

MASLAMA B. MUḤĀRIB: UMAYYAD HISTORIAN

Wilferd Madelung

The Oriental Institute, Oxford

When the town of Baṣra was captured by the ʿAbbāsīd revolutionary army, the local nobility included a sizable number of descendants of Ziyād, the bastard brother of the caliph Muʿāwīya and early Umayyad governor. Counted as members of the Umayyad house, the Banū Ziyād were potentially subject to persecution by the new regime. During the later Marwānīd caliphate, however, the family had no longer been involved in government and evidently took no active part in the resistance to the ʿAbbāsīd movement. The ʿAbbāsīd governor Sulaymān b. ʿAlī thus treated them with benevolence. When the caliph as-Saffāḥ instructed him to confiscate the property of the Banū Ziyād, the governor sent for Maslama b. Muḥārib b. Salm b. Ziyād and proposed to him that the family voluntarily surrender a substantial part of their land with which he could satisfy the caliph and avert more serious harm to them. They acknowledged property of eight hundred *ḡarībs* of land, which were then seized by the governor¹.

It may have been to the advantage of the Banū Ziyād at the time that under Islamic law they could not be recognized as members of the Umayyad family. The acknowledgement of Abū Sufyān's fatherhood of Ziyād by Muʿāwīya had been in breach of the religious law and was, as is known, commonly considered as one of the scandals of Muʿāwīya's caliphate. The Banū Ziyād now abandoned, voluntarily or under duress, their claim to Umayyad descent. Ziyād is thus named in the pedigree of Maslama b. Muḥārib twice the son of one ʿUbayda, or ʿUyayna, b. ʿAbdarrahmān b. Ġawṣan, or al-Ġawṣanī (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* VII/1, 50, 110). Nothing is known about a man of this name, and it is uncertain whether he is entirely fictitious or was in fact legally the father of Ziyād.

Maslama b. Muḥārib, great-grandson of Ziyād, must have been a leading member of the family at the time of the ʿAbbāsīd conquest. His grandfather Salm b. Ziyād had been a distinguished governor of Ḥurāsān under Yazīd I and had died in 72/692.

¹ al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* III, 91. The report continues thus: When Sulaymān's brother ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī came to Baṣra as a refugee and noticed a man riding on a sprightly mule or horse with an ornate bridle, he asked the governor who he was. On being told that it was Salm b. Ḥarb b. Ziyād, he expressed amazement that somebody of the family of Ziyād like this one should survive. Sulaymān told him that he had not found anything to hold against them, but ʿAbdallāh swore that if he had the power he would certainly exterminate them. When Salm learned of this he fled from Baṣra and returned only after ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī had been surrendered by Sulaymān to the caliph al-Manṣūr in 139/956. The name of Salm's father should perhaps be read [Abī] Ḥarb. Abū Ḥarb was the *kunya* of ʿAbbād b. Ziyād (see the editor's note n. 10 in al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 189).

Nothing is known about his father Muḥārib, though he evidently lived long enough for his son Maslama to transmit from him. Maslama became a collector of historical reports and a major informant of the Baṣran historians ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Madāʿinī and Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muṭannā. Mainly interested in the history of his own family and of the Sufyānid branch of the Umayyad dynasty, he confined himself to *abbār* and did not collect or transmit *ḥadīth*, although he transmitted from some well-known Baṣran *ḥadīth* experts. The biographical dictionaries about the *ahl al-ḥadīth* thus ignored him, and no data about his life are available. The date of his death is unknown. However, since al-Madāʿinī was born only in 135/752, Maslama must have been alive at least during most of the caliphate of al-Manṣūr.

al-Madāʿinī, himself descended from a client of ʿAbdarraḥmān b. Samura b. Ḥabīb of the Banū ʿAbd Šams, evidently considered Maslama b. Muḥārib a reliable informant and quoted him extensively in his books. Maslama's reports are generally compatible with al-Madāʿinī's reporting from other sources. Thus they have attracted little attention by modern historians. E. L. Petersen (1964:112, 128) noted the distinctly pro-Umayyad tenor of his reports and suggested that he was perhaps an Umayyad, most likely of the Sufyānid branch. Maslama's lineage back to Ziyād had in fact already been given in the indices to the annals of aṭ-Ṭabarī. Correctly identifying him, G. Rotter (1974:117) described him briefly as a major informant of al-Madāʿinī. The body of his reports as a whole deserves a closer examination, especially in view of the common conviction of modern historians that early ʿAbbāsīd historiography was overwhelmingly biased against the overthrown Umayyad dynasty and therefore largely unreliable.

