

The Role of Qusam Ibn Al-Abbas And the Sahaba In the Spread of Islam In Central Asia (Based on the Shah-i Zinda Complex)

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Abstract: This article, based on historical sources, highlights the life of Qusam ibn Abbas ibn Abdulmuttalib — one of the noble companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), his cousin, and the person most resembling him in appearance. It explores his journey to Central Asia, particularly Samarkand, his role in propagating Islam, and his martyrdom in this region. Furthermore, the paper analyzes the spiritual and educational significance of the world-famous Shah-i Zinda (Qusam ibn Abbas) complex in the Islamic world, its historical roots, and the stages of the spread of Islam in Mawarannahr, adhering to scientific and academic standards by Imam al-Bukhari and presents important insights into their practical implementation in the field of hadith studies.

Keywords: Qusam ibn Abbas, Shah-i Zinda, companion (sahabah), Mawarannahr, Samarkand, Islam, historical sources, pilgrimage complex, enlightenment.

Introduction: The pages of Islamic history are adorned with the life paths of great companions who illuminated humanity with the rays of guidance. One such noble figure is Qusam ibn Abbas ibn Abdulmuttalib (may Allah be pleased with them), the cousin of our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and the person who resembled the Noble Messenger most closely in character and physical appearance. His life and activities left a profound mark not only in the Arabian Peninsula but also in Central Asia, particularly in the ancient land of Samarkand.

Historical sources, such as Imam al-Dhahabi's *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, Ibn Sa'd's *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, Ibn al-Athir's *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, and other Islamic encyclopedic literature, clearly delineate Qusam ibn Abbas's life path, his arrival in Samarkand, and his services in propagating Islam.

The household members of the Prophet (pbuh) played an incomparable role in the eastward expansion of Islam. The spread of Islam beyond its initial geographic boundaries was not merely the result of military conquests, but rather the outcome of the great

enlightenment, devotion, and courage demonstrated by devoted companions and Successors (Tabi'un) who carried the light of Islam to remote regions of the world.

The initial penetration of Islam into Mawarannahr, particularly into Samarkand and Bukhara, began during the era of the great companions. The primary historical evidence for this is the arrival of Qusam ibn Abbas (died 55/675 AH) in Samarkand, his propagation of Islam in this land, and his martyrdom here after teaching the Quran and Hadith sciences to the local population. Because of this esteemed companion, Central Asian regions, specifically Samarkand, are recognized as blessed lands touched by the sacred footsteps of prominent companions [9:18/83].

During the caliphate of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan in Arabia, Said ibn Uthman ibn Affan (the son of the third Caliph, Uthman ibn Affan) was appointed as the governor of Samarkand (Sogdiana). Thousands of companions and Successors entered this region under the leadership of Said ibn Uthman ibn Affan.

The first Islamic call to prayer (adhan) in these lands

was proclaimed by the companion Abu al-Uliya Rafi' ibn Mihran al-Rayahi (died 90/709 AH) [9:18/83]. Abu al-Uliya Rafi' ibn Mihran al-Rayahi crossed the Amu Darya River from the direction of Balkh and went down in history as the first person to call the adhan in Mawarannahr [14:293].

The introduction and establishment of Islam in the region of Mawarannahr took place in several stages. The call to Islam was realized through early propagations during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh), instructions from subsequent caliphs, and the arrivals of great companions and Successors such as Buraydah ibn al-Husayb, Abdullah ibn Hazim al-Sulami, Qusam ibn Abbas, Said ibn Uthman ibn Affan, Abu al-Uliya Rufa'i ibn Mihran, and Ubayd ibn Ziyad. The da'wah (call) initiated by the companions and Successors between 650–680 CE lasted for a century and culminated in the complete islamization of Mawarannahr under Caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz and Governor Qutaybah ibn Muslim between 705–717 CE [14:295–310].

One of the earliest major military campaigns by Arab armies into the interior regions of Central Asia in Islamic history was led by Ubayd ibn Ziyad (39/639–61/680). In the 54th year of Hijrah (674 CE), he crossed the Amu Darya, launched a military campaign toward the city of Bukhara, encountered counter-offensives by local ruler forces, and subsequently withdrew. This event is elaborated upon in Islamic historical sources [9:300]. Although these incursions were military campaigns in nature, they served as the early stages of spreading Islamic tenets into the territories of Mawarannahr, bringing thousands of companions and Successors into these lands.

The great scholars and traditionists (muhaddithun) originating from Mawarannahr learned the pillars of Islam, the Quran, and the Sunnah from the prominent companions and Successors who came to these regions.

