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THE HISTORY OF AL-ṬABARĪ

AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION

VOLUME XXX

The 'Abbāsīd Caliphate in Equilibrium

THE CALIPHATES OF MŪSĀ AL-HĀDĪ AND HĀRŪN AL-RASHĪD

A.D. 785–809/A.H. 169–193



The History of al-Ṭabarī

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The History of al-Tabarī
(*Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*)

VOLUME XXX

**The 'Abbāsīd Caliphate
in Equilibrium**

translated and annotated
by

C. E. Bosworth

The University of Manchester

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Preface



THE HISTORY OF PROPHETS AND KINGS [*Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*] by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (839–923), here rendered as the *History of al-Ṭabarī*, is by common consent the most important universal history produced in the world of Islam. It has been translated here in its entirety for the first time for the benefit of non-Arabists, with historical and philological notes for those interested in the particulars of the text.

Ṭabarī's monumental work explores the history of the ancient nations, with special emphasis on biblical peoples and prophets, the legendary and factual history of ancient Iran, and, in great detail, the rise of Islam, the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the history of the Islamic world down to the year 915. The first volume of this translation will contain a biography of al-Ṭabarī and a discussion of the method, scope, and value of his work. It will also provide information on some of the technical considerations that have guided the work of the translators.

The *History* has been divided here into 38 volumes, each of which covers about two hundred pages of the original Arabic text in the Leiden edition. An attempt has been made to draw the dividing lines between the individual volumes in such a way that each is to some degree independent and can be read as such. The page numbers of the original in the Leiden edition appear on the margins of the translated volumes.

Each volume has an index of proper names. A general index volume will follow the publication of the translation volumes.

Al-Ṭabarī very often quotes his sources verbatim and traces the

chain of transmission (*isnād*) to an original source. The chains of transmitters are, for the sake of brevity, rendered by only a dash (—) between the individual links in the chain. Thus, according to Ibn Ḥumayd—Salamah—Ibn Ishāq means that al-Ṭabarī received the report from Ibn Ḥumayd who said that he was told by Salamah, who said that he was told by Ibn Ishāq, and so on. The numerous subtle and important differences in the original Arabic wording have been disregarded.

The table of contents at the beginning of each volume gives a brief survey of the topics dealt with in that particular volume. It also includes the headings and subheadings as they appear in al-Ṭabarī's text, as well as those occasionally introduced by the translators.

Well-known place names, such as, for instance, Mecca, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Damascus, and the Yemen, are given in their English spellings. Less common place names, which are the vast majority, are transliterated. Biblical figures appear in the accepted English spelling. Iranian names are usually transcribed according to their Arabic forms, and the presumed Iranian forms are often discussed in the footnotes.

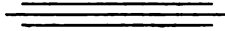
Technical terms have been translated wherever possible, but some, such as *dirham* and *imām*, have been retained in Arabic forms. Others that cannot be translated with sufficient precision have been retained and italicized as well as footnoted.

The annotation aims chiefly at clarifying difficult passages, identifying individuals and place names, and discussing textual difficulties. Much leeway has been left to the translators to include in the footnotes whatever they consider necessary and helpful.

The bibliographies list all the sources mentioned in the annotation.

The index in each volume contains all the names of persons and places referred to in the text, as well as those mentioned in the notes as far as they refer to the medieval period. It does not include the names of modern scholars. A general index, it is hoped, will appear after all the volumes have been published.

For further details concerning the series and acknowledgments, see Preface to Volume I.



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Abbreviations



AKAk. Berlin: Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussische Akademie zu Berlin

BGA: Bibliotheca geographorum arabicorum

EHR: *English Historical Review*

EI¹: *Encyclopaedia of Islām*, first edition

EI²: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition

EIr: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*

GAL: C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*

GAS: F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*

GMS: Gibb Memorial Series

IC: *Islamic Culture*

IJMES: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*

Isl.: *Der Islam*

JA: *Journal Asiatique*

JESHO: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*

JNES: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*

JRAS: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

JRASB: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bengal*

JSAl: *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*

R.Afr.: *Revue Africaine*

RCAL: *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*

REI: *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*

RSO: *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*

SI: *Studia Islamica*

WbKAS: *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache*

WZKM: *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*

ZDMG: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

In citations from the Qur'an, where two different numbers are given from a verse, the first is that of Flügel's text and the second that of the official Egyptian edition.

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Translator's Foreword



The section of Ṭabarī's history devoted to the reigns of Mūsā al-Hādī and his brother Hārūn al-Rashīd spans twenty-four years, al-Hādī's caliphate lasting for only fifteen months of these, at the most. The historical events dealt with by the chronicler are located in a wide expanse of territory embracing most of the still largely united caliphate (although Muslim Spain had of course never acknowledged the 'Abbāsids from the outset, and Ṭabarī takes no cognizance of happenings there), from Morocco in the west to Transoxania in the east.

