

The Men of Madina III

**Ibn Sa‘d’s
Kitab at-Tabaqat al-Kabir
Volume VII**

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Chapter One

The Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who settled in Basra, and the Tabi'un and people of knowledge and fiqh there after them

‘Utba ibn Ghazwan

His *kunya* was Abu ‘Abdullah. Ibn Sa’d said, “I heard some people say that his *kunya* was ‘Abu Ghazwan’. He was a very tall man and became Muslim very early on. He emigrated to Abyssinia and was present at the Battle of Badr.”

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab put ‘Utba ibn Ghazwan in charge of Basra. He was the one who conquered that area and gave it the name Basra and first settled there. Before that it had been called Ubulla. He built the mosque of Basra at Qasab when there were no houses there.

It is related that ‘Utba ibn Ghazwan was with Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas at the Battle of al-Qadisiyya, and then he sent him to Basra when he received ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab’s letter commanding him to do that.

Muhammad ibn Sharahbil said, “‘Utba ibn Ghazwan was with Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas when he defeated the Persians. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab wrote to Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas instructing him to base his troops in Kufa and to send ‘Utba ibn Ghazwan to the land of Hind. ‘Utba had some prestige in Islam. He had been present at the Battle of Badr. At that time Basra was called the ‘land of Hind’. So Sa’d established his troops at Kufa and adopted it as a residence for the Muslims.”

“Then Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas summoned ‘Utba ibn Ghazwan and told him about ‘Umar’s letter, so ‘Utba set out from Kufa with 800 men and went to Basra. Basra was given its name because there are black stones (*basra*) there. When ‘Utba ibn Ghazwan arrived there, he established a base for his troops. The Muslims erected their tents and shelters there. ‘Utba ibn

Ghazwan erected his tent which was made of cloth, and then ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab sent more men there. When there were a large number of them, a group of them built seven brick villages there: two in al-Khurayba, one in Zabuqa, two in the Banu Tamim, and two in Azd. Then ‘Utba went to the Euphrates region of Basra, conquered it, and returned to Basra. The people of Basra used to make raids into the adjacent mountains of Persia (Khuzistan). ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab sent a letter to ‘Utba ibn Ghazwan ordering him to attack the enemy nearby [as a diversion].”

“‘Utba addressed the people in the first *khutba* in Basra. He said, ‘Praise belongs to Allah. I praise Him and seek His help. I believe in Him and trust in Him. I testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger. O people! This world has turned in retreat and bade farewell to its people. Whatever is left of it, is like the dregs in the bottom of the vessel. You must leave it, so leave it with the best you have. It is extraordinary that a large stone will be thrown from the edge of Hell and will fall in it for seventy years before reaching its bottom. By Allah, it will be filled. It is extraordinary that the Garden has seven gates and the width between the two sides of a gate is a distance of fifty years. By Allah, a time will come for them when they will be crammed because of crowding. ‘I can recall myself with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when I was one of seven and the only food we had to eat were some balsam leaves and tragacanth thorns until we had blisters on the corners of our mouths. One day I found a cloak and I divided it with Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas. Later there was not one of us seven, O company, who was not a commander over one of the garrisons. There is no prophethood which is not followed by kingdom. I seek refuge with Allah from thinking myself important while I am inconsequential in the eyes of people. You will experience commanders after me. Some you will like and some you will dislike.”

“While ‘Utba was giving his *khutba*, a man of Thaqif brought a letter from ‘Umar to ‘Utba ibn Ghazwan which said, ‘Abu ‘Abdullah ath-Thaqafi has mentioned to me that he purchased some horses in Basra at a time when no one purchased them. When this letter reaches you, be a good neighbour to Abu ‘Abdullah and assist him when he asks for your help.” Abu ‘Abdullah was the first to depend on and make use of horses in Basra.

Then ‘Utba went to Maysan and Abazqubadh and conquered them. The *marzban*, the commander of Madhar, went out to meet him with a large

army and ‘Utba fought and defeated him. So, Allah defeated the *marzban* who was captured and beheaded. His coat and belt studded with gold and jewels were sent to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab.

When the booty of the *marzban* reached Madina, the people inquired about the state of the people. The newcomer said, “O company of Muslims! About what are you asking? By Allah, I left the people piling up gold and silver.” He excited the people and ‘Umar sent about 150 men as reinforcements to ‘Utba in Basra. Sa’d, who was his governor, used to write to ‘Utba. ‘Utba was upset at that and asked ‘Umar’s permission to come to Madina to speak directly to him. He gave him permission and delegated al-Mughira ibn Shu’ba in his place.