Maslama b. Muḥārib was naturally interested in his own ancestors and their part in Umayyad history. His reports about his great-grandfather Ziyād are consistently favourable. He depicts him as a stern and strict governor, shrewd in keeping the unruly Arab tribesmen under control, yet also concerned about their material well-being, and as incorruptibly loyal and subservient to the caliph Muʿāwiya to whom he owed his good fortune. He quotes Ziyād's famous inaugural speech to the Baṣrans in which he warned them not to be among the many who would certainly be put to death by him (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīḥ* II, 73-75) and describes him as ordering his police chief to kill anyone found outside his house after the final evening prayer (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 210; aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīḥ* II, 76-77). Yet he also reports that Ziyād distributed more than 5/6th of the tax revenue from the provinces of Baṣra among the local warriors and their families (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 218-219) and was personally concerned that every one received his full share (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 208-209, 214). He transmits numerous statements attributed to Ziyād illustrating his political wisdom and keen insights.

While he describes Ziyād's close relationship with Muʿāwiya and his visits to him, Maslama is virtually silent about Ziyād's earlier service and support for ʿAlī. Fully integrated into the Sufyānid family by Muʿāwiya's adoption, Ziyād's descendants

evidently viewed the earlier career of their ancestor rather as a demerit and preferred to ignore it. Maslama's only reference to it is in an anecdote about Ziyād's being put in his place by Mu'āwiya. When Ziyād once traveled to visit the caliph, the camel driver (*ḥādī*) sang to his camels that Ziyād would become the Commander of the Faithful. Mu'āwiya learned of this and was angered, but did not mention it to Ziyād directly. One day, in the presence of Ziyād, he addressed the question to al-Ḥudayn b. al-Mundir ar-Raqāṣī, a prominent former supporter of 'Alī in the battle of Šiffīn, as to what had brought about the schism and bloodshed in the Muslim community. al-Ḥudayn answered that it was the murder of the Commander of the Faithful 'Utmān. Mu'āwiya commented: "You have spoken the truth, and the caliphate is not suitable for any hypocrite (*munāfiq*) and facetious simpleton (*dū du'āba*)". He was, Maslama explains, alluding to 'Alī and the fact that Ziyād had been one of his supporters. Ziyād understood the hint and apologized: "It was merely someone making up a *rağaz* about something. It was not on my order. I rather restrained and rebuked him." Mu'āwiya accepted his apology (al-Balādurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 27-28).

Maslama b. Muḥārib is aṭ-Ṭabarī's main source for the governorship of Salm b. Ziyād in Ḥurāsān during the caliphate of Yazīd I. His account is full of praise for his grandfather, describing his successful raids across the Oxus to Samarqand and Ḥuwārizm and stressing his popularity among the Muslim warriors and their leaders. Ḥanzala b. 'Arāda as-Sa'dī chooses to serve him in preference to 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād, governor of Baṣra and Salm's superior (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* II, 392-394). After the death of the caliph Yazīd, Salm receives the provisional oath of allegiance in Ḥurāsān until a new caliph would be chosen. Two months later, however, the people break their agreement with him (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* II, 488-489).

