

= Abdallah al @-@ Battal =

Abdallah al @-@ Battal (Arabic : ??????? ?????? ; " Abdallah the Hero " , died in 740) was a Muslim warrior of the Arab ? Byzantine Wars of the early 8th century , participating in several of the campaigns launched by the Umayyad Caliphate against the Byzantine Empire . Historical facts about his life are scarce , but an extensive pseudo @-@ historical and legendary tradition grew around him after his death , and he became a famous figure in both Arab and later Turkish epic literature as Sayyid Battal Ghazi .

= = Biography = =

Nothing is known of Abdallah al @-@ Battal 's origin or early life . Much later accounts claim that he hailed from Antioch or Damascus , and that he was a mawla of the Umayyad family . He is also given various kunya , Abu Muhammad , Abu Yahya , or Abu ' I @-@ Husayn , by which he is usually known . His nisba of al @-@ Antaqi (" of Antioch ") rather than a tribal affiliation suggests that he was not of Arab origin ; in this context , his name " Abdallah " further suggests that he was a convert to Islam , as this name (meaning " servant of Allah ") was often given to new converts in early Islamic times . Khalid Yahya Blankinship suggested that he might be the same person as a certain " ' Amr " recorded by the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes the Confessor in the Nicaea campaign of 727 , and hence that " ' Amr " could be his actual personal name or a patronymic (i.e. his name could be ' Amr ibn Abdallah or Abdallah ibn ' Amr) , while alternatively " Abdallah " could simply be an honorific .

According to historical sources (the chroniclers al @-@ Ya 'qubi and al @-@ Tabari) , al @-@ Battal first appears in 727 , in one of the annual raids against Byzantine Asia Minor . This campaign was commanded by Mu 'awiya ibn Hisham , the son of the reigning Caliph Hisham (reigned 723 ? 743) . Al @-@ Battal led the vanguard , with which he penetrated as far as the city of Gangra in Paphlagonia , which he captured and razed , before the army went on to unsuccessfully lay siege to Nicaea . Blankinship considers that al @-@ Battal 's capture of Gangra ranks as one of the greatest successes of Umayyad arms against the Byzantines in this period , along with the capture of Caesarea by Maslama ibn Abd al @-@ Malik in 726 . Later accounts from the 10th century , place al @-@ Battal alongside Maslama during the latter 's failed siege of Constantinople in 717 ? 718 , but as the Arab accounts of the siege are semi @-@ legendary , it is impossible to know if this report contains any truth .

Al @-@ Battal himself commanded another raid in 731 ? 732 , of which little is known . It most probably was a failure , and is remembered only for the death in battle of another Arab hero , Abd al @-@ Wahhab ibn Bukht . In the next year , AH 115 (732 ? 733) , al @-@ Battal campaigned again alongside Mu 'awiya ibn Hisham , raiding as far as Akroinon in Phrygia . A Byzantine army under a certain Constantine tried to confront the Muslims , but al @-@ Battal defeated Constantine and took him prisoner . Al @-@ Battal 's next and last appearance is in 740 , when a major campaign involving several tens of thousands of men was launched by the Umayyads against Byzantium . Along with Malik ibn Shu 'ayb , deputy governor of Malatya , al @-@ Battal commanded a 20 @,@ 000 @-@ strong cavalry force while Sulayman ibn Hisham led the main force behind them . Al @-@ Battal and Malik 's force reached as far as Akroinon , but there they were confronted and defeated by the Byzantines under Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (r . 717 ? 741) in person . Both Arab generals and two thirds of their army perished .

= = Legend = =

If his military career was not particularly distinguished , Abdallah al @-@ Battal quickly became the subject of popular tales and his fame grew , so that by the 10th century he was well established as one of the heroic figures of the Arab ? Byzantine Wars : al @-@ Mas 'udi (The Meadows of Gold , VIII , 74 ? 75) ranks him among the " illustrious Muslims " whose portraits were displayed in Byzantine churches as a mark of respect . In the 10th ? 12th centuries his alleged role in the siege

of Constantinople was embellished by the Persian historian Bal 'ami and the Andalusian mystic Ibn Arabi . A number of fictional anecdotes became part of the accepted historical corpus around al @-@ Battal from the time of Ibn ' Asakir (1106 ? 1175) on : the use of his name to frighten children by the Byzantines ; his entry into Amorion pretending to be a messenger and discovery of the Byzantine plans ; his stay at a convent , whose abbess shielded him from Byzantine soldiers and whom he took with him and married ; and finally his death in battle and burial , attended by Emperor Leo himself . On the other hand , beginning with Ibn ' Asakir 's contemporary al @-@ Samaw 'al ibn Yahya al @-@ Maghribi , a succession of Muslim chroniclers were critical of the various fabrications introduced into the accounts of al @-@ Battal 's life . Ibn Kathir in particular regarded it as " poor and confused material suitable only for the unsophisticated " .

Al @-@ Battal 's exploits became the subject of two romances , the Arabic @-@ language " Tale of Delhemma and al @-@ Battal " (S?rat ??t al @-@ Himma wa @-@ l @-@ Ba???l) and the Turkish epic tradition of Sayyid Ba???l Gh?z? . Although both were composed in the 12th century and draw upon a common Arabic tradition , they show significant differences , with the Turkish tale including many uniquely Turkic and Persian influences , including supernatural elements from folk tradition or motifs from the Shahname and the Romance of Abu Muslim . Both romances place al @-@ Battal in the mid @-@ 9th century and associate him with the epic cycle of Malatya and its emir , Umar al @-@ Aqta (died 863) , with the result that he became particularly associated with the city of Malatya and its region . In the Delhemma , his own role in the Umayyad wars with Byzantium is taken over by the Kilabite hero al @-@ Sahsah . In these tales al @-@ Battal is presented as an Islamic analogue to Ulysses , to the extent that his name became a byword for cunning . The Turks adopted al @-@ Battal following the Danishmendid conquest of Malatya in 1102 , and he became prominent as a Turkish national hero and symbol of their conquest of Asia Minor . His stories (Battalname) were reworked throughout the Seljuk and Ottoman periods , and he became the subject of a considerable body of folk tales . A cult developed around him as a saintly figure (" sayyid ") , especially among the Alevi and Bektashi sects , and his supposed tomb at Seyitgazi became a major centre of pilgrimage until the early 20th century , drawing pilgrims from as far as Central Asia .