‘Utba went to ‘Umar and complained to him about Sa’d’s authority over him. ‘Umar remained silent and ‘Utba repeated his complaint several times. When it was too much for ‘Umar, he said, “‘Utba, why do you worry about affirming the command of a man of Quraysh who was a Companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and a man of honour?” ‘Utba said to him, “Am I not one of Quraysh? The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘The ally of a people is one of them.’ And I was a long-standing Companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ which is not denied or refuted.” ‘Umar said, “That is not denied to be part of your excellence.” ‘Utba said, “If command is given to this one, by Allah, I will never return to it!” ‘Umar refused to do anything except restore him to it and so ‘Utba returned, but died on the way back to Basra.”

He was in charge of Basra for six months. He fell ill with an intestinal complaint and died at Ma’din Bani Sulaym. His slave Suwayd took his goods and legacy to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. That was in 17AH. ‘Utba ibn Ghazwan was 57 when he died.

Burayda ibn al-Husayb al-Aslami

Burayda’s *kunya* was Abu ‘Abdullah. He became Muslim when the Prophet ﷺ passed by him on the Hijra but he remained in his people’s land and was not present at the Battle of Badr. Then he emigrated to Madina and remained there with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and went on his subsequent expeditions with him until the death of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When Basra was made into a garrison, he moved there and built a house there. Then he left there to go on an expedition to Khurasan during the caliphate of ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan and remained there until he died at Marv while Yazid

ibn Mu‘awiya was caliph. His son also remained there and then some of his son’s people came and settled in Baghdad where they died.

Abu Ya‘qub ad-Dabbi said that he was told that Burayda al-Aslami was heard to say while he was beyond the river of Balkh, “There is no life except in the transport of horses!”

Muwarriq said, “Burayda al-Aslami commanded that two palm leaves be placed in his grave.³ He died in the nearer part of Khurasan. They could only be found in the saddle-bags of the donkeys. Burayda ibn al-Husayb died in Khurasan in 63AH.”

Abu Barza al-Aslami

Muhammad ibn ‘Umar and some of the sons of Abu Barza told us that his name was ‘Abdullah ibn Nadla. Hisham ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi and other people of knowledge said that his name was Nadla ibn ‘Abdullah. Others say that it was Nadla ibn ‘Ubaydullah.

Abu Barza became Muslim early on and was present with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at the Conquest of Makka. He continued to go on expeditions with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ until the death of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Then he moved to Basra and settled there when the Muslims settled there and he built a house there. He had descendants there. Then he went on an expedition to Khurasan and died in Marv.

Sayyar ibn Salama said, “I saw Abu Barza when he had white hair and a beard.”

Umayya ibn ‘Abdu’r-Rahman reported from his mother that Abu Barza and Abu Bakra had a bond of brotherhood.

‘Imran ibn al-Husayn ibn ‘Ubayd

He became Muslim early on with his father and brother and went on expeditions with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He remained in his people’s land and visited Madina frequently until the Prophet died. When Basra was established, he moved there and remained there until his death.

3 The Prophet ﷺ once placed two palm leaves on the grave of two people who were suffering punishment in the grave, saying that they would have relief from their torment until the leaves had withered.

He had descendants there. They included Khalid ibn Taliq ibn Muhammad ibn 'Imran, who became *qadi* of Basra.

Abu'l-Aswad ad-Du'ali said, "I came to Basra when Abu'n-Nujayd 'Imran ibn al-Husayn was there. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab had sent him to teach *fiqh* to the people of Basra."

'Ata' reported that 'Imran ibn al-Husayn gave judgement against a man in a case and the man exclaimed, "By Allah, you have given judgement against me unjustly although I have not been remiss." He said, "How is that?" He said, "There was false testimony against me." 'Imran said, "What I judged against you will come out of from my own property, and by Allah, I will never sit here ever again!"

'Ata', 'Imran ibn al-Husayn's client, said, "'Imran ibn al-Husayn's seal had a man wearing a sword engraved on it." His son Ibrahim said, "I saw a ring of ours in the mud in our house, and my father said, 'This is the signet ring of 'Imran ibn al-Husayn.'"

Abu Raja' al-'Utaridi said, "'Imran ibn al-Husayn came out to us wearing a robe of rough silk which we never saw on him before or after. He said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'When Allah bestows a blessing on His servant, He likes the mark of His blessing to be seen on His servant.'"

Hilal ibn Yasaf said, "I came to Madina and entered the mosque. There was an old man with white hair and a beard, leaning against a column speaking to a circle. I asked who it was and was told that it was 'Imran ibn al-Husayn."

Mutarraf said, "I told 'Imran ibn al-Husayn, 'All that prevented me from visiting you, when you were ill, was what I saw (that I dislike) of your state.' He said, 'Do not do it. That which is most beloved to Allah is most beloved to me.'"