Maslama's reports about his great-uncle, 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād, are limited and appear rather reserved. The family of Ziyād presumably did not much cherish the memory of this governor of Baṣra who was ignominiously forced out of office and expelled by the Baṣrans after the death of Yazīd I and then played a major part in the transfer of the reign from the Sufyānids to Marwān b. al-Ḥakam. Maslama offers an account of 'Ubaydallāh's appointment as governor of Ḥurāsān after the death of Ziyād (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* II, 166-170). His reports about the events and circumstances surrounding 'Ubaydallāh's fall from power and expulsion from Baṣra, recorded by Abū 'Ubayda, are more reliable than parallel accounts². He narrates only one anecdote about 'Ubaydallāh, in which the latter is described as cleverly extracting embezzled tax money from a governor without openly chastizing him. Maslama, or al-Madā'inī, adds that this story was reported by some about Ziyād (al-Balādurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 379).

² aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* II, 445-56. See Madelung 1981:301.

Aside from his own family, Maslama's interest in the history of Baṣra extended especially to the family of Abū Bakra, Ziyād's maternal brother, and to al-Aḥnaf b. Qays, the widely popular and admired chief of the Banū Tamīm. Abū Bakra had been granted extensive estates in the region of Baṣra, and there were close, mutually beneficial ties between the families of the two brothers. Maslama in particular related stories about the munificence of ʿUbaydallāh b. Abī Bakra who, among other deeds of exceeding generosity, provided Saʿīd, the son of the caliph ʿUtmān, with money, mules, horses, camels, clothing and equipment for a whole army when Saʿīd was appointed governor of Ḥurāsān by Muʿāwiya (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* I, 497-498). ʿUbaydallāh b. Abī Bakra's son Bašīr (or Bušayr?) was an informant of Maslama b. Muḥārib³.

In agreement with the general historical tradition, Maslama presents al-Aḥnaf b. Qays as endowed with the ideal qualities of the tribal leader, *ḥilm*, prudence, forbearance, and with political sagacity, in spite of his lowly origins. Like Ziyād, al-Aḥnaf had been an active and loyal supporter of ʿAlī during his caliphate. While Ziyād evidently held him in high regard and relied on his prudent advice in dealing with the Arab tribes in Baṣra, Muʿāwiya held his past against him. When Ziyād proposed him for the governorship of the border region in India, Muʿāwiya, according to Maslama, rejected the proposal, questioning why he should reward him for his failure to back the Mother of the Faithful ʿĀʾiṣā in the battle of the Camel and for his efforts to thwart Muʿāwiya at Ṣiffīn⁴. Maslama further reports that Muʿāwiya told al-Aḥnaf b. Qays personally that he could not forget his withdrawal from Baṣra when the men of Qurayš were being slaughtered like camel foals and his call for cavalry troops to annul God's gift to Muʿāwiya on the day of the arbitration. al-Aḥnaf commented that Muʿāwiya had made clear to him what was on his mind and that he, al-Aḥnaf, would never come to him for any need⁵.

al-Aḥnaf remained, however, a major figure on the local political stage in Baṣra and as such was later consulted also by Muʿāwiya. After Muʿāwiya's death, he loyally backed Yazīd and refused to become involved in the movement in support of al-Ḥuṣayn. Only after Yazīd's death did he join his tribesmen backing ʿAbdallāh b. az-Zubayr and his viceroy in ʿIraq, Muṣʿab b. az-Zubayr, against the Umayyads. When Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya was imprisoned in Mekka by Ibn az-Zubayr, al-Aḥnaf was urged by some of his tribesmen to aid him. Maslama reports that he declined to do

³ al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, V, 394; I, 499, where Bišr b. ʿAbdallāh should be read Bašīr b. ʿUbaydallāh.

⁴ al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* VII/1, 124, where *amīr al-muʾminīn* must be read *umm al-muʾminīn*.

⁵ al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* VII/1, 110. There are no other reports about al-Aḥnaf's reaction to the outcome of the arbitration in favour of Muʿāwiya. From Maslama's report it appears that he urged resumption of the war against the Syrians.

so, pointing out that they had experienced the incompetence of the descendants of Abū Ṭālib to rule, their lack of ability to deal soundly with the finances and to employ proper war guile. The sound reign was to be found in Syria with the Umayyads. When asked what prevented him from backing them, he explained that his people had come to him and pressed him to swear allegiance to Ibn az-Zubayr. When he did so, they asked him to break his oath, but he would not break his oath⁶. Maslama probably appreciated both al-Aḥnaf's faithful keeping of his pledge of allegiance and his recognition of the Umayyads' superior qualification to rule.

