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*In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*

Preface

Indeed, all praise is due to Allāh. We praise Him, we seek His Aid, and we seek His Forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Allāh from the evil of our selves and from the evil of our deeds. Whomsoever Allāh guides, there is none that can misguide him, and whomsoever Allāh misguides, there is none that can guide him.

And I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allāh alone and without partners. And I bear witness that Muhammad ﷺ is His Slave and His Messenger.

Imâm Muslim bin Al-Hajjâj

This is a biography of the master of the *Muḥaddithîn*, the foremost of the righteous scholars, the lofty Imâm, Abû Al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn Al-Ḥajjâj An-Nîshâpûrî. It serves as a reminder of the great scholars of this *Ummah* who reached a station never attained by the scholars of any other *Ummah*. Because they acquired knowledge for Allâh's Sake and strove to please Him, Allâh showed them the path and opened to them gates of knowledge that had remained closed to all others.

This illustrious Imâm, this knight of the Science of *Ḥadîth* has firmly taken his place in the hearts of men and a position of prominence amongst the scholars. His

book *Salâh Muslim* reached such a level of authenticity and precision that it is surpassed only by the Book of Allâh Himself.

His Name and Lineage:

He is the great Imâm, the stupendous *Hâfiz*, and the truthful *Hujjah* (Proof), Abû Al-Husayn Muslim ibn Al-Hajjâj ibn Muslim ibn Ward ibn Kûshâdh An-Nîshâpûrî, the author of *Aş-Şahîh*.

Imâm Muslim was a *Mawlâ* (client),^[1] he was not of Arab roots. He is counted amongst Banû Qushayr by way of *Walâ'*.

As-Sam'ânî said, "Al-Qushayrî: Some are attributed to Qushayr by way of *Walâ'*. Amongst those attributed to them by way of *Walâ'* is Abû Al-Husayn Muslim ibn Al-Hajjâj, one of the Imâms of the world, whose book *Aş-Şahîh* is famous throughout the East and the West."^[2]

Anyone who studies most of the biographies of the scholars will find that most of them were from the *Mawâlî*^[3] whom Allâh blessed when their lands were opened and Islâm spread or those who traveled from their lands and settled in the vicinity of some other tribes, and hence they were counted amongst them. Hence his *Nasab* (attribution or lineage) to them would be by way of *Walâ'* (alliance).

[1] *Mawlâ*, client, refers to someone who is a freed slave or descended from a freed slave. When he is freed, he has a particular relationship with his former master and his tribe known as *Walâ'* (alliance). If someone accepted Islâm at someone's hands, he could also be counted as his *Mawlâ* even if there was no slave-master relationship.

[2] *Al-Anisâb* (4/503).

[3] Pl. of *Mawlâ*. What is meant is that they were not originally Arabs.

It was common practice amongst the Arabs to boast of their lineages, and they take greater care than all other peoples to preserve the knowledge of their lineages. If they should combine nobility of lineage with nobility of religion, they would attain great dignity, but if they neglect religious nobility, their noble lineage will not benefit them anymore.

It is knowledge which lifts up the person both in the world and in the Hereafter, more so than kingdom, money, or anything else can raise them up. Knowledge increases the nobility of the noble person, and it raises the status of the slave until he is able to sit with the kings.

Nâfi' ibn 'Abd Al-Hârith relates that he met 'Umar ؓ at 'Usfân, and 'Umar had placed him in charge of Makkah. He said to him, "Who have you placed in charge of the people of the valley?"

He said, "Ibn Abzâ."

He said, "And who is Ibn Abzâ?"

He said, "One of our *Mawâlî*."

He said, "You have placed a *Mawlâ* in charge of them!"

He said, "He is a reciter of the Book of Allâh ﷻ and he is a scholar of the laws of inheritance."

Umar said, "Indeed, your Prophet ﷺ said,

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْفَعُ بِهَذَا الْكِتَابِ أَقْوَامًا وَيَضَعُ بِهِ الْآخَرِينَ»
 "Indeed, Allâh raises some groups of people with this Book, and He lowers others by it."^[1]

Abû Al-'Âliyâh relates:

I used to come to Ibn 'Abbâs while he was seated on his throne, surrounded by the Quraysh. He would take

[1] *Muslim* (no. 817).

me by the hand and make me sit next to him upon the throne. The Quraysh subtly gestured to one another with their eyes because of me and Ibn 'Abbās realized it. He said, "Such is the way with this knowledge, it increases the nobleman in nobility, and it raises the slave to sit upon the thrones."^[1]

'Atā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ entered upon 'Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwān while he was seated upon the throne, surrounded by nobles. This was in Makkah at the time that he performed *Hajj* during his *Khilāfah* (caliphate). When 'Abd Al-Malik caught sight of him, he stood up to go to him. He made him sit on the throne and sat in front of him. He said, "O Abū Muḥammad, have you any need?"

