Muawiya in the army of Imam Hasan (as) had spread such rumour that the Iraqi soldiers had lost the will to fight and started deserting the army. With indiscipline and disorder all around and desertion in the army, the enemies of Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) got a chance to attack his tent and to rob all that was in it.

While the loot was still on and the Imam (as), riding a horse, had gone towards Madain with his trusted followers, a Kharjite attacked him on the way. As an example, these historians write that the rumour of Qais bin S'ad having been killed was spread in the army.

It cannot be denied that in the difficult circumstances, such rumors proved very effective in making the Iraqis fearful and upset and it is not unlikely that hearing the news of the death of such a well known person as S'ad they ran away, realizing that after Qais bin S'ad there was none else who could successfully challenge Muawiya. They very likely felt that now Muawiya with his army, would attack Madain and would either make them prisoners or kill them.

The historian Yaqubi has elaborately preserved the details of the propaganda. He writes that Muawiya sent a three man delegation for negotiations with Imam Hasan (as). The delegates, while leaving the camp of Imam Hasan (as) after negotiations, spread the false news in the army of Imam Hasan (as) that he had agreed to their offer of peace, which caused the said incident.

The writer Dinawari also supports the fact of such news being spread and mentions how Abdullah bin A'mir, a well known leader of the Syrian army, on the one hand spread fear in the minds of the Iraqi army, while on the other tried to convince them that Muawiya did not want war. 20

There is no shortage of evidence to prove that the real reason for the incident of Madain was not the sermon of the Imam (as), as mentioned by Abul Faraj and others, but it was to the defeatist tendency of the Iraqis, their weakness and the false propaganda of the Syrians. A majority of the original sources of history show that even after the incident of Madain, Imam Hasan (as) agreed to peace only after he was convinced that his army was no more prepared to fight for him.

In this regard those reliable sources should also be referred to wherein the historical sermon of Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) has been quoted, which was given after the incident of Madain when he was recuperating. In that sermon he had explained his attitude towards peace with Muawiya and had left the choice of peace or war with the soldiers, and only when the soldiers raised slogans in favour of peace, had he agreed for the same.

On the basis of these arguments we do not accept the conclusion drawn by Abul Faraj and Ibn. Atham etc. and do not consider the explanations given by Dinawari and Sheikh Mufid sufficient, as it was not the first occasion when the Imam (as) had seen the Iraqi army's performance in war. Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) had been watching the behaviour of this army since the days of his father and he could very well distinguish between fried and foe.

Moreover, the Iraqi army had not only shown signs of weakness and surrender in Madain as stated by Dinawari, but it had started to give a defeatist impression right from the time of the Imam's (as) declaration of war in the central ('Jame') Mosque at Kufa.

As far as the question of camping at Madain is concerned, we have indicated in earlier chapters the reason for it being declared as the army garrison. Briefly, the Imam (as) was facing a shortage of personnel in the army and he expected support and more supplies from Madain.

Moreover, Madain could prove to be a very important strategic location from a defensive point of view. Earlier, S'ad bin Abi Waqas had fought the Qadisiah battles declaring Madain as the central strategic location.

1. Dinawari - 'Al Akhbar al Tiwal', Cairo: Dar Ahya al Kutub 1960, pp 216-217
2. Yaqubi - 'Tarikh al-Yaqubi', Beirut: Dare Sadir, vol.2 pp. 214-215.
3. Tabari - 'Tarikh al Tabari', Beirut: Darul Kutub al Ilmiah 1988, vol 3, pp. 165, 167, 168.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibn. Athir - 'Al Kamil fi al Tarikh', Beirut: Dar Ahya al Turas, 1989, vol. 2 pp. 442-449.
6. Ibn. Atham - 'Al Futuh, Hyderabad: Daira al Ma'arif al Usmania, 1971, vol. 4, p.157.
7. Ibn. Asakir - 'Tarikh Madinate Damishq, Tarjuma al Imam al Hasan' Beirut, Muassasah Mahmudi, 1980, p. 173, Abdul Qadir Badran, 'Tahzib Tarikhe Damishq', Beirut, Darul Ahya al Turas, 1987, vol 4, p.223.
8. Ibn. Abi al Hadid, 'Sharh al-Nahjul Balaghah', Cairo: Dar Ahya al Kutub al Arabia, 1962, vol. 16, p.22; Abul Faraj, 'Maqatil

al Talibin, Najaf, Maktaba al Haidariyah, 1965, vol. 1, p.41.
9. Husayn Dayar Bakri – 'Tarikh al-Khamis', Beirut, Muassasah Shabaan, vol. 2 p.389
10. Ibn. Khaldun, 'Tarikh Ibn. Khaldun', Beirut, Muassasah A'lami, 1971, vol. 2, pp. 186-187.
11. Ibn. Kathir – 'Al bidayah wal Nihaya', Beirut, Maktaba al M'arif. 1974, vol. 6 p.220 and vol.8, p.16,
12. Hafiz Dhahabi, 'Tarikh al-Islam' 'hde Muawiya, Beirut, Darul Kutub al Arabi, 1987, p. 5-7; Hafiz Dhahabi, al 'abar, Beirut, Darul Kutub al I'lmia, vol.1, p.34.
13. Ibn. Sabbagh al Maliki – 'al Fusul al Muhimmah, Najaf, Darul Kutub, p.144.
14. Hakim Naishapuri, 'al Mustadrak al Sahihain', Beirut, Darul Ma'rifa, vol. 3, p.174
15. Ibn. Abdul Barr 'al-Istiab',Egypt, Maktaba Nahzat Misr, vol. 1, p.386.
16. The references have been quoted in the earlier chapter.
17. Razi aale Yasin, 'Sulhul Hasan', Qum, ' Manshurat al Razi, 1995, p.122.
18. Husayn Muhammad Jafri, 'The Origin & Early Development of Shia Islam', Qum, Ansarian Publications, pp.138-142; Wellhausen, 'Arab Kingdom', p. 107 (see 'The Origin').
19. Husayn Muhammad Jafri, 'The Origin' ... p.142.
20. Dinawari, 'Al Akhbar al Tiwal', Cairo, Dar Ahya al Kutub, 1960, p.217

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