The Departure of 'Alî b. Abî Ṭālib for Sīffīn¹

According to 'Abdallâh b. Ahmad al-Marwazi—his father—Sulaymân—'Abdallâh—Mu'âwiyyah b. 'Abd al-Rahmân—Abû Bakr

¹ For the background to the following reports about the prelude to the Battle of Sīffīn and the fighting there, see Translator's Foreword to the present volume. For further information, discussion, and references to sources and secondary materials, see E.D., s.vv. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭalîb, Sīffīn, etc.; Caetani, Annali dell'Islam (henceforth Ann.), vol. IX, 36A.H., §346ff.; Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom, 75–112; Hinds, “Banners and Battle Cries,” 3ff.; idem, “The Sīffīn Arbitration Agreement,” 93ff. For parallel versions and other accounts, in addition to the materials compiled and translated into Italian in Ann. (including references to the editions and manuscripts used), see especially Nasr b. Muzâhím al-Minqârî, W.S.; and Ibn Abî al-Ḥadîd, SNB. Material relating to the Battle of Sīffīn is scattered throughout the twenty volumes of SNB, but see especially vol. III, 165ff., 244ff.; vol. IV, 13–32, 175–258; vol. V, 302–17; vol. VIII, 9–102; vol. IX, 301–3; vol. X, 102–7; vol. XV, 104, 12–24. W.S is frequently cited in SNB. Material from the relevant part of al-Balâdhurî's Ansâb al-ašrâf is available in Italian in Levi Della Vida, "Il Califato di Ali secondo il Kitâb Ansâb al-ašrâf di al-Balâdhurî" (see pp. 449ff. for the events narrated here), as well as scattered throughout vols. IX and X of Ann.
al-Hudhali. When 'Ali had appointed 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās as his deputy over al-Baṣrah, went from there to al-Kūfah, where he got ready to go to Siffin. He asked for advice about that. Some advised him to send his forces but remain in al-Kūfah himself, whereas others recommended that he go with the men. He insisted on taking command himself, and he prepared his men.

News of that reached Mu‘āwiyyah, who summoned 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ and asked his advice. 'Amr said, "Since you have heard that 'Ali is on his way, set out yourself and be sure to confront him with your views and your strategies." Mu‘āwiyyah replied, "In that case, Oh Abū 'Abdallāh, prepare the men!"

'Amr proceeded to work them up and to disparage the strength of 'Ali and his followers, saying, "The men of Iraq have split among themselves, sapped their own strength, and blunted their cutting edge. Moreover, the Baṣrans are opposed to 'Ali, who has done them harm and dealt death to them. Their leaders and those of the Kūfans wiped each other out at the Battle of the Camel, and 'Ali has set out with only a band few in number, among whom are those who killed your caliph. Fear God, lest you forfeit your right to claim vengeance and allow the blood of 'Uthmān to go unavenged."

Mu‘āwiyyah conscripted men into the armies of the Syrians and tied his banner for 'Amr, and 'Amr in turn tied one for, among

---

2. The chain of transmission from al-Marwazi to 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak] [d. 181/797; see GAS, I, 95] was frequently cited by Tabarī, for Abu Bakr al-Hudhali [d. 167/783–784], see Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib, XII, 46, no. 180.
3. For 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās, cousin of the Prophet and ancestor of the future dynasty of 'Abbāsid caliphs, see EP, s.v. for his appointment over al-Baṣrah following 'Ali's victory at the Battle of the Camel, see Tabarī, I, 3230.
4. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ (Abū 'Abdallāh) was the conqueror of Egypt and had been its governor for a time. In the struggle between Mu‘āwiyyah and 'Ali, 'Amr appears as Mu‘āwiyyah's right-hand man [see EP, s.v.; and, for the historical image of 'Amr in this struggle, Petersen, 'Ali and Mu‘āwiyya].
5. The Baṣrans generally had fought against 'Ali and his Kūfani supporters at the Battle of the Camel [see EP, s.v. Dījamal].
6. Literally, "your blood," but see Gloss., s.v. b-t-l.
7. Wa-kattabab fi 'ajnādi ahli al-Sha'm; the preposition fi suggests this translation, rather than "he formed troops into kattā'ib." See Lane, Lexicon, s.v. k-t-b, forms 2 and 8.
8. 'Aqada liqā'ahu li-fulān, "he tied his banner for so-and-so" is a stock expression for "he appointed so-and-so to the command." On the use of banners among the Arabs, see EP, s.v. 'Alam, and the literature cited in Hinds, "Banners and Battle Cries," p. 8, nn. 28, 29, and Athamina, "Black Banners," 307–26, esp. p. 316.
others, his attendant \textit{ghulām} Wardān\textsuperscript{9} and his two sons 'Abdallāh and Muḥammad.\textsuperscript{10} 'Alī appointed his \textit{ghulām} Qanbar. Consequently 'Amr said:

Will Wardān suffice me against Qanbar,
and the Sakūn against the Himyar,
When the men of courage don the armor?\textsuperscript{11} 

'Alī heard that and replied:

I shall meet al-'Āṣī b. al-'Āṣī\textsuperscript{12} 
with 70,000 men ready for war,\textsuperscript{13}
Riding the horses and the young camels side by side  
and tying to their hind parts the links of the chain mail.\textsuperscript{14}

When Mu‘āwiyyah heard that, he said (to 'Amr), "It seems to me tht Ibn Abī Ṭālib is a match for you \textit{qad wafā īlaka}," and he began to proceed more cautiously. He wrote to everybody he thought was afraid of 'Alī or had spoken evil of him\textsuperscript{15} and to everybody who considered the shedding of 'Uthmān's blood to have been a grave matter, and he asked for their help against him. When al-Walid b. 'Uqbah\textsuperscript{16} saw that, he sent to Mu‘āwiyyah,

Indeed tell Mu‘āwiyyah b. Ḥarb:

"You are held to shame by a man of trust."

