

Ibn A'tham al-Kufi

Ibn A'tham al-Kufi gives us the most embellished account of the martyrdom of the Imam al-Husayn. He prefaces his account by including lists of *isnads*, which he claims are his sources¹.

These lists are muddled, and seem like an attempt to show that this is indeed an authoritative account. Ibn A'tham's exaggeration in his authorities sets the tone for the rest of the account. It is based on what has become the standard version, but it is that standard version in a very embellished form. Each individual battle is prefaced by verses, most of which are not reported by any other source.

The prowess in the battle of the Imam al-Husayn's followers and the Imam himself is such that one is surprised that they were not victorious. In his partisan approach, Ibn A'tham forgets that it is a tragedy which is taking place. The same tendency to exaggerate is a feature also of the account attributed to Abu Mikhnaf. Such treatment diminishes the real story of the Imam's sufferings and places it in the realm of a peculiar kind of hagiography. Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani deals with the martyrdom of al-Husayn in his *Maqatil al-Talibiyyan*.

The work, as its name suggests, is a survey of the persecution of the descendants of Abu Talib. His account is brief in comparison with al-Tabari and al-Baladhuri, but he does give a useful account².

His main authority is Nasr b. Muzahim but he also uses al-Mada'ini. A third authority of Abu al-Faraj—and one he uses throughout his book—is Yahya b. al-Hasan. The latter is also an authority of al-Mufid for his *Kitab al-Irshad*, and he seems to have written a The other annalistic historians, al-Ya'qubi, al-Dinawari, work on the descendants of the Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib. The account supplements the reports of Abu Mikhnaf, but by and large it acts as confirmation that al-Tabari's use of Ibn al-Kalbi is authentic.

¹ Ibn A'tham, *Kitab al-Futuh* (Hyderabad, 1971), IV, 209–10. The whole narrative is IV, 209–24, and V, 8–252.

² Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–81.

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