The 'Alids and their Shī'ī supporters, despite having been the beneficiaries of a comparatively conciliatory policy toward them by the previous Caliph al-Mahdī, remained basically unreconciled to 'Abbāsīd rule and the deflection of the caliphate-imamate, as they saw it, from the Prophet's direct descendants, the offspring of 'Alī and Fāṭimah, to those of the mere paternal uncle of Muḥammad, al-'Abbās. Something of the polemical battles of the early 'Abbāsīd period, fought on the literary plane by the poets who lent their support to the 'Abbāsīds and 'Alids, respectively, emerges in our section of Ṭabarī's history from the verse of the 'Abbāsīd court poet Marwān b. Abī Ḥafṣah cited at III, 743 (below, 308).

The struggles of these opposing parties were, however, by no means literary only. The episode which dominates Ṭabarī's account of al-Hādī's reign is that of the 'Alid rising in Medina and then Mecca of the Ḥasanīd al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Ḥasan, which ended with the latter's death in battle at Fakhkh in 169 (786); one result of the scattering of the 'Alids after this débâcle was the

eventual foundation of the Idrīsid state in Morocco by the fugitive Idrīs b. 'Abdallāh b. Ḥasan, involving the first subtraction of a province, albeit a very distant one, from the 'Abbāsids' orbit. In al-Rashīd's reign, the rising of the Ḥasanid Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh b. Ḥasan in Daylam and northwestern Persia in 176 (792), brought to an end through the military and diplomatic skills of the Barmakī al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, is treated only briefly by Ṭabarī; but the chronicler adds much anecdotal material on Yaḥyā's subsequent tribulations and death at the Caliph's hands.

Thereafter, al-Rashīd's uncompromising maintenance of Sunni orthodoxy seems to have dampened further Shī'ī efforts. Yet Iraq and al-Jazīrah continued all through his reign to be troubled by the sectarian activities of the Khārijites among the Arabs there, apparently affecting the countryside rather than the towns but requiring punitive expeditions to be sent out from the capital. Syria, with its endemic tribal factionalism going back to Umayyad times, remained a potential focus for disaffection against the Iraq-centered 'Abbāsids. Fears of the possible use of Syria as a power base by the 'Abbāsīd prince 'Abd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ, himself with maternal connections with the Umayyads and governor in Syria for several years like his brother and father before him, may have lain behind al-Rashīd's arrest and imprisonment of his great-uncle in 187 (803); and the Caliph's virtual abandonment of Baghdad as the effective capital and his move in 180 (796) to al-Raqqah may have been motivated not only by a desire to be near the military front with Byzantium, as Kennedy has suggested,¹ but also by a need to keep an eye on Syria. Egypt was in these years not so much chafing under 'Abbāsīd domination specifically as it was disaffected through the fiscal policies of the 'Abbāsīd governors, which provoked unrest among both the Copts and the Bedouins of the Nile delta, whilst similar oppression by a caliphal governor in the Yemen resulted in a prolonged revolt of the Yemenis.

On the northern frontier of the caliphate, a state of rough equilibrium with the Byzantines seems to have been reached by al-Rashīd's time. The period of transition from rule by the Isaurian dynasty in the Empire to that of the Amorian dynasty was a

1. H. Kennedy, *The early Abbasid caliphate*, 120.

troubled one, with upheavals in the state caused by the Empress Irene's seizure of sole power in 797 and her deposition five years later by Nicephorus I, and this should have enabled al-Rashīd—highly conscious of his image as the great Ghāzī-Caliph—to intensify military pressure in the region of the *thughūr*; in fact, the annual Arab raids and the Greek counterattacks resulted in no extensive or permanent transfers of territory at this time. Potentially very serious, but stemmed by the energetic measures of the general Yazīd b. Mazyad (whose family was later to establish a power base in the region as the Yazīdī line of Sharwān-Shāhs), was the invasion of Armenia and Arrān through the Caucasus in 183 (799–800) by the Khazar Turks.