Sources record that nine renowned companions arrived in Mawarannahr between 55–65 AH (675–685 CE). They are: Said ibn Uthman ibn Affan, Qusam ibn Abbas, Abu al-Uliya Rafi' ibn Mihran, Muhammad ibn Wasi', Bard (the freedman of Malik ibn Anas), Dahhak ibn Muzahim, Layth ibn Abi Sulaym, Ziyad ibn Mihran, and Khulayd ibn Hassan.

The primary objective behind the arrival of these companions was to spread Islam, promote it widely, and encourage the local population toward the new faith and creed. Although the formal Islamic conquest of Mawarannahr had not yet been fully realized, the light of Islam had already entered the land. A significant number of local inhabitants voluntarily showed interest

in and embraced Islam [11:20–30].

Among such eminent companions, the status of Qusam ibn Abbas ibn Abdulmuttalib, the cousin of the Prophet (pbuh), is peerless. His arrival in Samarkand, his dissemination of Islamic enlightenment in this blessed soil, and his ultimate martyrdom here constitute one of the most brilliant and vital historical milestones in the integration of Mawarannahr with Islam.

The lineage, family environment, and ties of Qusam ibn Abbas to the household of the Prophet (pbuh) are well-established. His lineage and ancestral roots as a Hashemite Qurayshi hold an exalted status and a special place in Islamic history. His father was Hazrat Abbas ibn Abdulmuttalib ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf (the esteemed paternal uncle of our Prophet). His mother was Umm al-Fadl — Lubaba al-Kubra bint al-Harith al-Hilaliyyah, who was among the first women to accept Islam after Umm al-Mu'minin Khadijah (ra), and who shared fraternal bonds as the sister of Umm al-Mu'minin Maymuna bint al-Harith and Umm al-Mu'minin Zaynab bint Khuzayma, making her a highly respected woman in Islamic history [8:3/442].

According to reports transmitted by Imam al-Dhahabi and other traditionists, Qusam ibn Abbas was the last person to descend into the burial niche (lahd) and the last to hand over the soil during the burial of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Furthermore, his physical appearance closely resembled that of the Prophet (pbuh).

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) narrated: "The last person to emerge from the lahd (grave) of the Prophet (pbuh) was Qusam" [8:3/440].

Hazrat Ali (ra) also stated regarding Qusam: "Whoever wishes to see the person who most closely resembles the Prophet (pbuh) in appearance and character, let him look at Qusam ibn Abbas" [8:3/441]. These sources provide vivid proof of Qusam ibn Abbas's close proximity to the Prophet (pbuh) and his resemblance in conduct and disposition.

Despite being among the younger companions, Qusam ibn Abbas narrated several important traditions from the Prophet (pbuh) and his elder brother Abdullah ibn Abbas. His narrations primarily pertained to the etiquettes of worship, Hajj rituals, and the lifestyle of the Prophet (pbuh), which were accepted as reliable authorities by subsequent generations of traditionists.

The brothers of Qusam ibn Abbas were: Abdullah ibn Abbas (the erudite interpreter and scholar of the Ummah), Fadl, Ubaydullah, Ma'bad, Abdurrahman, and Kathir (may Allah be pleased with all of them).

Historians and hadith masters, including Imam al-

Dhahabi in Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, emphasize that Qusam (ra) was one of the individuals who most closely mirrored the Prophet (pbuh) in physical form and moral character. He was also a milk-brother (rada'ah) to Hasan ibn Ali (ra), as their mother Lubaba bint al-Harith, according to certain reports, nursed Hasan ibn Ali with her milk.

This is supported by a narration in Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal's Musnad and Ibn Majah's Sunan, where Umm al-Fadl said: "O Messenger of Allah, I saw a dream as if a member of your household was in my house." The Prophet (pbuh) replied: "You have seen a good dream; Fatima will give birth to a boy, and you will nurse him." Indeed, she gave birth to Al-Husayn or Al-Hasan, and she nursed him with Qusam's milk [2:26875].

Umm al-Fadl narrated: "I brought Qusam (in his childhood) to the presence of the Prophet (pbuh) and placed him in his lap. He urinated, and I struck his shoulder. Thereupon, the Prophet (pbuh) said: 'You have hurt my child, may Allah have mercy on you'" [2:26878]. This incident indicates that Qusam ibn Abbas grew up in the household of the Prophet (pbuh) from early childhood. Since Al-Hasan ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet (pbuh), was born in the 3rd year of Hijrah, it follows that Qusam ibn Abbas was born around the same age, in the 2nd or 4th year of Hijrah [10:158].

From his childhood, Qusam ibn Abbas experienced the affection and upbringing of the Prophet (pbuh). Historical and hadith sources record several key virtues associated with his relationship with the Prophet (pbuh).