\footnotesize{9. Wardān is often referred to as the \textit{mawlā} of 'Amr [e.g., Ya'qūbi, \textit{Ta'rikh}, II, 215].}
\footnotesize{10. For 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, noted transmitter of \textit{ḥadīth} and specialist in apocalyptic tradition, see Wensinck, \textit{A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition}, s.v. For Muhammad b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, see al-Zubayrī, \textit{Nasab Quraysh}, 411.}
\footnotesize{11. For the Banū al-Sakūn [of Kindah], see Ibn al-Kalbī, II, index, s.v., for the Banū Himyar, \textit{ibid.}, s.v.}
\footnotesize{12. Al-'Āṣī b. al-'Āṣī is a pun. In its full form the name of 'Amr's father was al-'Āṣī (generally shortened to al-'Āṣī and thence to al-'Āṣ), which can mean "the disobedient one" or "the rebel."}
\footnotesize{13. or, "full of anger"; see the expressions \textit{aqada ihyātahu} and \textit{aqada naṣiyatahu} in Lane, \textit{Lexicon}, s.v. \textit{aqada}.}
\footnotesize{14. Possibly the camels were ridden to the place of battle to conserve the horses, which were then used in the fighting.}
\footnotesize{15. The Arabic could be read to mean that Mu‘āwiyyah wrote to all those who thought that his Mu‘āwiyyah) was afraid of 'Alī and who had said evil things about him. Possibly he was writing to Iraqis in an attempt to deflect them from supporting 'Alī.}
\footnotesize{16. Al-Walid b. 'Uqbah b. Abī Mu‘ayyīn was a cousin of Mu‘āwiyyah and former governor of al-Kufah [see al-Zubayrī, \textit{Nasab Quraysh}, 138ff.].}
The First Civil War

You have wasted time like the stallion camel of arousal, confined
   and
bellowing in Damascus but unable to move.

You and your writing to 'Ali
   are like a woman tanning a hid that has become worm-eaten
   and useless.  

Each band of riders for the emaciated camels of Iraq, tripping along,
excites in you the desire for the rule.

But he who seeks revenge does not hang back
   but seeks it relentlessly.

If you were the slain one, and he ('Uthmān) were alive,
   he would have drawn his sword, not turning aside, unflagging,
And not shirking from seeking vengeance until
   he had slain in retaliation for it, not weary or sticking in one
   place.

Your family in Medina have been wiped out,
   cast down like chaff."

Narrators other than Abū Bakr (al-Hudhalī) say that Muʿāwiya
summoned his secretary Shaddād b. Qays and told him, "Find me
a scroll to write on." When he had brought him one, Shaddād took
up the pen and began to write, but Muʿāwiya said, "Do not rush!
Write:

"How surprised (he is) by what he sees of our deliberateness,
   but, if war had buffeted him, he would not have said a word."

He then told Shaddād, "Roll up the scroll," and he sent it to al-Walīd
(b. 'Uqbah), who, when he opened it, found only this one verse
inside.

---

17. For al-sadīm al-muʿammā, see Lane, Lexicon, s.vv. It refers to a stallion camel
   that is led among females to arouse them then, having done so, is not allowed to
   couple but is taken away and tethered apart, bellowing in frustration.
18. See Lane, Lexicon, s.v. halima; Freytag (tr.), Arabum proverbia (= al-Maydānī,
   Majmaʿ al-amthāl), II, 346.
19. I find the sense of this line elusive. It perhaps continues the imagery of line
   2, but, if so, the metaphor seems to obscure the meaning.
20. The text reads "if I were slain," but see Add. et emend.
21. This seems to be Tabari's only reference to him.
22. The verse is attributed to Aws b. Ḥajar (Dīwān, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm
   [Beirut, 1960], no. 48, verse 25 [p. 121]).
According to Abū Bakr al-Hudhali, when ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib marched to meet Mu‘awiyah, one of the men of Iraq wrote these two verses:

Tell the Commander of the Faithful
when you arrive, O brother of Iraq,
"Iraq and its people
eagerly await you, so come."23

According to ‘Awānah (whose account is now resumed)24, ‘Alī sent Ziyād b. al-Nadr al-Hārith25 ahead with 8,000 men as an advance guard and with him Shurayh b. Hāni26 with 4,000. ‘Alī set out from al-Nukhaylah27 with his men, and, after he had entered al-Madā’in28 the fighting men stationed there left with him. He put Sa’d b. Mas‘ūd al-Thaqafi, the paternal uncle of al-Mukhtār b. Abī ‘Ubayd,29 in charge of al-Madā’in and sent Ma‘qil b. Qays30 on from there with 3,000 men, telling him to go by way of al-Mawsil31 and then join him.

23. The verses do not seem to fit in with the events as reported: they make it appear that ‘Alī was somewhere else and that the Iraqis were calling him to come (to lead them against Mu‘awiyah?). It might be possible to read “Commander of the Faithful” in the vocative and understand something like “O Commander of the Faithful, when you arrive tell any Iraqi (on the side of Mu‘awiyah) . . .,” but the second verse would be more suitably addressed to ‘Alī than to any ordinary Iraqi.

24. For ‘Awānah b. al-Hakam al-Kalbi, an important Kūfān collector and transmitter of tradition (d. ca. 153/770), see EI2, s.v.; and GAS, I, 307–8. ‘Awānah’s material here is cited by Tabari from ‘Umar b. Shabbah from al-Madā’in [see n. 401, below]. Tabari’s previous citation of the material from this source broke off at the point where this volume of translation begins. The story had reported how, following his unsuccessful sending of Ja’far b. ‘Abdallāh al-Bajali to demand Mu‘awiyah’s allegiance, ‘Alī had moved out to the army camp at al-Nukhaylah, where he had been joined by Ibn ‘Abbās and the men from al-Basrah.