Affairs in the eastern parts of the caliphate were in the early years of al-Rashīd's caliphate the responsibility of al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī, who from 178 (794) onward continued the earlier Arab policy of expansion into the pagan steppes of Central Asia, himself raiding as far as the Syr Darya valley and despatching one of his commanders into what is now eastern Afghanistan; he also recruited fresh contingents of local Iranian troops from Khurāsān and Transoxania in order to stiffen and to supplement the 'Abbāsids' original backing of Khurāsānian guards, the *Abnā' al-Dawlah*. But with the recall of al-Faḍl to Baghdad and then the fall of the Barmakīs, Khurāsān came under the governorship of 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān, whose financial exactions there rendered the province discontented and ready to support the revolt raised at Samarqand in 190 (806), with Turkish support from the steppes, by Rāfi' b. Layth b. Naṣr b. Sayyār. Only the belated decision of the Caliph to dismiss his very profitable servant (from the viewpoint of revenue-raising) 'Alī b. 'Īsā led Rāfi' to submit to al-Ma'mūn "because of his just conduct" in 193 (809), when al-Rashīd himself was actually dead.

Al-Rashīd's dealings with 'Alī b. 'Īsā and his despatch of his mawlā Harthamah b. A'yan as replacement governor in Khurāsān and as restorer of order there are narrated in considerable detail by Ṭabarī; but the most extensive treatment accorded by him to a single episode is of course with regard to the fall of the Barmakī family of secretaries and viziers in 187 (803). These dramatic events excited the shocked wonder and the pity of contemporaries, and continued thereafter to intrigue mediaeval Muslims, who

came to weave around them imaginative, even semilegendary embroideries. Living as they did in a society where abrupt changes of fortune were far from uncommon, these Muslims came to view the Barmakīs' fate as the supreme *'ibrah* or warning example of pride and riches brought low at one stroke. Yet such embroideries, designed to amplify and to explain for contemporaries what was not easily explicable, should not surprise; for it is not completely clear today precisely what tangled motives lay behind al-Rashīd's actions, beyond the obvious one of humbling subjects who had grown overmighty.²

The reign of al-Hādī is really too short for us to arrive at a completely balanced estimate of his character as ruler, and we do not have enough material for us to follow Von Kremer in stigmatizing al-Hādī as "the Arabic Nero."³ But he does emerge as a capricious, unreliable person whom it was dangerous to oppose or thwart, with a distinct streak of violence and cruelty, as his indiscriminate striking of passersby when once at 'Īsābādh and his killing of the two lesbian slave girls indicate.⁴

For al-Rashīd, we have a much ampler documentation in both the historical and the *adab* sources. The popular image of the despotic but bluff and genial monarch, patron of poetry and the arts, under whom Baghdad became a city of luxury and *douceur de vie* unparalleled in the previous history of the Islamic world, was fostered in the West from the eighteenth century onward under the seductive but delusory depiction of life there in the *Thousand and One Nights*. The materials for the art of biography as we know it in the West today are generally meager in the premodern Islamic sources, and the real mainsprings of al-Rashīd's character will probably remain as obscure to us as those of most leading figures in early Islam. Yet this image of "good old Hārūn al-Rashīd" has been potent enough to have spawned several popular books on the

2. See the discussions of the causes of the fall of the Barmakīs, so far as they are discernible, in D. Sourdél, *Le vizirat 'abbāsīde*, I, 156–8, and Kennedy, 127–9; and for further secondary sources, below, 201, n. 697.

3. See F.-C. Muth, *Die Annalen von at-Ṭabarī im Spiegel der europäischen Bearbeitungen*, 99, and also S. Moscati, *Le califat d'al-Hādī*, 24–8, for an estimate of the Caliph's personality.

4. Ṭabarī, III, 586, 590 (below, 67, 72–73).

Caliph and his age, such as E. H. Palmer's *Haroun Alraschid, Caliph of Baghdad* (London and Belfast, 1881), H. St. J. B. Philby's *Harun al Rashid* (London, 1933), and Sir John Glubb's *Haroun al Rasheed and the great Abbasids* (London, 1976). At least the first two of these writers were too familiar with the realities of mediæval Islamic life and with some of the mediæval Islamic sources to accept unquestioningly the picture of al-Rashīd's age as a golden one.⁵ Palmer noted that "hitherto we have found him very unlike the Merry Monarch of the Arabian Nights," and his final verdict was that "as a man, he showed many indications of a loyal and affectionate disposition, but the preposterous position (i.e., as God's vicegerent on earth, with the servility thereby engendered) in which he was placed almost necessarily crushed all really human feelings in him. . . . That such a man should not be spoilt, that such absolute despotism should not lead to acts of arbitrary injustice, that such unlimited power and absence of all feelings of responsibility could be possessed without unlimited indulgence, was not in the nature of human events."⁶ Philby asserted that "the reigns of Harun and his son Mamun stand out conspicuously against the dark background of the world's ignorance as beacons welcoming the rebirth of the arts and sciences after their long eclipse," but he readily conceded that "in surveying the circumstances of Harun's Califate we seem to be assisting at the spectacle of a heart beating fast and furiously in a paroxysm of fever which was reducing the body of an empire to the extremes of sickness and misery. The shadows of future decay were thrown forward on to the screen of history by the brilliant kaleidoscope of a puppet-show, which dazzled its beholders at the time and has blinded posterity—thanks to the unholy alliance of the historian and the