The children of Abbas ibn Abdulmuttalib displayed immense courage in propagating Islam. All of them were raised under the tutelage of the Prophet (pbuh) and adorned with Islamic morality. They traveled to various regions of the Islamic world to promote Islam and passed away in those respective places. Sources note that no other family's children are found buried as far apart from one another as the offspring of Abbas ibn Abdulmuttalib. They were born to the same mother, Umm al-Fadl, in a single household and nurtured in the same blessed home. Among them, Fadl ibn Abbas was martyred in Ajnadayn (Palestine); Ma'bad and Abdurrahman passed away in the lands of Africa; Abdullah in Taif; Ubaydullah in Yemen; Qusam in Samarkand; and Kathir passed away in Yanbu (Saudi Arabia) [8:3/441].

Childhood Attention and Affection: Abdullah ibn Ja'far (ra) narrated that while they were playing as children, the Prophet (pbuh) passed by on a mount and seated Qusam behind him on the animal. This demonstrates the special regard and attention held for him in the heart of the Prophet (pbuh).

The Last Person in the Grave: One of Qusam ibn Abbas's greatest and most unique virtues was his direct participation in preparing the Prophet (pbuh) for his funeral and placing him in the grave, making him the final person to emerge from inside the burial chamber [6]. This honor was not bestowed upon any other companion.

State Service, Political Activity, and Just Governance: During his caliphate, Hazrat Ali (ra) highly valued Qusam ibn Abbas's exceptional virtue, knowledge, and administrative capability, appointing him as the governor of Makkah al-Mukarramah and Madinah. He administered the emirate of Makkah justly starting from the 36th year of Hijrah and served in this responsible position until the end of Hazrat Ali's reign [11].

Among the distinctions attained by Qusam ibn Abbas was a unique privilege shared by very few individuals from Banu Abdulmuttalib. Ibn al-Kalbi states: "Those among Banu Abbas ibn Abdulmuttalib who resembled the Prophet (pbuh) are: Qusam ibn Abbas and Abdullah ibn Nawfal ibn Harith ibn Abd Manaf. From Banu Abu Lahab ibn Abdulmuttalib: Muslim ibn Muattib ibn Abu Lahab; and from Banu Muttalib ibn Abd Manaf: Sayib ibn Ubayd ibn Abd Yazid ibn Hashim ibn Muttalib ibn Abd Manaf" [7].

The Companion's Second Distinction: This was an unrepeatable, unique opportunity that destiny did not grant to anyone else. He shone so brightly in greatness and exclusivity that it had to belong to a single individual — destiny made him the person with the most immediate final contact with the Prophet (pbuh). He (ra) was the final person to emerge from the blessed grave.

Narrated by Abdullah ibn al-Harith: "During the reign of Umar (ra), I performed Umrah along with Ali ibn Abi Talib. When he finished the Umrah, a group of people from Iraq came to him and said: 'O Abul-Hasan, we have come to ask you about something we would love to hear from you directly.' Ali asked: 'Perhaps Mughirah ibn Shu'bah is telling you that he was the person with the closest final connection to the Prophet (pbuh)?' They replied: 'Yes, we came to ask about that.' Thereupon, Ali said: 'The person with the final connection to the Prophet (pbuh) was Qusam ibn Abbas'" [2].

Even after the martyrdom of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali ibn al-Rida (Ali ibn Abi Talib, ra), Qusam ibn Abbas continued his endeavors in propagating Islam and exalting the word of Allah. Free from political disputes, he dedicated himself to spreading Islam in foreign lands with the aim of raising the banner of Islam high.

During the caliphate of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan,

Qusam ibn Abbas arrived in Khorasan and Mawarannahr under the command of Said ibn Uthman ibn Affan. He was a scholar, jurist, and master of Islamic jurisprudence (shariah). Another of his great virtues was his profound humility.

During the era of Hazrat Ali and subsequent periods, Qusam ibn Abbas actively participated in state governance and efforts to spread Islam. In the campaigns and propagation missions conducted to spread Islam in the territories of Khorasan and Mawarannahr—specifically during Said ibn Uthman ibn Affan's conquest of Samarkand (55–56 AH / 675–676 CE)—Qusam ibn Abbas participated by setting an example for others, playing an active role in the dissemination of Islam there. The local population learned early Islamic teachings from the companions, particularly from prominent figures like Qusam ibn Abbas. Regarding this, the renowned historian Ibn al-Athir records in his *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*: "When Said ibn Uthman campaigned against Samarkand, many companions were with him, including Qusam ibn Abbas ibn Abdulmuttalib. They entered the city and began establishing Islamic ordinances" [4:3/412]. This source provides direct grounds to assert that the entry and spread of Islam in Samarkand occurred through Qusam ibn Abbas and thousands of companions and Successors.