25. For Ziyād b. al-Nadr (of the Banū Madhhiij), see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v.
26. For Shurayh b. Hāni (also of Madhhiij), see ibid., s.v. Șurayh.
27. The usual place for the gathering of the Kūfān army, apparently northwest of al-Kūfah on the road to Syria.
28. Al-Madā’in was the Arabic name for the former Sasanid capital, Ctesiphon, on the Tigris south of the subsequently built city of Baghdad (see Le Strange, Eastern Caliphate, 33ff.).
29. For al-Mukhtār b. Abī ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafi, a major figure in the subsequent history of al-Kūfah, see EI2, s.v. He had been brought up by his uncle Sa’d, following the death of his father during the conquest of Iraq.
30. Of the Banū Tamīm [see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v.]; for his subsequent role in the suppression of the revolt of al-Khirrit b. Rashid, see pp. 18ff., below.
31. That is, Mosul in Mesopotamia.
The First Civil War

‘Ali Orders the Construction of the Bridge over the Euphrates

According to Hishām b. Muhammad—Abū Mikhnaf—al-Hajjāj b. ‘Ali—‘Abdallah b. ‘Ammār b. ‘Abd Yaghūth al-Bāriqi: When ‘Ali reached al-Raqqah, he ordered the Raqqans, "Build me a bridge so that I can cross from this place to Syria." They, however, refused, having seized control over the boats (which would be used for the bridge). ‘Ali therefore departed from them to cross from Jisr Manbij, leaving al-Ashtar behind over the Raqqans while he himself went to move on with his men to cross with them at Jisr Manbij.

Al-Ashtar summoned the Raqqans and addressed them: "People of this fortress! I swear to you by God that if the Commander of the Believers goes on without your having made a bridge for him by your town so that he can cross, I will bare the sword among you and kill the men, devastate the land, and seize your possessions." The Raqqans met one with another and said, "Does not al-Ashtar fulfill what he swears or perpetrate something even worse?" "Yes." Therefore, they sent to him, saying, "We will make a bridge for you, so approach." ‘Ali came, they made the bridge for him, and he crossed over it with his baggage and footsoldiers. Then he ordered al-Ashtar, and he move up with 3,000 horsemen, until all of the men had crossed. Finally, al-Ashtar, the last of the men, crossed on foot.

According to Abū Mikhnaf—al-Hajjāj b. ‘Ali—‘Abdallah b. ‘Ammār b. ‘Abd Yaghūth: When the cavalry crossed they were all jostling together and the hat (qalansuwa) of ‘Abdallah b. Abi

32. For Hishām b. Muhammad al-Kalbi, important Kufan scholar, d. ca. 206/821, see EI², s.v. Kalbi; and GAS, I, 268–71; for Abū Mikhnaf, Lūṭ b. Yahyā, d. 157/774, see EP, s.v.; GAS, I, 308–9; and U. Sezgin, Abū Mikhnaf.

33. For al-Raqqah, on the east bank of the Euphrates at approximately the same latitude as Mosul on the Tigris, see Le Strange, Eastern Caliphate, 10ff.; and EI², s.v. Rakka.

34. That is, "The Bridge of Manbij," considerably to the north of al-Raqqah; from there the road went to Manbij (ancient Hierapolis), northeast of Aleppo (see Le Strange, Eastern Caliphate, 10ff.).


36. For the qalansuwa, a tall Persian headpiece, see Dozy, Vêtements, s.v.
al-Huṣayn al-Azdi\(^{37}\) fell off. He dismounted, picked it up, and rode on. Then the *qalansuwaḥ* of 'Abdallāh b. al-Hajjāj al-Azdi fell off, and he dismounted, picked it up, and rode on. He said to his companion:

If, as is said, the augur's idea is true,

I shall be killed shortly and so will you.

'Abdallāh b. Abī al-Huṣayn said, "Nothing that could happen would be dearer to me than what you have mentioned." And they were killed together at Siffin.\(^{38}\)

According to Abū Mikhnaf—Khālid b. Qatān al-Ḥarīthi: When 'Ali had crossed the Euphrates, he summoned Ziyād b. al-Nadr and Shurayh b. Hāni' and sent them ahead toward Mu'āwiyah as a vanguard in the same role in which they had left al-Kūfah. Having been sent by 'Ali from al-Kūfah, Ziyād and Shurayh had followed the [west] bank of the Euphrates from the desert adjoining al-Kūfah as far as 'Anāt.\(^{39}\) There they heard that 'Ali had taken the road to al-Jazirah and also that Mu'āwiyah had set out from Damascus with the forces of the Syrians to meet 'Ali. They said, "By God, we do not think it good that we should go on, with this expanse of water between us and the Muslims and the Commander of the Faithful. It would be bad for us if we were to meet the armies of the Syrians with our few men, cut off from reinforcement and support." They went out to cross the river from 'Anāt, but the people of that place prevented them and stopped them getting boats, and they had to go back and cross from Hit.\(^{40}\) Then they joined up with 'Ali at a settlement below Qarqīsiyā'.\(^{41}\) They had intended to attack the

---

37. On 'Abdallāh b. Abī al-Huṣayn al-Azdi and 'Abdallāh b. al-Hajjāj al-Azdi, see further (p. 51, below); and for the latter, see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v.

38. The Arabic *yawm* Siffin, literally "on the day of Siffin," recurs frequently throughout Muslim tradition. *Yawm* ("day") is a common word for "battle," but it is clear from the narrative that the events at Siffin occupied several days. I have generally translated, therefore, by the less specific "at Siffin" or "the Battle of Siffin."

39. 'Anāt on the west bank of the Euphrates (virtually due west of Takrit on the Tigris) was counted by the medieval Muslim geographers as the most southerly major settlement on the Euphrates in al-Jazirah (Mesopotamia) (see Le Strange, Eastern Caliphate, index, s.v. 'Anah).

40. For Hit, also on the west bank and considerably south of 'Anāt, see Le Strange, Eastern Caliphate, map II and 65.

41. Qarqīsiyā' (Circesium), at the junction of the Khābūr and Euphrates Rivers about 200 miles below al-Raqqa, is far to the north of 'Anāt; see Le Strange, Eastern Caliphate, map II and 105.
people of 'Ānāt, but the latter fortified themselves, so they withdrew.