5. The only primary sources which Palmer mentions specifically in his book are Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī* and "El Amraniy" (99, 154) (this last author being presumably Muḥammad b. 'Alī, Ibn al-'Imrānī, whose history *al-Inbā' fī ta'rīkh al-khulafā'* has recently been edited and published by Qasim al-Samarrai, Leiden, 1973, an author whom Palmer could have cited from Ibn al-Ṭīqtaqā's *Kitāb al-Fakhrī*); but, of course, the printed texts of Ibn al-Athīr and of the Persian abridgment of Ṭabari by Bal'ami would have been available to him at that time. I have not seen Glubb's book, but the semipopular book of 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Jūmard, *Hārūn al-Rashīd, dirāsah ta'rīkhiyyah ijtimā'iyah siyāsiyyah*, 2 parts (Beirut, 1956), adds nothing to what is already known.

6. *Haroun Alraschid*, 138, 222-3.

storyteller—to the emptiness of a limelit scene of splendour surrounded by the murky night of wailing and gnashing of teeth.”⁷

Certainly, al-Rashīd does not stand out in either personal character or executive competence above others of the early 'Abbāsīd Caliphs. His extravagant gifts to poets, singers, popular preachers, ascetics, and so forth, were merely what was expected of a ruler, and one should always recall that somewhere in the caliphal lands someone—whether a fellah in the Nile valley, a merchant in Baghdad, or an artisan in Nishapur—was paying for all such manifestations of royal conspicuous consumption. Ṭabarī notes that al-Rashīd's intellectual horizons were narrow and that he had no taste for disputation and argumentation such as his son al-Ma'mūn was to encourage at his court.⁸ In the early years of his caliphate he was content to leave much of the burden of administration to the Barmakīs, and then subsequently to mawlās like al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī' and Ismā'īl b. Şubayḥ al-Ḥarrānī. The decision, embodied in the “Meccan documents” of 186–7 (802–3), to arrange in his own lifetime a division of the empire between his sons al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn (with belated provision for a third son, al-Qāsim al-Mu'taman) undeniably seems, with the hindsight of our knowledge of the Civil War which ensued after al-Rashīd's death, to have been an unwise one, as some contemporaries averred at the time.⁹ But Kennedy may be right in seeing the Caliph's move as an attempt, unfortunately unsuccessful but worth trying, to resolve some of the tensions and ambitions rife within the ruling groups of the state by providing for these groups defined sectors of power in the caliphate.¹⁰ Finally, one may note that al-Rashīd's mode of executing the captured brother of Rāfi' b. Layth, Bashīr,¹¹ shows a refinement of cruelty, even of sadism, which the fact of the Caliph's being racked with incessant pain from his incurable internal malady at that time cannot wholly excuse.

For his historical information and for his anecdotes on the Caliphs' lifestyles, Ṭabarī relied on reports going back to leading

7. *Harun al Rashid*, 60, 75–6.

8. III, 741 (below, 306).

9. Ṭabarī, III, 653–4 (below, 181–82).

10. Kennedy, 124–6.

11. Ṭabarī, III, 734–5 (below, 298).

historians such as Hishām Ibn al-Kalbī and Wāqidi, and on reports from noted *adībs* and philologists like Ishāq al-Mawṣilī and al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, as well as on information from *rāwīs* who are quite obscure to us. The interval of only a century or less between the events in question and Ṭabarī's writing his history meant that he was able to draw on a great fund of family tradition preserved by the direct descendants of the protagonists in these events, such as al-Hādī's own great-grandson Hārūn b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'il.¹² Ṭabarī also gives in this section the texts *in extenso* of numerous official documents, including among others the encomia on the accession of al-Rashīd by the secretary Yūsuf b. al-Qāsim (III, 600–1; below, 93–94) and by Ja'far b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī in gratitude for his appointment as governor of Syria in 180 (796–7) (III, 642–4; below, 159–62); al-Rashīd's letter of dismissal in 191 (806–7) to 'Alī b. 'Isā and the letter of appointment of 'Alī's successor in Khurāsān, Harthamah b. A'yan (III, 716–18; below, 273–75); but above all, that of the "Meccan documents," the stipulations by which the two princes al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn bound themselves to their father's arrangements, and the letter to the provincial governors announcing these measures (III, 654–66; below, 183–99). These documents are not yet couched in so florid a style, made up of balanced, assonantal [*musajja'*] phrases as was to become standard in Islamic chanceries after circa 900; but their at times tortuous syntax poses problems for the translator, especially where the reconstructed Arabic text is by no means certain; an Arabist of the caliber of F. Gabrieli has confessed, on the occasion of his essaying the task of translating the "Meccan documents" and other similar documents of the period, that the precious style of such texts makes absolute certainty in translation impossible.¹³