The caliphate and the natural title to it of the Umayyads, in particular the Sufyānids, because of their pre-Islamic nobility, their kinship with the Prophet, and their special talent to rule clearly concerned Maslama. He reported that Abū Sufyān, the noble lord of Quraysh before Islam and erstwhile leader of the opposition to Muḥammad, openly complained to the Prophet when the latter made him wait while receiving others. Muḥammad reassures him as to his superior status in his eyes⁷. At the time of the Prophet's death Abū Sufyān, in charge of the alms tax in Naḡrān, was absent from Medina. When informed about the succession of Abū Bakr, he protests: "Abū l-Faṣīl? Surely, I see a matter that will be settled only by blood." (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 12) Maslama here confirms other reports about Abū Sufyān's opposition to Abū Bakr's succession which western historians have commonly sought to discredit as anti-Umayyad fiction. He does not mention that Abū Sufyān offered 'Alī military support if he would claim the succession, an offer rejected by the latter. Abū Sufyān's protest against Abū Bakr's succession, however, suited Umayyad claims to be entitled to the succession to Muḥammad on account of their descent from 'Abd Manāf, the father of both Hāšim and 'Abd Šams. Maslama thus saw no reason to conceal Abū Sufyān's initial attempt to prevent the succession of Abū Bakr.

While Maslama virtually ignores the caliphate of Abū Bakr, he distinctly admires 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb as the righteous and incorruptible champion of the cause of Islam. He quotes the judgment of Qabīṣa b. Ḡābir al-Asadī, a staunchly 'Uṭmānid Kūfan and later confidant of Mu'āwiya, that he had never seen a man more conversant with the Book of God and stronger in championing his faith than 'Umar (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 119). According to a report of Ibn 'Awn transmitted by Maslama, Abū Bakr sent for 'Alī to pledge allegiance to him, but the latter failed to respond. 'Umar goes with a torch to the house of Fāṭima, who receives him at the door and asks if he is about to set it on fire. 'Umar tells the daughter of the Prophet sternly: "Yes, that is the strongest possible support for the message your father brought."

⁶ al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* VII/1, 115, where Maslama b. 'Alqama al-Māzinī must be read Maslama 'an 'Alqama al-Māzinī.

⁷ al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 10. For the saying *kullu ṣ-ṣaydi fī ḡanbi (ḡawfi) l-farā'* see Lane 1863-93, s.v. *farā'*.

‘Alī comes and pledges allegiance, apologizing: “I had resolved not to leave my home before gathering the Qur’ān.” (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* I, 586) In Maslama’s view, this was probably nothing but a foul excuse.

Mu‘āwiya evidently was also an admirer of ‘Umar. According to Maslama, he told the people: “Accept from the *ḥadīṭ* whatever was present in the age of ‘Umar; for he kept perfect control of that (*atqana dālika*) in his lifetime and frightened the people of relating a multitude of *ḥadīṭ* of the Messenger of God by ordering, Do not spread lies about him.” (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* V, 391) Various anecdotes narrated by Maslama depict ‘Umar as the strict and austere ruler who inspires awe and respect among all. Even al-Aḥnaf b. Qays admits having lied once to ‘Umar, claiming that he had bought an overcoat for a third of what he actually paid for it. ‘Umar observed that the coat would be nice if only it had not been so expensive (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* V, 374).