When their advance force joined up with 'Alī, he said, “My vanguard has come to me from the rear!” Ziyād b. al-Naḍr al-Hārithi and Shurayh b. Hāni’ approached him and told him what they had thought when they heard about what was happening, and 'Alī said, “You acted rightly.” Then 'Alī went on, and, having crossed the Euphrates, he sent them ahead toward Mu‘āwiyyah.

Reaching Sūr al-Rūm,42 they met Abū al-A‘war al-Sulami ‘Amr b. Sufyān43 with an army of Syrians. They, therefore, sent a message back to 'Alī: “We have encountered Abū al-A‘war al-Sulami with an army of Syrians. We have appealed to them, but not one of them has responded. Tell us what we should do.” In response 'Alī sent to al-Ashtar, saying:

Oh Malik, Ziyād and Shurayh have sent informing me that they have encountered Abū al-A‘war al-Sulami with a body of the Syrians, and the messenger tells me that he left them confronting one another. Hasten to save your companions.44 When you reach them you are in charge, but do not begin fighting the enemy, unless they attack you first, before meeting with them, appealing to them, and having been heard. “Do not allow their hatred to provoke you”45 into fighting them before you have appealed to them and given them every chance, again and again, to change their views. Place Ziyād over your right wing and Shurayh over your left, and put yourself in the middle of your men. Do not approach close to them as if provoking war but do not keep at a distance as if fearing harm, until I come to you, for, God willing, I shall be hurrying on behind you.

---

42. This is, apparently, Tabari’s only reference to Sūr al-Rūm, which is not mentioned by Yāqūt or Le Strange; the name occurs in the same form in the parallel passage in WS, 133—apparently its only occurrence in that work.
43. For the military activity of this man in the time of the Prophet and during the conquest of Syria, see Lecker, The Banū Sulaym, index, s.v. Abu ’l-A‘war, and Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v. ‘Amr b. Sufyān.
44. See Gloss., s.v. n-j-w.
45. See Qur‘ān, 5:2, 8.
Abū Mikhnaf said that the messenger was al-Hārith b. Jumhān al-Ju`fi.⁴⁶

‘Ali wrote to Ziyād and Shurayh: “I have appointed Mālik (al-Ashtar) over you. Take heed of what he says and obey him. He is someone from whom neither rashness,⁴⁷ nor erroneous conduct is to be feared, and neither slowness regarding what is best done quickly nor rushing into what is best held back from. I have given him orders similar to those I gave you—that he should not begin an attack before meeting them and appealing to them and giving them every chance.”

Al-Ashtar departed and came to the enemy. He followed ‘Ali’s orders and refrained from fighting, and they continued confronting one another. Then, at evening, Abū al-A‘war al-Sulami attacked them, but they stood firm and swapped blows for a while, and the Syrians withdrew.

The next day Hāshim b. ‘Utbah al-Zuhri⁴⁸ went out against the Syrians with a troop of horsemen and footsoldiers, many in number and well-equipped. Abū al-A‘war came out to meet him, and they fought for that day, the horsemen attacking the horsemen and the footsoldiers attacking the footsoldiers. The Syrians held firm, man to man, and then they withdrew. Al-Ashtar attacked them, and ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mundhir al-Tanūkhī⁴⁹ was killed. Zabyān b. ‘Umārah al-Tamīmī⁵⁰ who was only a raw youth, killed him, while al-Tanūkhī was the leading horseman of the Syrians. Al-Ashtar started saying, “Woe to you! Show me Abū al-A‘war!”

Abū al-A‘war called his men, and they went back to him, and he took up position behind the place where he had been at first. Al-Ashtar came and organized his men in lines in the place that Abū al-A‘war had occupied. He told Sinān b. Mālik al-Nakha’ī,⁵¹ “Go to

⁴⁶ See (p. 44, below). Of the Banū Madhājī (see n. 174), he sometimes appears as al-Hārith b. Juhmān (see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v. al-Hārith b. Guhmān).
⁴⁷ Rahaq; see Qur’ān 72:6, 13.
⁴⁸ For Hāshim b. ‘Utbah al-Zuhri, al-A‘war, al-Miqāl, who had lost an eye at Yarmūk and been present at Qadisiyyah, see al-Zubayrī, Nasab Quraysh, 263–64; and Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v. Hāshim; and see further later [p. 70ff.]
⁴⁹ This seems to be Tabari’s only reference to ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mundhir al-Tanūkhī.
⁵⁰ Cairo has Zabyān b. ‘Ammār; see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v. Zabyān b. ‘Ummāra.
⁵¹ The following seems to be Tabari’s only mention of Sinān, who does not appear in Ibn al-Kalbi. Al-Ashtar’s subsequent address of him as “my nephew”, if it is to be taken literally, could indicate that a name had been omitted from his nasab.
Abū al-Aʿwar and challenge him to single combat.” Sinān asked, “With me or with you?” Mālik [al-Ashtar] said, “If I told you to fight him singly, would you do it?” Sinān replied, “Yes. By God, if you asked me to go against their line with my sword, I would not come back until I had struck their line with my sword.” Al-Ashtar said to him, “Oh my nephew, God give you long life! By God, my love for you has increased. I am not ordering you to fight him in single combat, but to challenge him to fight me. He would not come out to fight—if he agrees—unless against someone with the right seniority, equality of status, and nobility. You, may your Lord be praised, are of a family who have equality of status and nobility, but you are a raw youth in years, and he will not undertake single combat against young men. Call on him to fight against me.” Sinān went and called out, “Give me safe conduct, for I am a messenger!” He was given safe conduct and he went on until he reached Abū al-Aʿwar.