Ibn Sirin said, "'Imran ibn al-Husayn suffered from dropsy for thirty years. Cauterisation was suggested to him but he refused to be cauterised until he finally agreed and it was done about two years before his death."

Lahiq ibn Humayd said, "'Imran ibn al-Husayn forbade cauterisation. He became ill and was cauterised. He used to shout, 'I have been cauterised with a brand of fire! I was not freed of the pain nor cured of the illness!'"

Mutarraf said, "'Imran ibn al-Husayn said to me, 'Are you aware that [the angels] used to greet me, but when I was cauterised, the greeting stopped?' I asked, 'Did the greeting come to you from above your head or from your feet?' He replied, 'It came from above my head.' I said, 'I do not

think that you will die until that recurs.’ Then after that, he said to me, ‘Are you aware that the greeting has returned to me?’” He said, “It was only a short time until he died.”

Al-Hasan said, “‘Imran ibn Husayn left instructions, ‘When I die, take me out and walk swiftly and do not go slowly with me as the Jews and Christians do.’⁴ Do not let fire or noise follow me.’” He said, “He left some bequests to the *umm walads* he had. He said, ‘Any woman among you who cries out for me will receive no bequest.’”

‘Ata ibn Abi Maymuna, the client of the family of ‘Imran ibn al-Husayn, said that ‘Imran ibn al-Husayn told his family that when he died, no sound should follow him and cursed whoever made such noise (wailing). He said that they should make his grave square and elevate it about four fingers high.

‘Imran ibn al-Husayn’s daughter said that when he was near death he said, “When I am dead, bind my bed about me with my turban, and when you come back, slaughter an animal and feed people.”

Muhammad ibn ‘Umar and others said that his *kunya* was Abu an-Nujayd. He related from Abu Bakr and ‘Uthman, and died in Basra a year before Ziyad ibn Abi Sufyan. Ziyad died in 53AH while Mu‘awiya ibn Abi Sufyan was caliph.

Mihjan ibn al-Adra‘ al-Aslami

Muhammad ibn ‘Umar said that he became Muslim early on and that he laid out the mosque of the people of Basra. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ had passed by him when he was shooting with some people, and said, “Shoot, and I am with the son of al-Adra’!” Then he returned from Basra to Madina and died while Mu‘awiya was caliph.

Umayya ibn Makhshi al-Khuza‘i

Jabir ibn Subh said, “I accompanied al-Muthanna ibn ‘Abdu’r-Rahman al-Khuza‘i to Wasit. He would say the basmala when he began to eat and with the last morsel he would say, ‘In the Name of Allah, the first of it and

4 The Muslims thought it very important to avoid assimilating the various non-Muslim customs prevailing in Iraq.

the last of it.' I remarked, 'You said the basmala when you started to eat, so why do you say with the last morsel, "In the Name of Allah, the first of it and the last of it"?' He replied, 'I heard my grandfather Umayya ibn Makhshi, who was one of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, say, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw a man who was eating without saying the basmala. When he got to the last morsel of the food, he said, 'In the Name of Allah, the first of it and the last of it.' The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'Shaytan continued to eat with him. Then when he said, "In the Name of Allah, the first of it and the last of it," he vomited everything in his stomach.'""

‘Abdullah ibn al-Mughaffal al-Muzani

Yahya ibn Ma‘in said, “‘Abdullah ibn al-Mughaffal’s *kunya* was Abu Ziyad.” He said, “I mentioned that to a man among his children and he said, “His *kunya* was Abu as-Sa‘id and he was one of the Weepers.⁵ He was one of those who gave allegiance to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ under the tree on the Day of al-Hudaybiya. He remained in Madina and then moved to Basra and remained there until his death.”

Ziyad, the grandson of ‘Abdullah ibn al-Mughaffal, said, “In his final illness, ‘Abdullah ibn al-Mughaffal told his family, ‘Only my companions should be near me, and [the governor, ‘Ubaydullah] Ibn Ziyad is not to pray over me.’ When he died, they sent for Abu Barza al-Aslami and ‘A’idh ibn ‘Amr and some of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in Basra, and they washed and shrouded him. They rolled up their shirt sleeves and tucked their shirts in their waistbands. Then they washed and shrouded him. Then people only did *wudu*’. When they brought him out of the house, Ibn Ziyad was waiting at the door with his retinue. He was told that Ibn Mughaffal had left instructions that he should not pray over him. So, Ibn Ziyad accompanied them until he was near al-Bayda’ and then he went on to al-Bayda’ and left them.”

‘Abdullah ibn al-Mughaffal left instructions that he should not be followed with fire in the funeral procession.

⁵ “The Weepers” were those Muslims who wanted to go on the expedition to Tabuk with the Prophet ﷺ but lacked the means to go due to poverty. They wept in sorrow when they were unable to go.