

Awana b. al-Hakam

Ibn al-Kalbi has included some narratives from `Awana b. al-Hakam which supplement the version of Abu Mikhnaf and sometimes provide alternatives for it. Al-Baladhuri also gives quotations from `Awana from different sources than Ibn al-Kalbi¹.

`Awana presents his reports without any further *isnad*. This suggests that they are taken from a continuous account which `Awana had written.

The first extract which we have from it concerns Yazid's appointment of Ibn Ziyad as governor of Kufa after receiving complaints from his supporters that Nu'man b. Bashir was not acting firm against Muslim b. `Aqil and the Shi'i in Kufa. `Awana seems to be the only source for the story of Yazid consulting his father's Christian advisor, Sergius. Sergius tells Yazid that his father was going to appoint Ibn Ziyad over Kufa and advises him to do the same. Yazid takes this advice and writes to Ibn Ziyad, telling him to go to Kufa and hunt for Muslim. He gives him three choices in his treatment of Muslim: to imprison him, to kill him or to banish him².

Ibn A'tham repeats this account in a somewhat embellished version without giving any reference to `Awana³ but it is clear that `Awana must be his source, probably in the version of Ibn al-Kalbi. Shaykh al-Mufid also reproduces the account but he says that his version is based on Ibn A'tham⁴; al-Mufid did not realize the implications of this version of `Awana; it removes the responsibility of the appointment of Ibn Ziyad from Yazid and puts it, in effect, not on Mu`awiya, but instead on Mu`awiya's Christian advisor.

Thus Yazid is exonerated to some extent from Ibn Ziyad's conduct. Even the three choices given to Ibn Ziyad for dealing with Muslim are presented in such a way as to lay less emphasis on the killing of Muslim. The first is imprisonment, the last banishment. Ibn Ziyad's choice of the second, killing, put more of the responsibility for that on himself rather than Yazid.

Another report from `Awana of some significance is paralleled by reports from Abu Mikhnaf. It emphasizes the reluctance of `Umar b. Sad to go against the Imam al-Husayn and stresses the pressure that Ibn Ziyad put on him by threatening to withdraw the appointment that he had earlier given him. `Umar b. Sa'd suggests that the task be given to a tribal leader in Kufa but Ibn Ziyad refuses.

When `Umar b. Sa`d's army reaches the Imam al-Husayn, he finds it difficult to send a messenger to the Imam because nearly all of them had previously sent messages to the Imam urging him to come to Kufa. The report ends with `Umar b. Sa`d's hope that he will not have to fight the Imam al-Husayn⁵.

This account, like others, put the blame for `Umar b. Sa`d's situation on Ibn Ziyad. It also stresses the treachery of the Kufan tribal leaders. In this context, again, we see the blame for the ensuing situation being transferred from Yazid to Ibn Ziyad and the Kufan traitors⁶.

A further report from Awana concerns Yazid's behaviour when the head of the martyred Imam and the prisoners of the *ahl al-bayt* are sent to him by Ibn Ziyad.

In this account we are told that the members of the *ahl al-bayt* were imprisoned while Ibn Ziyad sent after Yazid. A message was sent to them in which there was a promise to inform them of their fate. When the prisoners are sent to Yazid, he justifies his action and indicates that he was unwilling that such a thing should happen. The report describes his good treatment of the prisoners, and even the praise of his treatment by one of them⁷.

This report should be seen in conjunction with another isolated report by Ibn al-Kalbi, which has clearly pro-Yazid tendencies. In it, Yazid expresses regret for the death of the Imam and puts the blame on Ibn Ziyad.

Awana, in his narrative, seems to be presenting again a slant which diverts the blame for the killing of the Imam away from Yazid and towards Ibn Ziyad. There is no mention of Yazid's desecration of the Imam's head.

A report from `Awana, which has no support elsewhere, describes how Ibn Ziyad tries to get his letter instructing `Umar b. Sa`d to attack the Imam al-Husayn from `Umar b. Sa`d, but `Umar b. Sa`d has already used it as a justification for himself⁸.

Thus insofar as the reports from `Awana which have been included in Ibn al-Kalbi's version may be taken as a sample of `Awana's full account, it would seem that `Awana is presenting an account which reduces the amount of blame attached to Yazid in the affair. He is writing a marginally pro-Umayyad version. In his accounts of the battle of Siffin, it has been noted that `Awana tends to shift responsibility from Mu`awiya to `Amr b. al-As⁹.

The same operation appears to be taking place here with `Awana shifting the responsibility away from Yazid to Ibn Ziyad and ultimately to his advisor, Sergius, for suggesting Ibn Ziyad's appointment.

Abu Mikhnaf's account survives in the reports taken by later writers from the recensions of Ibn al-Kalbi, Nasr b. Muzahim and al-Mada'ini. Ibn al-Kalbi's work is given in very full form by al-Tabari.

Al-Baladhuri tends to use the collective 'they said (*qalu*)'.

But it is clear that the major source is Abu Mikhnaf. Abu al-Faraj uses both Nasr b. Muzahim's version

and al-Mada'ini s, but he mainly relies on Nasr b. Muzahim's. It is clear from a comparison of the three texts that the fullest version is Ibn al-Kalbis, but all three recensions indicate that sometimes narratives are compressed together and summarized. What emerges is a very full account based on numerous sources, where alternatives are put side by side.

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1. Al-Badadhuri, *Ansab al-Ashraf* (Beirut, 1977), III, 165, 213, 218.
 2. Al-Tabari, *op. cit.*, II, 239-40.
 3. Ibn A`tham, *Kitab al-Futuh*, V, 60-1.
 4. Al-Mufid, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-8.
 5. Al-Tabari, *op. cit.*, II, 309-11.
 6. *Ibid.*, pp. 379-83.
 7. *Ibid.*, pp. 374-6.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 385.
 9. E. L. Petersen, *Ali and Mu awiya in Early Arab Tradition* (Copenhagen, 1964), pp. 32, 48, 53.

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