According to Abū Mikhna-f—al-Nāḍr b. Ṣāliḥ Abū Zuhayr al-ʿAbsi—Sinān: I drew near him and said, “Al-Ashtar summons you to fight against him in single combat.” He gave me no answer for a long while, but then he said, “It was al-Ashtar's lack of sense and bad judgment that led to his driving out the officials of Ibn 'Affán—may God be pleased with him—from Iraq and his insubordination to him and thus his losing the fruits of his own good deeds. It was a result of al-Ashtar's lack of good sense and his bad judgment that he went to Ibn 'Affán in his house and dwelling place and joined in with those who killed him, and he has become liable for his blood.” Indeed I have no need to fight him in single combat.” I told him, “You have had your say. Now listen while I answer you,” but he replied, “No, there is no need for me to listen to you or for you to answer—get going!” His men shouted at me, and I left him, but, if he had given ear to me, I would have told him of my master's explanations and arguments.

I went back to al-Ashtar and told him that Abū al-Aʿwar had declined the challenge, and he said, “He is concerned to save himself.”

---

52. For details of al-Ashtar's role in the anti-'Uthmān movement, see EI, s.v. al-Ashtar: “Liable for his blood” = muttabaʾan bi-damihī (see Qurʾān 2:178 for ittībāʾ in a similar context).
We stood facing them until night drew its veil between us. We passed the night taking turns at guard duty, but the next day we saw that they had withdrawn under cover of night. 'Ali b. Abi Ṭālib joined us early in the morning. He sent al-Ashtar on ahead with those who were with him in the vanguard, and the latter came to Mu'āwiyyah and took up position facing him. 'Ali came along behind him and quickly joined up with al-Ashtar. He took up position, and the two sides faced one another for a long time.

Then 'Ali sought a camping place for his army. Having found it, he ordered his men to lay down their baggage. When they had done so, the youth and young men went to get water, but the Syrians prevented them, and they fought one another by the water. Previously al-Ashtar had said to 'Ali, "The enemy has beaten us to the drinking place, the most comfortable spot, and the pleasant camping ground. If you think it sound, let us go on. We shall pass beyond them to the settlement from which they came, and they will set out after us. When they catch up with us we shall have camped and we shall be on equal terms with them." But 'Ali disapproved of that, saying, "Not all the men are able to travel on," and he had them make camp.

The Battle "by the Water"

According to Abū Mikhnafta—Tamīm b. al-Hārith al-Azdr—Jundab b. 'Abdallāh: When we came upon Mu'āwiyyah, we found that he had set up camp in a flat and broad space, which he had chosen before we arrived, alongside a watering place in the Euphrates. In that area there was no other place to obtain water, and Mu'āwiyyah had put it under his control and sent Abū al-A'war to deny access to it and to guard it. We went farther up the Euphrates in the hope of finding some other drinking place that would do for us, but we did not and so went back to 'Ali. We told him about the thirst the men were suffering and that we had found no other place in which to get water but that of the enemy, and he said, "Fight them for it."[3265]  

53. 'alā al-mā'ī, i.e., by the Euphrates. It is possible to understand 'alā as indicating the object of or motive for the fighting, rather than where the fighting occurred, but in what follows it seems generally to have the latter sense; compare the phrase jalasa 'alā al-nār, "he sat by the fire."

54. Qāṭilahum 'alayhā: here 'alā must indicate the object of the fighting rather than where it should take place [see preceding note].
Al-Ash‘ath b. Qays al-Kindī⁵⁵ came to him and said, "Shall I go against them?" and 'Ali said, "Do so." He did, and we went with him. When we approached the water, they rose up ahead of us and showered us with arrows while, by God, we loosed arrows at them for a while. Then we thrust at each other with spears for a long time, and finally we and they had recourse to swords and fought with them for a while. Next Yazīd b. Asad al-Bajalī⁵⁶ came to reinforce the enemy with cavalry and footsoldiers, and they advanced toward us. I said to myself, "Will the Commander of the Faithful not send anyone to us to cancel them out?" I went and turned around and saw a number of men similar to that of the enemy, or more, whom 'Ali had sent to us to counteract Yazīd b. Asad and his men. Shabath b. Rib‘ī al-Riyāḥī⁵⁷ led these new troops, and the fighting increased in intensity.


[3266] Give us access to the flowing waters of the Euphrates, or stand fast against a host many in number, Defying death against every warrior and selling themselves dearly, thrusting with their lances and wheeling to the attack, Striking their enemies’ skulls and full of daring.

According to Abū Mikhnaf—a man from the family of Khārijah b. [al-Ṣalt?] al-Tamimi:⁵⁹ Zabyān b. ‘Umārah kept fighting on that day while saying:

⁵⁵. The leader of the Banū Kindah in al-Kūfah [see EI², s.v. al-Ash‘ath b. Kays; Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v. Ma‘dikarib b. Qais; and Crone, Slaves on Horses, 110].
⁵⁶. Leader of the Banū Bajal in Syria and grandfathcr of the future governor Khalīd al-Qasrī [see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v.; Crone, Slaves on Horses, 102].
⁵⁷. A leader of the Banū Tamim in al-Kūfah [see Ibn Kalbi, II, index, s.v. Šabat b. Rib‘ī al-Riyāḥī; Crone, Slaves on Horses, 118].
⁵⁸. A participant in many of the events of the period and often cited as an authority by his fellow Azdī Abū Mikhnaf [see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v.].
⁵⁹. The name of Khārijah’s father, missing in the text, is suggested by the editor, referring to I, 3214, l. 14; WS, 172, has Khārijah b. al-Salt.
Can you, Oh Zabyān, endure life
without water among those who inhabit the earth?
No, by the God of earth and heavens—
so strike the faces of the faithless enemies
With the sword in the ferocious clamor
until they render you equality.

Zabyān said: “By God we smote them until they gave us access to
the water.”

According to Abū Mikhnaf—his father, Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd—his
paternal uncle, Muḥammad b. Mikhnaf: At that time I was with
my father Mikhnaf b. Sulaym. I was seventeen years old and not
yet enrolled for pay (lastu fi ʿatāʾ). When the men were denied
access to the water, my father said to me, “Keep close to the
campment!” But when I saw the Muslims going toward the water
I lost patience, took up my sword, set out with the men, and took
part in the fighting.