Maslama was not much interested in the caliphate of ‘Uṭmān and reports nothing about it except for a few notes relevant to the rebellion against him. For the Sufyānids ‘Uṭmān was “the wronged caliph” whose murder was avenged by Mu‘āwiya. In contrast to the Marwānids, they liked to view Mu‘āwiya, not ‘Uṭmān, as the true founder of the Umayyad caliphate. Mu‘āwiya was proud to have been appointed governor of Syria by ‘Umar. He did not feel obliged to ‘Uṭmān and considered him a weak caliph. Maslama b. Muḥārīb most likely shared these views. He reports that Usāma b. Zayd offered ‘Uṭmān to take him safely to Syria where the caliph’s supporters would protect him, but he refused to leave Medina (Ibn Šabba, *Ta’rīḥ* 1211-1212). According to a report of Mu‘āwiya’s great-grandson Ḥarb b. Ḥālīd b. Yazīd⁸ transmitted by Maslama, Mu‘āwiya sent an army of 4,000 men under Ḥabīb b. Maslama al-Fihri to rescue ‘Uṭmān as he was besieged in Medina. When the vanguard of this army reached Wādī l-Qurā or Dū Ḥuṣub, news of the caliph’s murder arrived, and they turned back (Ibn Šabba, *Ta’rīḥ* 1289). The report reflects the Sufyānid claim that Mu‘āwiya did all he could to save ‘Uṭmān.

Maslama also shared the Sufyānids’ negative view of ‘Alī and did not seek to conceal it. He quotes the text of a letter in which ‘Uṭmān’s wife Nā’ila informed Mu‘āwiya that the Egyptian rebels against the caliph had entrusted their command to ‘Alī, Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr and ‘Ammār b. Yāsir, who had ordered them to murder ‘Uṭmān. Among those who besieged the caliph’s residence were the tribes of Ḥuzā’a, Sa’d b. Bakr, Ḥudayl and groups of Ġuhayna, Muzayna and the Nabataeans of Medina. Nā’ila sent the caliph’s bloody shirt to Mu‘āwiya, and some of the

⁸ Ḥarb b. Ḥālīd b. Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya is named as Maslama’s informant in several of his reports and may have been his source in many others. He lived during the later Umayyad caliphate in Syria and left some off-spring. See al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 366-367.

Syrians vowed: "We shall kill 'Alī"⁹. Maslama's source of the report was Ḥarb b. Ḥalīd b. Yazīd, and the letter, certainly inauthentic, reflects Sufyānid bias in suppressing mention of the leading part of Ṭalḥa among the rebels¹⁰.

Usāma b. Zayd vainly advised 'Alī to leave Medina in order to avoid being accused if 'Uṭmān were killed (Ibn Šabba, *Ta'riḥ* 1211). Concerning 'Alī's succession to the caliphate, Maslama transmits a report of the Kūfan 'Uṭmānid aš-Ša'bī. After the murder of 'Uṭmān, the people in Medina offer 'Alī the pledge of allegiance. He declines initially, recalling that 'Umar, who was a blessed man, had recommended a *šūrā* consultation for the election of a caliph. The people turn away from him, but then some become worried that if the rebel groups would disperse and return to their towns, disagreement might prevail. They return to 'Alī, and al-Aštar takes his hand. When 'Alī withdraws it, al-Aštar warns him that if he were to refuse the reign now after three others had accepted it before him, he might have to wait a long time for another chance. 'Alī relents, and al-Aštar pledges allegiance, followed by the common people (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* I, 3074-3075). Implied was that 'Alī merely pretended not to be eager for the caliphate and that he accepted the pledge from al-Aštar, thus allowing himself to become dependent on the rebels against 'Uṭmān.

Maslama's favourite among the caliphs was obviously Mu'āwiya, about whom he reports more than about anyone else. He quotes Qabīša b. Ḡābir as stating that he had never seen anybody more lordly (*aswad*) than Mu'āwiya (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 119). Even 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās, the ancestor of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs, must admit the excellent conduct of the Sufyānids. Maslama reports that Mu'āwiya presented his condolences on the death of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī to Ibn 'Abbās with the words: "May God cause you no grief." Ibn 'Abbās replies, "God will cause me no grief as long as He leaves you alive, Commander of the Faithful." Mu'āwiya's son Yazīd rides out and joins the session of the mourners. When he leaves, Ibn 'Abbās acknowledges: "You will hardly ever meet an Umayyad lacking a sound mind and nobility." (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* III, 45) Such praise by the forefather of the new dynasty

⁹ al-Iṣfahānī, *Aḡānī* XV, 71-72; al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 592-593; Ibn 'Abdrabbih, *Iqd* V, 50-51.

