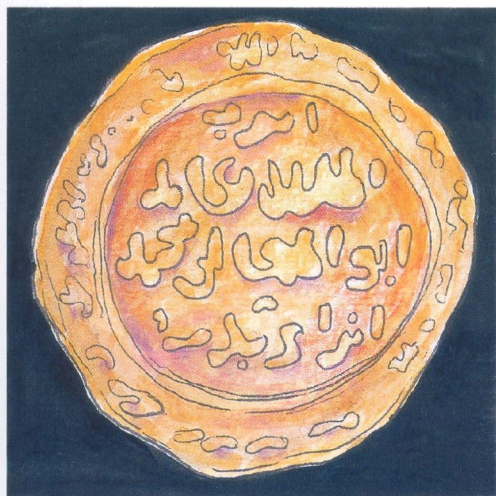


The Book of Ibn

The Amazing Sons of Islam



A beautiful gold *dinar* from the time of the Ayyubid sultan Al-Malik Al-Kamil (1218-1238 CE). This coin was minted in Cairo in the year 627 AH. Ibn al-Baytar might have received such coins in payment for his work as chief herbalist.

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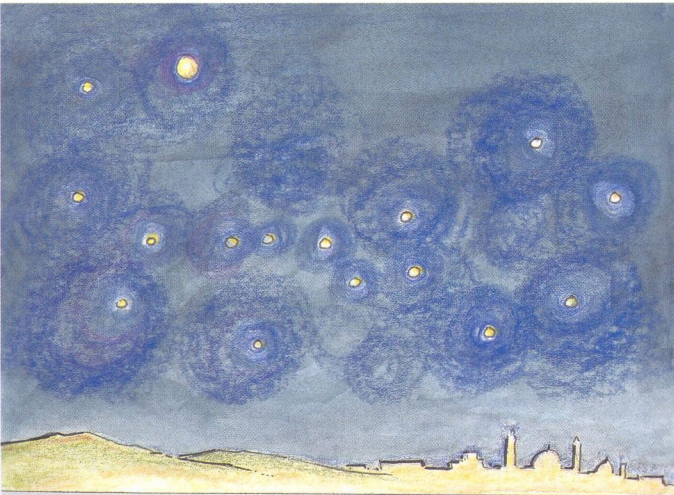


The astrolabe (Arabic *asturlab*), first invented by the Greeks two thousand years ago, is one of the oldest scientific instruments. It was perfected by Muslim scientists and craftsmen to become a very accurate astronomical tool as well as a beautiful work of art. The multi-purpose astrolabe was portable like today's laptop computer. An experienced sea captain such as Ibn Majid would have used it to determine the time of day or night. By measuring the noon altitude of the sun, he could calculate the ship's latitude at sea. The astrolabe was also ideally suited for determining the *qiblah* (the direction of Makkah). Once again, this was an invention introduced into Europe via Muslim Spain. Astrolabes were used until the 7th century CE, when newer inventions like telescopes replaced them. The astrolabe is still being handcrafted (usually from brass) in traditional centres of Islamic culture like Isfahan in Iran.

DEDICATION

May this book, dedicated to all the ‘Sons of Islam’, encourage readers to appreciate the rich cultural legacy that the ‘Sons of Islam’ left behind for us. This book is also dedicated to its first readers: my children, Abdul Haqq, Meryem and Abdul Hay.

This Book belongs to....



Here is the clear, starry sky so familiar to Ibn Yunus. About two or three hundred stars have names which come from the Egyptian, Greek and Arabic languages. Many of the brightest stars in our sky have Arabic names which were designated by Muslim scientists a thousand years ago when Islamic astronomy was at its zenith. For example, the brightest star here is Deneb, a part of our Milky Way. Deneb, two hundred times the diameter of our Sun, is the nineteenth brightest star in the northern hemisphere and is located above the Big Dipper. The name for this particular star comes from the Arabic phrase *danab ad-dajjah* (“the hen’s tail”)!

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Introduction

History, for many young people, is a boring list of names, dates and events. Our history, the history of *Din al-Haqq al-Islam* (Islam, the religion of the Truth) and the peoples of *Dar al-Islam* (The homeland of Islam), is anything but boring! This is a book full of the astonishing triumphs of Muslims from the Islamic Empire stretching from the Atlantic shores of Morocco, to the distant beaches of the South China Sea. What united these far-flung regions was Islam: the belief in one deity, Allah, and in the Prophet-hood of Muhammad (ﷺ).

In the Arab world, a father or a mother can be informally identified as *Abu 'Ali* ("the father of 'Ali") or *'Umm Maryam* ("the mother of Maryam"), after the birth of their first son or daughter. Each child, in turn, can be given a nickname of sorts identifying him or her as "son of" (*ibn*) or "daughter of" (*bint*) so-and-so. Therefore, *Abdul Haqq bin Luqman* and *Maryam bint Luqman* would mean "Abdul Haqq, son of Luqman" and "Maryam, daughter of Luqman" respectively.

This book is an introduction to the amazing lives of a number of Muslims. Each of the twelve Muslims honoured here is an *ibn* (son), and is, therefore, remembered by the name of his father; each was an achiever whose patience, intelligence, motivation and Islamic faith resulted in contributions that have benefitted not only Muslims, but all of mankind.

Insha 'Allah, the stories of these *Abna' Al-Islam*, or "sons of Islam", will inspire all young Muslims who read them. May each reader of this book, like the twelve Islamic superstars it introduces, always be, a son of *sirat al-mustaqeem*, a son of the True Path.