Then I saw a slave lad of one of the men of Iraq, and with him
he had a waterskin. When he saw that the Syrians had left open
the way to the watering place, he pushed forward and filled his
waterskin. Then he headed back, but one of the Syrian soldiers
attacked him and threw him to the ground, so that the waterskin
fell from his grasp. I assailed the Syrian, struck him, and laid him
low, but his companions fought hard and rescued him. However,
I overheard them saying to him (as they took him away), “We are
not sure about your chances.” I went back to the slave and carried
him, and he could talk to me, even though he had a gaping wound.
Quickly his master came, and he went off with him, while I took
his waterskin, which was full, and brought it to my father, Mikhnaf.
He asked, “From where did you get this?” and I said, “I bought it,”
for I did not want to tell him the story and make him angry with
me. He said, “Let the men drink!” I did that, and he was the last
to drink.

By God, my soul urged me on to fight, and I hurried forward with
those who were fighting, and we battled with the enemy for a while.
Then I saw that they had left the way to the water open to us, and
by evening we could see our water carriers and theirs crowded

60. On this system of payment in the early Muslim armies, see EI², s.v. ‘atāʾ
together at the watering place without harming one another. I turned back and came upon the master of the lad who had had the waterskin, and I said to him, "We have your waterskin with us—send someone to get it or tell us where you are so that I can send it to you." He replied, "God's mercy on you, we have enough with us." I then turned away, and he went off. Next morning he passed by my father, stopped and greeted him, and saw me by his side. "This young man is not yours?" he said, and my father replied, "It is my son." The man said, "May God show you joy in him. Last evening God through him rescued my lad from death, and the young men of my clan told me that he was the bravest of the men at that time." My father gave me a look, and from his face I could see that he was angry. He kept quiet, and then, when the man had gone on, he said, "Is that what I instructed you?" and he made me swear that I would not go out to fight without his permission. So that was the only engagement I took part in until a later time.

According to Abū Mikhnaf—Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq al-Sabīrī—Mihrān, client (mawla) of Yazīd b. Hāni':

By God, my patron, Yazīd b. Hāni', was fighting "by the water" with the waterskin in his hand. When the Syrians withdrew from the water I turned around to drink, fighting and firing arrows in between.

According to Abū Mikhnaf—Yūsuf b. Yazīd—'Abdallāh b. 'Awf b. al-Ahmar: When we reached Mu'āwiya and the Syrians at Siffin, we found that they had chosen an even, wide, and spacious position. They had seized the watering place, and it was in their possession. Abū al-Awar al-Sulamī had lined up horsemen and footsoldiers by it, and he had placed the archers in front of his men. He had formed a row with spears and shields, and helmets on their heads, and they had resolved not to let us reach the water.

In alarm we went to the Commander of the Faithful and told him about that, and he summoned Sa'āda b. Ṣuhān. He told him, "Go to Mu'āwiya and say this: 'We have come to you like this but are reluctant to fight you before exhorting you by all possible means. But you have advanced your horsemen and footsoldiers against us and have attacked us before we attacked you. You began the fighting against us while we considered that we should hold back from

61. See p. 80, below, for Yazīd b. Hāni'.
62. Of the Banū 'Abd al-Qays/Rabī'ah (Ibn al-Kalbī, II, index, s.v.).
fighting you until we had appealed to you and put before you our arguments. And this is another thing that you have done—you have barred our men from the water, and they will not stop fighting unless they have drunk. So send to your men to allow mine access to the water and to hold off from fighting until we consider our dispute and what we have come for and what you have come for. But, if you prefer that we should give up what we came for and leave the men to fight at the water, so that only the victors drink, we will do so."

[When he heard that] Mu'āwiyyah said to his men, "What do you think?" Al-Walid b. 'Uqbah\textsuperscript{63} answered, "Keep water from them, just as they kept it from 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, may God be pleased with him. They besieged him for forty days, allowing him neither the coolness of water nor the comfort of food. Make them die of thirst. May God make them die of thirst!" But 'Amr b. al-'Ās said, "Let them get to the water, for surely the men will not thirst when you have drunk sufficiently. But, leaving aside the water, consider the dispute between you." Al-Walid b. 'Uqbah repeated what he had said, and 'AbdAllah [b. Sa'd] b. Abī Sarh\textsuperscript{64} said, "Keep them from the water until night, for if they cannot get to it they will go back. If they go back, their return will be a flight. Keep them from the water, and may God keep it from them on the day of resurrection."

Ṣa'sa'ah ['Ali's messenger] retorted, "God will keep it on the day of Resurrection only from the infidels, the wanton ones, and the drinkers of wine—like you and this wanton one (meaning al-Walid b. 'Uqbah)!" They rushed at him, verbally abusing him and threatening him, but Mu'āwiyyah said, "Keep away from the man, for he is simply a messenger."

According to Abū Mikhnaf—Yūsuf b. Yazīd—'AbdAllah b. 'Awp b. al-Aḥmar: Ṣa'sa'ah came back to us and told us what he had said to Mu'āwiyyah, what the answer had been, and how he had replied. We asked him how Mu'āwiyyah had responded to that, and he said, "When I desired to leave his presence, I asked, 'How do you answer me?' and he answered, 'You will learn of my decision.'"

\textsuperscript{63} See n. 16, above.

\textsuperscript{64} The name of 'AbdAllah's father, Sa'd, is missing from the text. It is generally accepted that this former governor of Egypt, who joined Mu'āwiyyah upon the murder of 'Uthmān, died before Ṣiffin and was not present there [see further Elz, s.v.].
By God, the next thing we knew, Mu‘āwiyah was sending troops of horsemen to Abū al-A‘war to stop our men from getting to the water. ‘Ali sent us against them, and we fired arrows and thrust with spears and then gave blows with the swords. We were granted victory over them, and the water came into our hands. We said, “By God we will not allow them to drink from it,” but ‘Ali sent to us, saying, “Take what water you need and return to your camp. Leave them alone, for God has given you victory over them because of their evil and oppression.”