¹⁰ In al-Madā'inī's *isnād* as quoted in al-Iṣfahānī, *Aḡānī* XV, 71, Ḥarb b. Ḥalīd is named as Maslama's source. al-Madā'inī there gives a second *isnād* Abū Miḥnaf 'an Numayr b. Wa'la 'an aš-Ša'bī. The Kūfan aš-Ša'bī was at least two decades older than Ḥarb b. Ḥalīd and can hardly have received the report and text of the letter from him. More likely they both relied on a Syrian Umayyad source. The omission of any mention of Ṭalḥa is significant since Marwān b. al-Ḥakam claimed priority in avenging the murder of 'Uṭmān by having killed Ṭalḥa in the battle of the Camel (see Madelung 1997:171-172, 348, 379). The mention of Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr and 'Ammār b. Yāsir, both of whom were killed by Mu'āwiya's armies, reflects the latter's claim of being the true avenger. In the version of the letter quoted by Ibn 'Abdrabbih, the names of Ṭalḥa and az-Zubayr are added secondarily to those of the leaders of the rebels. The mention of az-Zubayr is entirely out of place, since he, in contrast to Ṭalḥa, was in fact an active defender of 'Uṭmān (see Madelung 1997:103-105).

must have sounded incredible just after the revolution. In other versions of the report it is missing.

The secret of Mu^cāwiya's successful rule was his *hilm*, tolerant forbearance towards his loyal subjects, combined with ruthless elimination of his enemies who endangered his reign. According to one of Maslama's reports, a man vituperated Mu^cāwiya, exceeding all bounds, yet the caliph tolerated it. When asked about his tolerance of such a man, he explained: "I don't interfere with people and their tongues as long as they don't interfere with us and our kingdom (*mulkinā*)." (al-Balādurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 20) Ziyād related that Mu^cāwiya overruled him only once in a political matter. That happened when a man of the Banū Tamīm employed by Ziyād embezzled the land tax and fled to Mu^cāwiya, who pardoned him. Ziyād warned him that this would set a bad example for the tax collectors and might corrupt them. He requested that Mu^cāwiya send the culprit to him. The caliph now wrote him that it would not be suitable for both of them to follow a single political line. If they both were strict, they would ruin the people and harass them, but if both were lenient, they would encourage them to recklessness (al-Balādurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 84). The lesson was evidently that the ruler should be lenient where his governors must be strict.

It is evidently in this context that a report of Maslama is to be seen according to which Mu^cāwiya before his death regretted his having ordered the execution of the Kūfan Šī'ite leader Ḥuḡr b. 'Adī. Maslama describes Mu^cāwiya as uttering, while his dying body was being turned around: "What a body are they turning if he escapes from Ibn 'Adī" (al-Balādurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 266). Ḥuḡr b. 'Adī and a group of his associates were, as is known, charged by Ziyād with sedition. Mu^cāwiya condemned several of them to death, provoking wide-spread dismay and resentment throughout the empire. The transmission of this report about Mu^cāwiya's remorse before his death by Maslama seems to indicate that the latter felt that Mu^cāwiya as the caliph should have pardoned Ḥuḡr when Ziyād was obliged by his position to accuse him.

During an illness of the caliph, Maṣqala b. Hubayra aš-Šaybānī, who had earlier deserted 'Alī to join Mu^cāwiya, spread rumours in 'Iraq about the caliph's condition. When the latter recovered, Ziyād expedited Maṣqala to him and informed him that Maṣqala had gathered a group of 'Irāqī rebels around himself who spread rumours about the Commander of the Faithful. Ziyād, he wrote, was sending him so that the caliph would decide how to treat him and that Maṣqala should witness his good health. Mu^cāwiya received him in a public audience and, asking him to approach, pulled his hand so forcefully that Maṣqala fell. Maṣqala readily apologized and prayed that God preserve the Commander of the Faithful for the *hilm* that adorned him, as a pasture for his friends and as a deadly poison for his enemies. Who, he exclaimed, could attempt to reach Mu^cāwiya when his father had been the *sayyid* of the people of the Ġāhiliyya and he was the Commander of the Faithful in Islam? Mu^cāwiya forgave and rewarded him, and Maṣqala returned to Kūfa to assure the public that the caliph had nearly crushed his hand and broken his bone in pulling him (al-Balādurī,