To you all, my warmest salaams.

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‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud

Died 653 CE

In the barren, sun-baked mountains surrounding Makkah, a young shepherd tended flocks of sheep and goats belonging to a Qurayshi chieftain. This boy’s humble origin and occupation in many ways resembled those of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) himself. This boy, however, spent his days far away from Makkah so knew little about Muhammad (ﷺ) and the message of Islam that was slowly being spread amongst Makkans.

The young shepherd was known by his friends as *ibn ‘umm ‘abd* or “son of the mother of a slave”. In truth, he was ‘Abdullah, son of Mas‘ud or ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud. Despite his daily wanderings in the hills and mountains outside of Makkah, ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud was soon introduced to *Din al-Haqq al-Islam*. One day while tending his sheep, two strangers approached ‘Abdullah. They were tired and obviously very thirsty so they politely asked ‘Abdullah to milk a sheep and offer them fresh, thirst-quenching milk. “I cannot milk any sheep as they are not mine,” replied ‘Abdullah. The two strangers, none other than Muhammad (ﷺ) and Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (رضي الله عنه), respected his very honest answer, and instantly became attached to this humble little shepherd. The remote mountains surrounding Makkah had been an ideal place to go to flee the persecution by the Quraysh.

Thus, ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud at a very young age rejected the pagan tribal religion of the Quraysh, and *al-Hamdulillah*, accepted the message of Muhammad (ﷺ) and the universal religion of *Rabb al-‘alameen*. He was certainly one of the very first Muslims; some even say he was the third person to embrace Islam after Khadeejah (رضي الله عنها), the first wife of the Prophet (ﷺ).

‘Abdullah’s life now changed forever. He left his shepherding and became totally committed to caring for the Prophet (ﷺ). The fortunate ‘Abdullah became a regular member of the household of

*اللَّهُ نُورٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَاللَّهُ رَاضٍ مِّثْلُ
 نُورِهِ، كَمِشْكَاةٍ يَبْقَىٰ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحُ
 الْمِصْبَاحِ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ
 كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ
 مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ
 وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ، وَلَوْ
 لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارُ نُورِكُمْ لَأَنُورَ يُضِيءُ
 إِلَهُ لِنُورِهِ، قَزِيشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ
 إِلَا فَنَالِ النَّاسُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

خطاط فاجي

‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud’s unique gift was his ability to recite the Holy Qur’an in such a way that among all the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), he was indeed the best reciter.

the Prophet (ﷺ). ‘Abdullah was a totally devoted Companion both inside and outside the house. He accompanied the Prophet (ﷺ) wherever he went and carried the Prophet’s (ﷺ) staff and sandals. ‘Abdullah would also gather the branches of *miswak* from which the Prophet’s (ﷺ) toothbrushes (*siwak*) were made. Being so close to the Prophet (ﷺ) gave ‘Abdullah a unique training in the *sunnah*, or “traditions” and ways of the Prophet (ﷺ). In time, ‘Abdullah followed all the habits and manners of Muhammad (ﷺ) and, it was soon said of him that, “He was the closest to the Prophet (ﷺ) in character.”

‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud’s unique gift was his ability to recite the Noble Qur’an. It is agreed that among all the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), he was indeed the best reciter. It is reported that Muhammad (ﷺ) and Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) were once leaving the mosque when they saw a man standing in prayer. The Prophet (ﷺ) stopped to listen to him, then turned around and said, “Whoever wants to read the Qur’an as fresh as when it was revealed, then let him read according to the recitation of Ibn ‘Umm ‘Abd.” Muhammad (ﷺ), upon seeing ‘Abdullah supplicating, then said, “Ask and it will be given.”

Before the *hijrah*, when the small community of Muslims were still in Makkah, it was decided to recite the Noble Qur’an in public. Until that time, the Quraysh had not heard any of the sacred verses being recited loudly and openly. ‘Abdullah immediately offered to read the Qur’an in *al- Haram ash-Shareef* (the Noble Sanctuary). When the other Companions feared that ‘Abdullah might be attacked by the Quraysh, he replied that Allah would be his protector from their evil.

Fearlessly, one morning after dawn, ‘Abdullah entered the *Haram* and proceeded until reaching the *Maqam Ibraheem* (the Station of Ibrahim) (عليه السلام). This was metres away from the *Ka’bah* around which each morning the Quraysh congregated. ‘Abdullah began to recite the opening *ayahs* of *Surah al-Baqarah* loudly and in the most beautiful manner. When the Quraysh understood what they

were hearing, they began beating ‘Abdullah until his face became severely injured. He returned to the Companions and said, “By Allah, the enemies of Allah are not more comfortable than me at this moment. If you wish, I shall go tomorrow and do the same.” The Companions replied that the Quraysh had been forced to hear what they disliked.

‘Abdullah fled the persecution in Makkah by escaping to Ethiopia with a small group of other Companions, but returned to Makkah to make the *hijrah* to Yathrib (Madinah) with the Prophet (ﷺ). He lived until the time of the third Caliph, 'Uthman (رضي الله عنه) who came to visit him at his deathbed. ‘Abdullah refused an offer of help to his children; he had told them to read *Surah al-Waqi‘ah* every night because the Prophet (ﷺ) had said anyone doing so would never be afflicted by poverty. May Allah be pleased with ‘Abdullah, the son of Mas‘ud whose sincerity continues to inspire Muslims to this day.