‘Ali Calls Mu‘āwiyah to Obedience and Unity

According to Abū Mirkhaf—'Abd al-Malik b. Abī Hurrah al-Ḥanafi: ‘Ali said, “On this day you have been given victory through zeal.” The men went back to their camp, and ‘Ali remained two days, during which he and Mu‘āwiyah did not exchange messengers. Then ‘Ali summoned Bashīr b. ‘Amr b. Mihšan al-Anṣari, Sa‘īd b. Qays al-Hamdānī, and Shabath b. Rib‘ī al-Tamīmī and said, “Go to this man and summon him to God, to obedience, and to unity.” Shabath b. Rib‘ī asked, “Oh Commander of the Faithful, will you not tempt him with an offer of an office of authority and a position in which he will have influence with you if he gives you the oath of allegiance?” ‘Ali replied, “Go to him and argue with him and find out his opinion.” This was at the beginning of Dhū al-Ḥijjah [May–June 657].

They came and entered in upon Mu‘āwiyah, and Abū ‘Amrah Bashīr b. ‘Amr praised God and extolled him. Then he said, “Oh Mu‘āwiyah, this world is transitory, but to the next you are returning. God will assess you according to your deeds and recom-

66. Leader of the Banū Himyar in al-Kūfah, said to be descended from the ancient south Arabian kings (Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v.; Crane, Slaves on Horses, 119).
67. Al-jamā‘ah. Literally, the word indicates “community” and has a positive value in contradistinction to the implications of fitnah. “Splitting the staff of the community” or “of the Muslims” (shaqq ‘aṣār al-jamā‘ah/al-muslimin) is a charge frequently brought against rebels, and the year in which Mu‘āwiyah ended the Fitnah and established his rule over all the lands of the Arabs is known in tradition as the “year of unity” (‘ām al-jamā‘ah).
68. Ḥammāma ‘Ilāh wa-athnā ‘alayhi, a stereotyped formula used to open a religious exhortation.
pense you 'for what your hands have offered.' I implore you by God not to split the unity of this community and not to shed its blood in internal conflict." But Mu‘awiyyah cut him off, saying, "Have you not commended that to your master?" Abū ‘Amrah replied, "My master is not like you. Of all of creation, he has the most right to this position of authority by virtue of his merit, his religion [din], his precedence in Islam, and his relationship with the Messenger of God." Mu‘awiyyah asked, "What does he say?" and Abū ‘Amrah replied, "He asks you to fear God and to respond to your cousin in acknowledging the truth to which he calls you. It is safer for you regarding your life in this world and better for you regarding your final end." Mu‘awiyyah said, "And are we to make the blood of ‘Uthmān count for naught? No, by God, never!"

Sa‘īd b. Qays went to speak, but Shabath b. Rib‘i plunged in first, saying, after praising God and extolling him:

Mu‘awiyyah, I understood your reply to Ibn Mihšan, and, by God, we are not unaware of what you intend and seek. The only way you could find to misguide the people, pervert their desires, and get from them their obedience was by saying "Your Imam was killed unjustly, and we seek revenge for his blood!" Some stupid riffraff responded to it, but we know that you delayed in giving ‘Uthmān help and that you desired his killing so that you might obtain this position that you now seek. There is many a one who desires something and seeks it, but God prevents it by His power, and sometimes he who desires a thing is granted his wish or even more than it. But, by God, there would be no good for you in either of the cases. If you fail to attain what you hope for, then you will be the most wretched of the Arabs as a result, while, if you achieve what you desire, you will have achieved it only by deserving the flames of hell from

70. It was commonly held, by the opponents of the Umayyads, that the murder of ‘Uthmān was the result of plotting by members of his [Umayyad] family who feared that the caliphate would pass into the hands of ‘Ali if ‘Uthmān were to die a natural death. The accusation that Mu‘awiyyah deliberately delayed in responding to the appeals for help that were made to him by ‘Uthmān is part of the argument in support of this theory [see further, N. A. Faris, "Development in Arab Historiography," 435-41].
your Lord. Fear God, oh Mu‘awiyyah. Leave off what you are about, and do not contest authority with its rightful possessor.

Mu‘awiyyah praised God and extolled him, and then he said, “The first thing in which I recognized your stupidity and low level of maturity was your interrupting the speech of this respected and high-born man, who is the leader of his people [i.e., Sa‘id b. Qays]. Then afterward you meddled with something about which you know nothing. You have lied and been base, you rude and uncouth bedouin, in everything you have referred to and described. Get out of my presence, all of you! Between you and me there is nothing but the sword.” He was furious.

The deputation departed with Shabath saying, “Do you threaten us with the sword? I swear by God that it will soon be raised against you.” They came to ‘Ali and told him what Mu‘awiyyah had said. That was in Dhū al-Hijjah (36, i.e., May-June 657).

Following this, ‘Ali would give orders to certain individual leaders of high status, and a band of men would go out to fight in support while another man of rank, a follower of Mu‘awiyyah, would come out against him with a group of his followers. The two of them would fight with horse- and footmen and then retire. They were reluctant to confront the Syrians with the whole body of the Iraqis because of the fear that it would entail mass slaughter and destruction.

At different times ‘Ali sent out al-Ashtar, Ḥujr b. ‘Adī al-Kindi,71 Shabath b. Rib‘i, Khālid b. al-Mu‘ammār,72 Ziyād b. al-Nadr al-Hārithi, Ziyād b. Khāṣafah al-Taymi,73 Sa‘īd b. Qays, Ma‘qil b. Qays al-Riyāḥi,74 and Qays b. Sa‘d.75 The one who was sent out most often was al-Ashtar. Mu‘awiyyah sent out against the men of Iraq, at

---

71. The leader in al-Kūfah, in 51/670, of what is often seen as the first pro-‘Ali anti-Umayyad movement after the death of ‘Ali, and a rival of al-Ash‘ath for the leadership of the Banū Kindah in al-Kūfah [see further EI2, s.v. Hudjr b. ‘Adī al-Kindi].
72. Of the Banū Shaybān/Bakr b. Wa‘il [see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v. Ḥālid b. al-Mu‘ammār].
73. Of the Banū Taym Allāh/Bakr b. Wa‘il [see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v. Ziyādā b. Ḥasafah].
74. See n.30.
75. Son of Sa‘d b. ‘Ubādah of the Banū Khazraj/Anṣār, he had been governor of Egypt for ‘Ali, for an account of his removal from there and his joining ‘Ali, see pp. 142–44, below [see Ibn al-Kalbi, II, index, s.v. Qays b. Sa‘d].
various times, 'Abd al-Rahman b. Khalid al-Makhzumí; Abū al-
Awar al-Sulami, Hābib b. Maslamah al-Fihri; Dhū al-Kala' al-
Himyar; Ubaydallāh b. Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb; Shurahbil b. al-Simt
al-Kindi; and Ḥamzah b. Mālik al-Hamdānī. They fought for the
whole of Dhū al-Hijjah, sometimes twice in one day, at its beginning
and at its end.