For a considerable part of Ṭabarī's account of al-Ma'mūn's caliphate, we have extant Ṭabarī's verbatim source, Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr's *Kitāb Baghdād*; but for the reigns of al-Hādī and al-Rashīd, we possess no such controlling parallel text. The editor of this section of the text of Ṭabarī's history, Stanislas Guyard, could only have recourse to later, epitomizing historians—like the anonymous author of the *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq*, Ibn al-Jawzī

12. Ṭabarī, III, 581 (see below, 60), 1148.

13. See below, 191, n. 686.

in his *Muntazam* and Ibn al-Athīr in his *Kāmil*—for supplementing the two manuscripts of Ṭabarī on which he had to rely for this section; namely, the Istanbul one, Köprülü 1041 (ms. C) copied in 651 (1253), which covers the whole of this particular section; and the Algiers one, 594 (ms. A) copied in the Maghrib, which contains, however, four lacunae in our section, two of substantial length, and which ends abruptly at III, 755 of the printed text, after which point the text depends on the unicum C. A Berlin fragment, Petermann II, 635 (ms. Pet) served as a third manuscript for a mere four and a half pages of the printed text.¹⁴ Thus, Guyard's task was far from easy, and he had perforce to leave certain cryptic passages unresolved; unless fresh manuscripts or hitherto unknown parallel sources turn up, it does not seem possible for the state of the text to be improved.

The pleasant task of thanking those who have given advice and help over the translation is the sole remaining one. I am particularly grateful to the late Dr. Martin Hinds (Cambridge), Dr. Patricia Crone (Oxford), and Professor Yūsuf 'Izz al-Dīn (al-'Ayn, U.A.E.) for help with the text; and to Professors Ch. Pellat (Sorbonne) and R. Sellheim (Frankfort) for their efforts at identifying some of the more obscure poets cited in this section. But since all human endeavors are susceptible to the onslaughts of the *'ayn al-kamāl*, for the imperfections of this translation I alone am responsible.

