

Diary of a Muslim Slave in America

The *Bilali Muhammad Document* and *The Treatise of ibn Abi Zayd Al-Qayrawaani*

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Bilali Muhammad (may Allah have mercy upon him) was a Muslim born to a well-educated Muslim family from the Fulani tribe. He was born around 1770 in the area of Africa known today as Guinea and Sierra Leone. Bilali was well versed in the Arabic language. He was enslaved by oppressors from Europe and sold to various oppressors until he was purchased by Thomas Spalding in Sapelo Island Georgia.

When Bilali died around 1857, it was discovered that he had handwritten a thirteen-page Arabic manuscript. For over one hundred years this manuscript was thought to have been his diary, but closer examination revealed that the manuscript was **in fact not** his diary, rather it was a famous book known as '*The Treatise of Ibn Abi Zayd Al-Qayrawaani*'; that Bilali Muhammad had written from memory. The author, Ibn Abi Zayd (may Allah have mercy upon him) was a well-known scholar from Tunisia from the tribe of Berbers, who died around 996 C.E.

Important note: Most of the historians who speak of the *Bilali Muhammad Document* and the *Treatise of ibn Abi Zayd*, refer to it as though it is only a treatise exploring Maliki jurisprudence or Islamic law. While they ignore the essential introduction of this piece, which details the creed of the Muslim. Before the author discusses purification for the prayer by way of water, he discusses purification of the soul by way of the correct creed. Here is a small passage from the introduction.

That which is pronounced by the tongues, and believed in the hearts, concerning the obligatory matters of the religion include believing in the heart while expressing with the tongue that Allah is One, and there is no deity worthy of worship except Him. There is nothing that resembles Him, and He has no rival or equal. He has no offspring and no parents. He has no wife and no partners. He is the First and there is no beginning to His firstness. He is the Last and there is no end to His eternalness. Neither His Essence nor His Nature can be described or encompassed by His creation. Those who ponder will only reflect upon His signs, while not delving into the reality of His Essence. (Allah said), And they will never compass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills. His footstool extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. And He is the Most High, the Most Great. (Soorah Al-Baqarah 2:255). He is the All-Knowing, the All-Aware, the Controller, the All-Powerful, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the Most High, and the Most Great. He is above His majestic throne in a manner befitting His Majesty, while His knowledge is in every place. He created mankind, and He knows what man's soul whispers to him. By way of His knowledge, He is closer to man than his jugular vein. There is not a leaf that falls except that He has complete knowledge of it.

Allah knows best, most likely, Bilali Muhammad wrote the *Treatise of ibn Abi Zayd* from his memory to teach fellow enslaved Muslims in America, their religion. And this book continues to be taught by Muslims in America until this day.

I encourage the descendants of Bilali Muhammad, the descendants of all slaves and the descendants of slave owners to read the English translation of the *Treatise of ibn Abi Zayd* with commentary by the likes of Shaykh Ahmad An-Najmi and Shaykh Salih Fawzan; so we can understand the legacy our brother Bilali Muhammad (may Allah have mercy upon him) was trying to convey to us.

Caution: The noble scholar Shaykh Salih Fawzan said, “the latecomers who claim to follow Imam Malik have distorted the explanation of the *Treatise of ibn Abi Zayd* to agree with their desires”. Some good audio explanations of this book that, I (Rasheed) have found include...

<https://www.spreaker.com/show/ibn-abee-zayd-al-qayrawaanee>

<http://dusunnah.com/audio/an-explanation-of-the-creed-of-ibn-abi-zayd-al-qayrawani/>

https://www.spreaker.com/user/masjidrahmah/the-creed-of-ibn-abi-zaid-al-qayrawaan-u?utm_medium=widget&utm_source=user%3A7077207&utm_term=episode_title