Ansāb IV/1, 81). The praise of Muʿāwīya as a deadly poison for his enemies deserves special note in view of the fact that he eliminated several of his opponents by serving them poison.

Maslama thus reports the poison murder of ʿAbdarrahmān b. Ḥālīd b. al-Walīd carried out by the Christian physician Ibn ʿUṭāl at the behest of Muʿāwīya. According to his account, Muʿāwīya became afraid for himself because of the great popularity of the son of the Sword of Islam in Ḥimṣ and among the Syrian border army. Maslama may well have considered this murder as justified since the Umayyad reign itself seemed threatened. He further reports that ʿAbdarrahmān's son Ḥālīd took revenge for the murder by killing Ibn ʿUṭāl. Ḥālīd was brought before Muʿāwīya, who merely imprisoned him for a few days and fined him the blood money for Ibn ʿUṭāl, denying any right of retaliation against him (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīḥ* II, 82-84). The identification of Ḥālīd b. ʿAbdarrahmān as the avenger is erroneous, and the whole account is poorly informed¹¹. Transmitted by Maslama, however, it indicates that this poison murder by Muʿāwīya was acknowledged by the Sufyānid family. The attempt of H. Lammens (1908:3-14) to discredit the relevant reports as anti-Umayyad and anti-Christian slander is thus inappropriate.

In depicting Muʿāwīya's superb leadership qualities, Maslama appears distinctly concerned to counter the impression created by the general historical tradition that he depended on the political judgment of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀs, the wily man of Quraysh, and was helpless in dealing with the malice of his Umayyad cousin Marwān b. al-Ḥakam. In Maslama's reports, ʿAmr is easily kept at bay and disposed of by the superior political acumen of the Sufyānid. In one of the anecdotes related by him, Muʿāwīya asks ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀs probingly what degree his cunning trickery (*daby*) reached. ʿAmr replies that he never entered into an affair but that he would safely get out of it. Muʿāwīya trumps him, "But I have never entered into an affair from which I wished to get out." (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 40) One day Muʿāwīya questioned several men in his company as to what they considered the most marvelous of things. When ʿAmr's turn came, he said: "The most marvelous thing is the victory of somebody without any right over the owner of the right in order to seize his right". Muʿāwīya realized that ʿAmr was alluding to his victory over ʿAlī. He countered: "More marvelous than that is giving somebody without any right that to which he has no right without a victory." He was alluding to ʿAmr's having been reinstated by him as governor of Egypt (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 77). According to another report of Maslama, ʿAmr wrote to Muʿāwīya, requesting that he appoint his son, the pious ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAmr, governor of Egypt after him. Muʿāwīya commented: "Abū ʿAbdallāh wanted to whisper in my ear, but he spoiled it by his noise." (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 60)

¹¹ See Madelung 1997:340-341.

Concerning Mu^cāwiya's relationship with Marwān, Maslama transmitted an account of Marwān's visit to the caliph in Damascus in order to protest his dismissal from the governorship of Medina which was apparently meant to counter another account of the visit quoted by al-Hayṭam b. ʿAdī (al-Isfahānī, *Aghānī* XII, 72-73; Madelung 1997:343-346). Maslama received his version of the story from Mu^cāwiya's great-grandson Ḥarb b. Ḥālid b. Yazīd. While in the version adduced by al-Hayṭam b. ʿAdī Marwān humiliates and intimidates the caliph by his insolent talk and blunt threats, in Ḥarb b. Ḥālid's story Mu^cāwiya retains the upper hand. He first declines to receive Marwān in private, but when he learns of the latter's threats against him, he decides to admit him, saying a prayer for protection from Marwān's evil. His enumeration of Marwān's offences reduces the latter to seeking excuses and to promising amends. Against al-Hayṭam's version, Marwān meekly accepts his reinstatement as governor by the caliph (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 65-66).