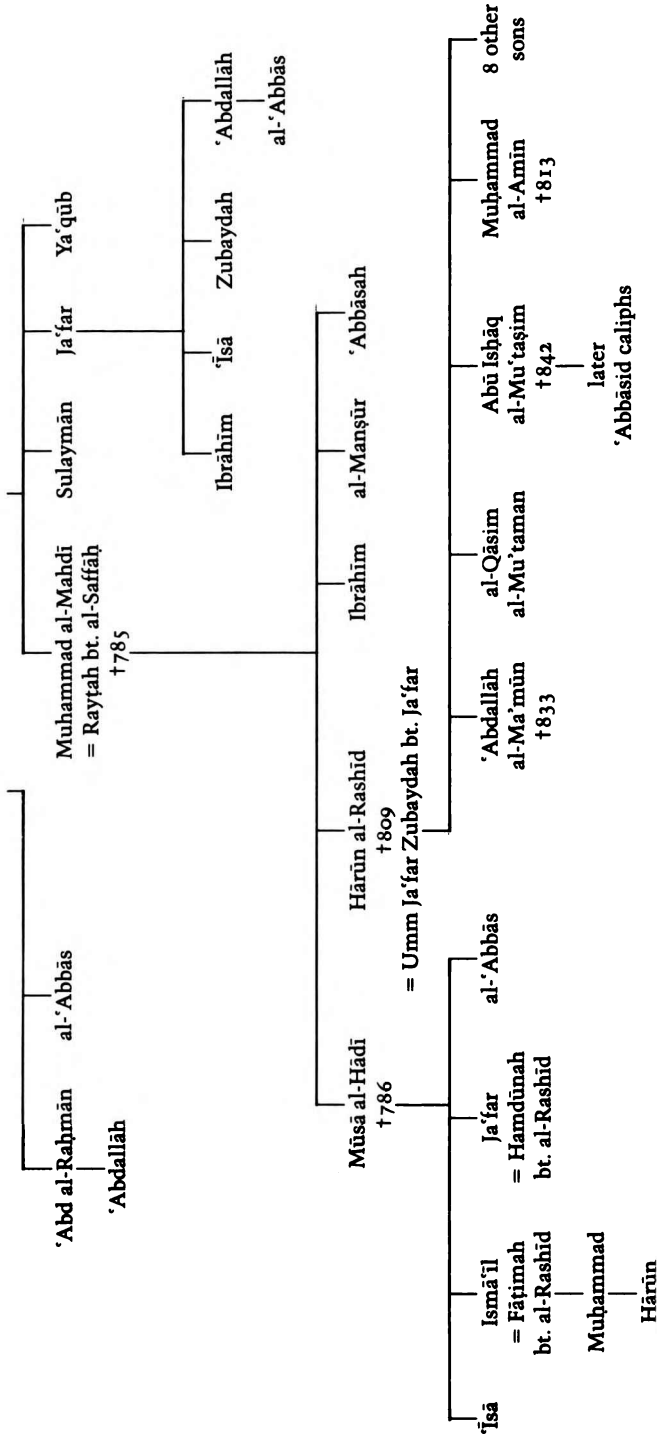
C. E. Bosworth

14. See *Introductio*, p. LXV.

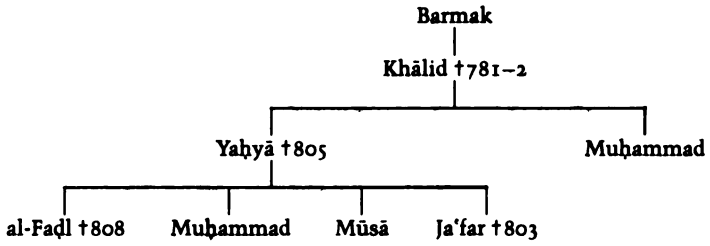


Genealogical Tables
and Maps

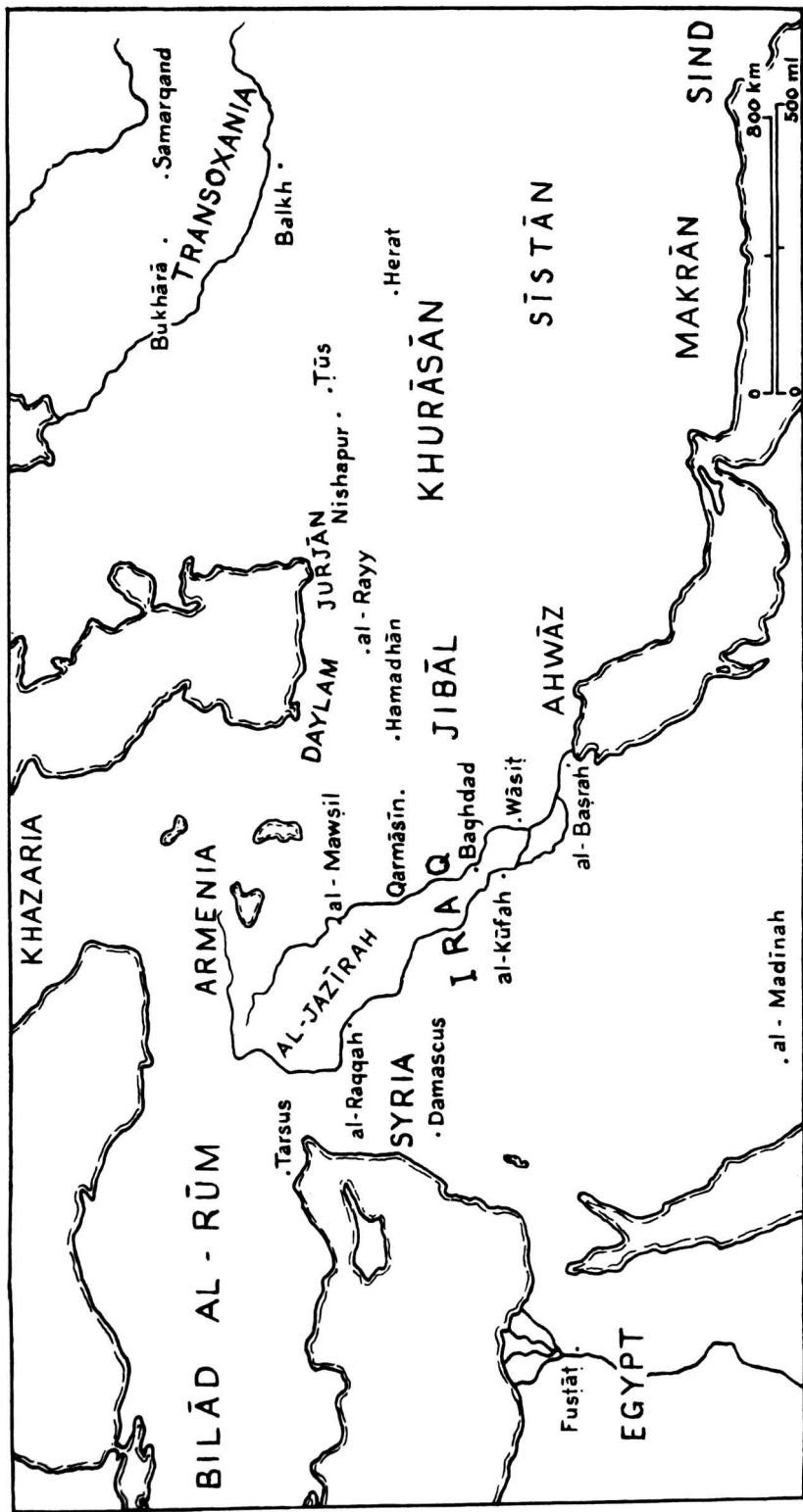




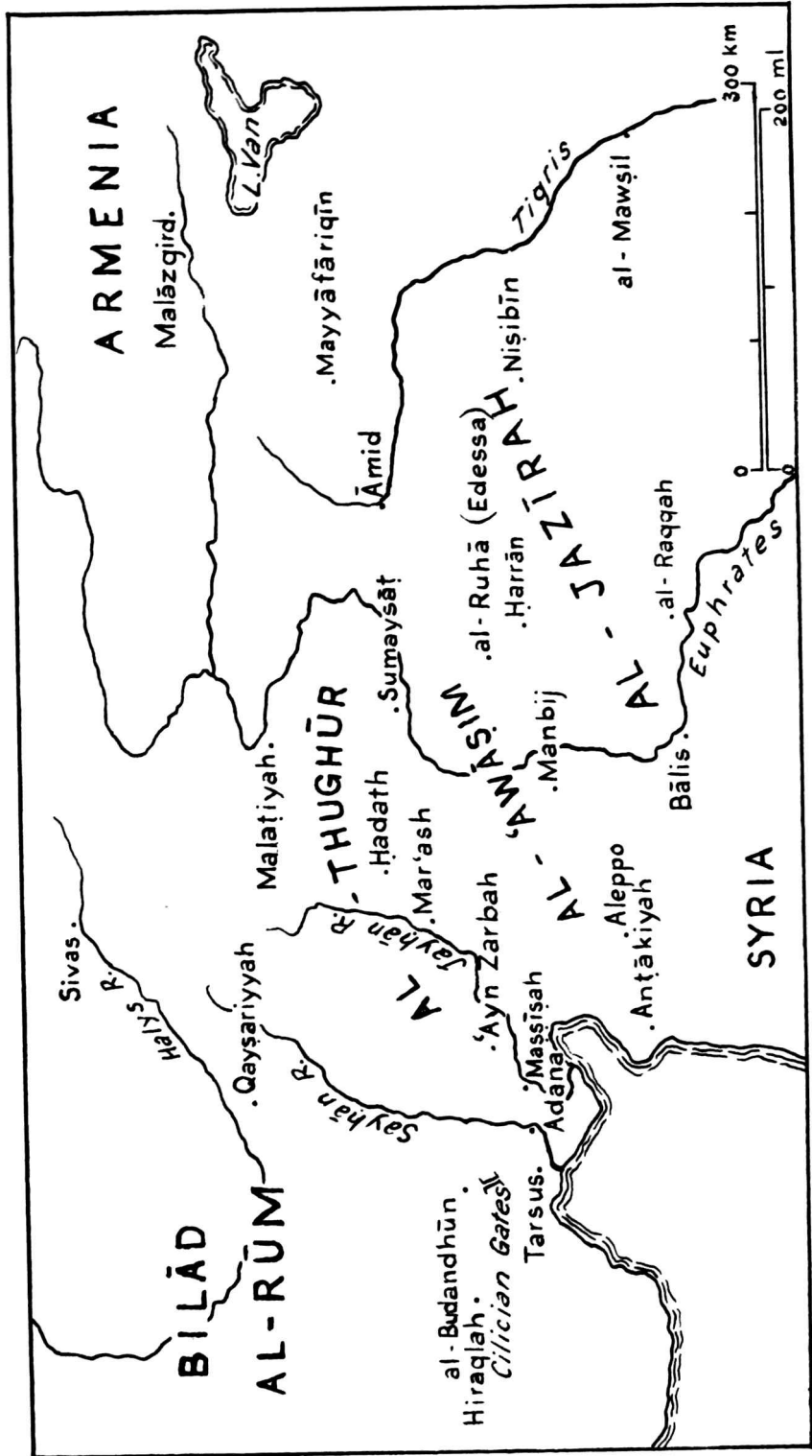
Genealogical Table of the Barmakī Family of Secretaries and Viziers
(Special reference to those members of the family
mentioned in this section of al-Ṭabari's *History*)

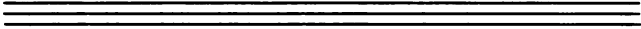


Map I
 Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and the Eastern Provinces during the Reigns of al-Hadi and al-Rashid.