As recorded in Ibn Sa'd's *Al-Tabaqat*, when Said ibn Uthman offered Qusam ibn Abbas during the Khorasan and Mawarannahr campaign, saying, "Shall I allocate a thousand shares [from the spoils or stipend] to you?", Qusam responded with humility: "No, five shares like ordinary soldiers are enough for me; first give the rights of others in full, and then give me whatever you wish" [6:7/367]. This demonstrates that he traveled not for wealth or status, but solely to spread Islam and impart enlightenment.

Qusam ibn Abbas's mission in Samarkand met a tragic conclusion. While engaged in propagating Islam within the city, he was attacked by rebels and local resistance forces and attained martyrdom.

Abu Bakr Narshakhi's *History of Bukhara and Samarkand* chronicles record: "While Qusam ibn Abbas was performing prayers or propagating Islam in Samarkand, infidels attacked him, and he was martyred. Among the people, a belief formed regarding his vitality and the immortality of his spirit, and the place where he was buried was named Shah-i Zinda (The Living King)" [1].

In the 57th year of Hijrah (around 676 CE), during the process of conquering Samarkand—the center of Mawarannahr—and promulgating Islam, Qusam ibn Abbas (ra) was martyred. As confirmed by Hakim al-

Nishapuri and other historians, his blessed grave is precisely in the city of Samarkand. The demise of Qusam ibn Abbas in Samarkand is mentioned in numerous reliable historical sources. In particular, regarding his final days and death in Samarkand, sources state: "Zubayr ibn Bakkar says: Qusam went to Samarkand alongside Said ibn Uthman during the reign of Muawiyah and was martyred there" [8:3/441].

Hafiz Abu Abdullah al-Hakim, relying on his *History of Nishapur*, writes that although there were differing opinions regarding the place of Qusam's death and burial, "According to the most authentic and correct view, his grave is in Samarkand" [13].

The news of Qusam ibn Abbas's passing away in foreign lands reached his brother Abdullah ibn Abbas while he was in Madinah. Upon hearing this, he recited *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un*, dismounted from his camel, performed two units of prayer by the roadside, and expressed deep grief over his passing.

The central nucleus of the world-famous Shah-i Zinda (Persian for "The Living King") complex in Samarkand is formed precisely by the mausoleum (dahmah) of Qusam ibn Abbas.

Historical sources and archaeological evidence demonstrate that this pilgrimage site has remained one of the holiest sanctums in the Islamic world for centuries and acquired an even more majestic architectural profile during the Timurid era.

The burial of Qusam ibn Abbas in Samarkand and the subsequent fame of this site under the name Shah-i Zinda (The Living King) serve as a vivid expression of the boundless love and reverence held by the peoples of Central Asia for the members of the Prophet's (pbuh) household.

Today, the Shah-i Zinda complex in Samarkand stands not only as an architectural monument but also as historical proof that Islam entered Central Asia early, during the era of the companions and directly through the relatives of the Prophet (pbuh).

The complex built over the grave of Qusam ibn Abbas evolved over centuries, transforming into one of the most magnificent architectural ensembles in the world, particularly under the Timurids. The shrine of Qusam ibn Abbas forms the oldest and most sacred core of the complex.

The medieval traveler and historian Ibn Battuta noted the grandeur of this shrine and the multitude of pilgrims in his memoirs, writing upon his arrival in Samarkand: "There is a noble shrine in Samarkand where Qusam ibn Abbas, the cousin of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), is buried. People come to visit it, and kings and emirs consider visiting this grave an honor"

[5].

The earliest madrasah in Central Asia was the "Qusamiyyah" Madrasah, which was associated with Qusam ibn Abbas. Just as the honor of the land was rooted in the arrival of Islam, the presence of renowned companions like Qusam ibn Abbas during its advent laid the foundation for the emergence of Successors from the people of Mawarannahr [10:272].

The life path of Qusam ibn Abbas (ra) is a brilliant illustration that the honor of lineage is not meant merely for pride, but for immense responsibility, service, enlightenment, and selflessness. His final resting place in the soil of Samarkand serves as a golden link in the history of Mawarannahr's connection with Islamic civilization, demonstrating to the world that this region has always been a cradle of enlightenment and Islamic values.

The Qusam ibn Abbas complex is regarded by the peoples of Central Asia as the true cradle for the spread of Islam and a center of spirituality and enlightenment. At a time when cultural ties among world nations are developing, and pilgrimage tourism along with the life paths of great scholars and historical figures are being showcased as examples, promoting the Shah-i Zinda complex under its authentic name, the "Qusam ibn Abbas Complex," is both vital and relevant.

The history and shrine of Qusam ibn Abbas constitute a peerless jewel of the entire Islamic world and a spiritual bridge connecting the peoples of Central Asia with the companions of the Prophet.

Today, with the territory of Uzbekistan in Central Asia being the sole location where the grave of this companion is situated, the Shah-i Zinda complex holds immense spiritual significance not only for our country but for the entire Islamic world.

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