

Khalifa b. Khayyat

Khalifa b. Khayyat is writing annalistic history, and therefore has to mention the death of the Imam al-Husayn. He does so in the briefest form possible and gives a list of the members of the Imam's family who were killed. He devotes much more space to Yazid's request of his governor, al-Walid, that the oath of allegiance should be taken from Ibn al-Zubayr and the Imam al-Husayn¹.

Before discussing his account, it will be necessary to look at the accounts that we have from Abu Mikhnaf. Ibn al-Kalbi's version has unified two separate reports from Abu Mikhnaf; they are given separately by al-Baladhuri. In the first, al-Waqidi's messenger comes to Ibn Zubayr and the Imam al-Husayn, and they make excuses for not attending. Al-Walid concentrates his pressure on Ibn al-Zubayr by sending him messengers, and Ibn al-Zubayr escapes to Mecca. The report adds that al-Husayn arrives there later, but there is no mention of any actual meeting with al-Walid. It suggests that when both men are in Mecca, Ibn al-Zubayr wants the Imam al-Husayn to go to Kufa to get him out of the way because he is jealous of his influence².

In the second report, Abu Mikhnaf speaks of a meeting between al-Walid and the Imam al-Husayn in the presence of Marwan b. al-Hakam in which the Imam puts off pledging allegiance to Yazid and gets angry with Marwan for threatening to kill him³.

The Uthmaniyya view of this event is somewhat different. Khalifa b. Khayyat gives an account from Wahb b. Jarir on the authority of Abu Bakr Juwayriyya b. Asma' al-Hudhali, who says that he heard from so many scholars of Medina that he cannot count them. According to this, Yazid's letter comes to al-Walid. He sends for Marwan who advises him to make Ibn al-Zubayr and the Imam al-Husayn pledge allegiance to Yazid immediately. Ibn al-Zubayr arrives first and there follows a conversation which is almost identical with the one Abu Mikhnaf reported to have taken place with the Imam al-Husayn.

Al-Walid orders them both to leave. The Imam al-Husayn arrives, but nothing is said to him until both men return. The narrative is interrupted at this point by the omission of something, and then goes on with Marwan advising al-Walid to appoint spies to watch Ibn al-Zubayr. Ibn al-Zubayr then makes his escape to Mecca and is followed later by the Imam al-Husayn. In Mecca, he asks the Imam al-Husayn

why he has not gone to his supporters, adding that if he had such supporters, he would go to them⁴.

Al-Baladhuri has another report from Wahb b. Jarir which purports to come from a servant of Mu'awiya⁵. Khalifa b. Khayyat reports the first half of it but prefers Abu Bakr al-Hudhalis account of the actual meeting with al-Walid⁶.

In this report, Zurayq, the servant of Mu'awiya, brings the message to al-Walid from Yazid. It is a very colourful account which gives details of the clothes all the main characters are wearing. Al-Walid is full of bitter grief at the death of Mu'awiya and sends for Marwan. Marwan advises that the men should be sent for.

The Imam al-Husayn arrives first, followed by Ibn al-Zubayr; then a new character arrives, Abd Allah b. Muti', who is a supporter of Ibn al-Zubayr. Al-Walid announces the death of Mu'awiya and calls upon them to pledge allegiance. It is Ibn al-Zubayr who takes it on himself to answer and he persuades al-Walid to let them delay it until the morning. Al-Walid does so and they all escape.

Clearly these two 'Uthmaniyya accounts are meant to build up the reputation of Ibn al-Zubayr at the expense of the Imam al-Husayn. They seem like propaganda. Abu Bakr al-Hudhali gives us as his authority countless scholars of Medina but does not name one of them. When compared with Abu Mikhnaf's tradition, it is obvious that one of them is based on the other and it seems probable that Abu Mikhnaf's account is the earlier. The second account is full of such great detail with regard to the clothes people were wearing as to suggest that it was written by a fashion critic. Clearly, these details are meant to establish its authenticity, but they rather tend to suggest that it is a fabrication.

¹. Khalifa b. Khayyat, Ta'rikh (2nd ed., Beirut, 1977), pp. 231-6

². Al-Baladhuri, Ansab al-Ashraf (Beirut, 1979), IV/2, 299-301

³. Ibid., pp. 302-3; cf. al-Tabari, op. cit., pp. 216-19.

⁴. Khalifa b. Khayyat, op. cit., pp. 232-3.

⁵. Al-Baladhuri, op. cit., pp. 309-10.

⁶. Khalifa b. Khayyat, op. cit., pp. 232.

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