He said, "O Chief of the Believers, fear Allāh concerning the Ḥaram (Sanctuary) of Allāh and the Ḥaram of His Messenger, take care to maintain its buildings. Fear Allāh concerning the children of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, for it is because of them you are sitting in this present gathering. Fear Allāh concerning the inhabitants of the border towns, for they are the fortress of the Muslims. Inquire after the conditions of the Muslims, for you alone are responsible for them. Fear Allāh concerning those who are at your door, do not be heedless of them nor shut your door to them."

He responded to him, "I shall do so."

Then he rose to leave, but 'Abd Al-Malik took hold of him. He said, "O Abū Muḥammad, you have only asked us to fulfill the needs of those other than you, and we have done so, but what need do you have?"

He responded, "I do not have any need of any

[1] *Siyar A'lām An-Nubalā'* (4/208).

created being" and then he departed.

Upon that, 'Abd Al-Malik said, "By your father, this is nobility, by your father, this is true eminence."^[1]

Imām Muslim, may Allāh have mercy on him, attained a high rank because of his knowledge. His book became the second most authentic of all books other than the Book of Allāh, as it comes immediately after that of Al-Bukhārī. He attained a level of nobility that shall never fade with the passage of time. If Allāh wills, it shall remain until the Establishment of the Hour.

His Birth:

Often, one will find there is disagreement concerning the birthdates of scholars while there will be very little disagreement concerning the dates of their deaths. This is because of the virtue of knowledge. Once they have become great scholars, there is great concern for recording their biographical information while before that there is not. Ibn Khalkān said, "I did not see any of the *Huffāz* mention the exact date of his birth nor the length of his life. However, they were in agreement that he was born after the year 200 H."^[2]

In *As-Siyar*, Adh-Dhahabī said, "It is said that he was born in the year 204 H."^[3] Adh-Dhahabī also said, "But I think that he was born before that."^[4]

His *Kunyah* and *Laqab* (Epithet):

The *Kunyah* (patronymic) is a name by which a person is called out of respect.

[1] *Siyar A'lām An-Nubalā'* (5/84).

[2] *Wafayāt Al-A'yām* (5/195).

[3] *Siyar A'lām An-Nubalā'* (12/558).

[4] *Tārīkh Al-Islām*.

The *Kunyah* can stand in place of a name such that a person may be known by his *Kunyah* just as he is known by his name. *Kunyah* and *kinyah* is the singular form, and *Kunâ* is the plural. *Iktanâ* means for a person to take a *Kunyah*, and *Yuknâ* means a person is called by this *Kunyah*. *Kannaytu* means "I gave him a *Kunyah*." For example, one says, "*Kannaytuhu* Abâ Zayd" meaning, "I gave him the *Kunyah* Abû Zayd (Father of Zayd)."

The Arabs used to give great importance to the *Kunyah* because it often expresses the personality of a person. A person has the freedom to take any *Kunyah* he likes, particularly if he has an ugly name, like *Murrah* (bitter), *Kalb* (dog), or *Hanzalah* (colocynth),^[1] or a name which contains excessive self-praise, or other prohibited names. A person can choose his own *Kunyah*, or a scholar may give him a certain *Kunyah* such that he becomes known by it.

A *Laqab* is a name other than the primary name by which he is called, and its plural is *Alqâb*. The *Laqab* could express some quality of the person such as *Al-A'mash* (weak in sight) or *Al-A'raj* (cripple). It is disliked to call someone by such a name except if he is only known by it. Alternatively, one might summarize a person's name and call him by the *Laqab* of his family, and this is also praiseworthy.

As for Imâm Muslim, his *Kunyah* was Abû Al-Husayn, and his *Laqab* was Al-Qushayrî.

Al-Khatîb named him as, "Muslim ibn Al-Hajjâj ibn Muslim Abû Al-Husayn Al-Qushayrî An-Nîshâpûrî."^[2]



[1] A very bitter fruit.

[2] *Târîkh Baghdad* (13/100).

The Upbringing of Imâm Muslim

The Impact of a Person's Upbringing:

There is no doubt that a person's upbringing has a tremendous impact on his life. If a family is righteous, it will usually lead the children to also be pious and righteous.

It is scientifically confirmed that a child is born as a blank page, unaffected by any point of view or desires. It is the way in which the child is trained which prepares him to learn the different sciences and fields of knowledge.

For this reason, we find that the Qur'ân informs man