Maslama shared the Sufyānids' negative view of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, who had seized the caliphate from them. In his story of Marwān's meeting with Mu^cāwiya, the latter, as noted, prayed for protection from his evil. Marwān's wicked character, however, makes him also vulnerable to the wickedness of others. Maslama relates an anecdote about a slave servant whom Marwān put in charge of the administration of his estate in Dū Huṣub. When Marwān visits Dū Huṣub in order to inspect the crops, he meets loads of produce on his way and is told that these come from his estate. He confronts his servant and tells him that he thinks that he has been cheating him. The servant answers coolly: "And I think you are incompetent, oh emir. You have bought me wearing a wool cloak. Today I am wealthy, I have taken and built houses. By God, I cheat you, you surely cheat the Commander of the Faithful, and the Commander of the Faithful cheats God. May God curse the most wicked of the three!" (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, ed. Goitein, V, 130)

Maslama also transmitted, from his father, a version of the story of Marwān's murder by his wife Umm Ḥālid Fāhita, the widow of the caliph Yazīd and mother of Ḥālid b. Yazīd. According to this version, some people maintained that Umm Ḥālid served him poisoned milk, while others held that she and her slave girls suffocated him with a pillow. Maslama's version, in contrast to others, depicts Ḥālid b. Yazīd as a morally strong and proud prince who warns his mother against marrying Marwān, suggesting that the usurper of his father's throne merely wanted to disgrace him and lower his status in public opinion. His mother, however, insists on marrying Marwān. The latter first humiliates her by ignoring her during the wedding night and then goes on to humiliate Ḥālid, who bravely talks back to the caliph before informing his mother of her husband's insult to her (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, ed. Goitein, V, 144-145) This favourable image of Ḥālid b. Yazīd in Maslama's report suggests that Ḥālid's son Ḥarb may have been a source of it. The story of Marwān's murder by his wife has commonly been rejected by modern western historians as fiction.

Already Th. Nöldeke suggested that it was planted by the Sufyānids¹². Maslama's version evidently strengthens this impression. The Sufyānid provenance of the story, however, does not necessarily prove its fictitiousness.

A Sufyānid bias is also apparent in some of Maslama's reports concerning ʿAbdalmalik, commonly considered the greatest of the Marwānid caliphs. According to Maslama, ʿAbdalmalik stated that he had never witnessed anyone like Ibn Hind (Muʿāwiya) in respect to his *ḥilm* and nobility (*karam*). He, ʿAbdalmalik, would be most merciful to any man he had seen with Ibn Hind when the latter inclined on his left hand and invited him to speak up (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* IV/1, 60-61). Muʿāwiya's treatment of his subjects was evidently exemplary for him. But ʿAbdalmalik also remembered Muʿāwiya's good fortune with *mith* mild envy, even though it had come to an end. When the ʿAbbāsīd ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh visited him on a day of extreme cold and congratulated him on the warmth of the wood fire the caliph enjoyed in contrast to the common people, who were freezing, ʿAbdalmalik answered: "Abū Muḥammad, are you saying this after Ibn Hind? He was emir for twenty years and caliph for an equal time, yet now a locust tree is shaking upon his grave." ʿAbdalmalik then recited two lines of poetry lamenting the vicissitudes of time (al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb* III, 74).

Maslama's reports relevant to the reign of the later Marwānid caliphs are factual and do not focus on their persons. His attitude to them was detached, and he viewed them without much sympathy or antipathy. If the overthrow of the Umayyad caliphate by the ʿAbbāsīds evoked a sense of nostalgia in him, it was only for the Sufyānid age. Nowhere in his reporting is there evidence of concessions to contemporary ʿAbbāsīd political correctness. Early ʿAbbāsīd historiography must not be considered as uniformly anti-Umayyad.

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¹² See Lammens 1927:91.

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