According to Abū Mikhnaf—Abdallāh b. Āsim al-Fā'ishī: One
of my fellow tribesmen told me that one day al-Ashtar went out
to fight at Siffin among some men of the qurra' and some of the
bedouin horsemen. The battle became fierce, and there came out
against us a man taller and mightier than whom I have rarely seen.
He put out a challenge to single combat, and no one responded to
him except al-Ashtar. They exchanged blows and al-Ashtar struck
him and killed him. I swear by God that we had been fearful for
al-Ashtar and asked him not to answer the challenge. When al-
Ashtar killed him, one of the dead man's heralds proclaimed:

Oh Sahm, Sahm Ibn Abi al-'Ayzār,
the best whom we know of Zār.

[Ẓarah is a clan of Azd.] And he said, "I swear by God that either
I will kill your killer, or he will kill me." He came out and attacked
al-Ashtar, who turned toward him and struck him, and suddenly

---

76. Son of the famous Khalid b. al-Walid, settled in Ḥimṣ (see Ibn al-Kalbī, II, index, s.v. 'Abdarrahmān b. Ḥālid).
77. Of Qunysh, he had been put in charge by Mu'āwiyah of the force that he sent, too late, to help 'Uthmān (see n.70, and see Ibn al-Kalbī, II, index, s.v.).
78. Leader of an important family of the Banū Himyar settled in Ḥimṣ (see Ibn al-Kalbī, II, index, s.v. 'Amāya' b. Nākūr; Crone, Slaves on Horses, 95). Delete text's "Ibn"?
79. A son of the second caliph (see Ibn al-Kalbī, II, index, s.v.).
80. A rival of al-Ash'ath for the leadership of the Banū Kindah in al-Kūfah, he had subsequently settled in Ḥimṣ and supported Mu'āwiyah (see Ibn al-Kalbī, II, index, s.v. Shurahbil b. al-Simt; Crone, Slaves on Horses, 101).
81. WS, 44, refers to him among a group of the leaders of Qaṭān and Yaman who were trusted by Mu'āwiyah. For his role in witnessing on behalf of Mu'āwiyah the "arbitration document" signed at Siffin, see p. 87, below.
82. There are two groups called Fā'ish among the Banū Hamdān.
83. The qurra' are frequently referred to throughout this volume and in connection with certain other events of early Islamic history. Traditionally they have been associated with the Qur'ān and are often described as 'Qur'ān reciters/readers." A number of scholars have recently been dissatisfied with that interpretation and have suggested others. For the literature, see Et2, s.v. kūrā'; and Calder, "The Qurra' and the Arabic Lexicographical Tradition," 297–307.
84. This seems to be Tabari's only reference to Sahm b. Abi al-'Ayzār.
the man was down on the ground in front of al-Ashtar's horse, but
his companions bore down on him and carried him off wounded.
Abū Rufayqah al-Fahmī said, "This was a fire, but he came upon
a whirlwind."\textsuperscript{85}

The men fought for the whole of Dhū al-Hijjah, but when it was
the end of the month they called on one another to refrain from
fighting for the month of Muharram\textsuperscript{86} and perhaps God would bring
about peace or an agreement. So they refrained from fighting one
another.

In this year 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib led the
pilgrimage [hajj]\textsuperscript{87} in accordance with 'Alī's appointment of him.
That is what I was told by Aḥmad b. Thābit from someone who
told him on the authority of Išāq b. ʿĪsā, who had it from Abū
Maʿshar.\textsuperscript{88}

In this year, too, Qudāmah b. Maẓʿūn\textsuperscript{89} died, according to the
claim of al-Wāqīḍī.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{85} This seems to be Tabari's only reference to Abū Rufayqah. WŚ, 196, has al-
Sahmī instead of al-Fahmī.

\textsuperscript{86} Although our information is rather confused, the month of Muharram is said
to have been one of the sacred months in pre-Islamic Arabia, during which fighting
was prohibited. The Qurʾān thrice refers to the sacred month [in the singular] and
once to there being four sacred months [see further \textit{EI}², s.v. al-Muharram].

\textsuperscript{87} The annual complex of rituals performed at various places in and around Mecca
during the month of Dhū al-Hijjah [see \textit{EI}², s.v. Hadīḍ].

\textsuperscript{88} Abu Maʿshar is a well-known collector of tradition who died in 171/787 [see
\textit{EI}², s.v.; \textit{GAS}, I, 291–92]. He is said to have composed a \textit{Taʾrīkh al-khuṣaʿā} and it
is apparently this work that Tabari frequently cites with the \textit{ismāʾīl} used here. Tabari's
immediate authority, al-Rāzī, is categorized as a liar (\textit{kadh Highlands}) in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's
\textit{Kitāb al-fath waʾl-taʾdīl}, 1/7, 44.

\textsuperscript{89} An early follower of the Prophet Muhammad, from Banū Jumah/Quraysh, who
had refused to give allegiance to 'Ali [see Ibn al-Kalbī, index, s.v.].

\textsuperscript{90} On this scholar, d. 207/822–823, important especially in the field of the biography
of the Prophet, see \textit{EI}², s.v. al-Wāqīḍī, \textit{GAS}, I, 294–97.