Map 2
The Arab-Byzantine Marches during This Period.





The Caliphate of Mūsā al-Hādī



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❦

The
Events of the Year

169 (cont'd)
(JULY 14, 785—JULY 2, 786)

❦

*The Succession of Mūsā al-Hādī as Caliph
on His Father al-Mahdī's Death
and His New Administrative Appointments* [544]

In this year (169 [July 14, 785—July 2, 786]), allegiance was given to Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās as Caliph on the day of al-Mahdī's death¹ and when he was actually established in Jurjān making war on the people of Ṭabaristān. Al-Mahdī died at Māsabadhān,² having present with him his son Hārūn and having left his mawlā al-Rabī³ behind in Baghdad as his deputy there. [545]

1. I.e., on Thursday, the twenty-second of Muḥarram (August 4, 785). See S. Moscati, "Nuovi studi storici sul califato di al-Mahdī," *Orientalia*, N.S. XV (1946), 171-2; *EI*² s.v. al-Mahdī (H. Kennedy). On al-Mahdī's arrangements for al-Hādī as his successor, see Moscati, *op. cit.*, 158-61.

2. A district in the Zagros mountains on the borders of Luristān and Iraq. See Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, V, 41; G. Le Strange, *The lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 202; P. Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter*, 464-70; *EI*² s.v. Luristān (V. Minorsky).

3. Al-Rabī' b. Yūnus b. Muḥammad, mawlā of al-Manṣūr and ḥājib or chamberlain under that Caliph and his two successors al-Mahdī and al-Hādī. See on him al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, VIII, 414, no. 4521; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, II, 294-9, tr. M. G. de Slane, I, 521-6; Moscati, *Le califat d'al-Hādī*, 17-18; D. Sourdel, *Le vizirat 'abbāsīde*, I, 85-90, 118-21; P. Crone, *Slaves on horses. The evolution of the Islamic polity*, 193-4; *EI*¹ s.v. (A. S. Atiya).

It has been mentioned that, when al-Mahdī died, the mawlās⁴ and army commanders rallied round his son Hārūn and told him, "If the army (at large) gets to know about al-Mahdī's death, we cannot guarantee⁵ that a tumult will not occur. The wisest thing to do would be for his corpse to be borne away and for the return homewards to be proclaimed among the army, so that you may eventually bury him secretly in Baghdad." Hārūn replied, "Summon my father⁶ Yaḥyā b. Khālid al-Barmakī to me." (Al-Mahdī had made Hārūn [nominal] governor of all the Western lands between al-Anbār and Ifrīqiyah and had ordered Yaḥyā b. Khālid to assume actual control over them. Hence all these administrative regions [a'māl] were under him, and he was in charge of all their government offices and was acting as Hārūn's deputy over the administrative duties in his charge until al-Mahdī's death.)⁷

He related: Yaḥyā b. Khālid went to Hārūn, and the latter said to Yaḥyā, "O my father, what is your opinion about what 'Umar b. Bazī,⁸ Nuṣayr⁹ and al-Mufaḍḍal¹⁰ say?" He replied, "What in fact

4. The rise of the *mawālī*, a social group which included men of many races, is a feature of the early 'Abbāsīd period, above all, of al-Manṣūr's reign, when we find a numerous and cohesive body of *mawālī* grouped around the Caliph's person, at the side of other groups such as the slaves [*ghilmān*, *mamālik*, *wuṣafā'*], the eunuchs [*khadam*, etc.] and the *Abnā' al-Dawla*, i.e., the Arabs and Iranians of Khurāsān now largely settled in the capital Baghdad. Al-Manṣūr boasted to his son al-Mahdī at the end of his reign that he had gathered together round his person such a body of *mawālī* as had never been known before (Tabarī, III, 448). On this social and military role of the mawlās, see D. Ayalon, *The military reforms of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim: their background and consequences*, 1-3, 39-42; P. Forand, "The relation of the slave and the client to the master or patron in medieval Islam," *IJMES*, II (1971), 59-66; Ayalon, "Preliminary remarks on the Mamlūk military institution in Islam," *War, technology and society in the Middle East*, 48-50; Farouk Omar, "The composition of 'Abbāsīd support in the early 'Abbāsīd period 132/749-169/785," in *'Abbāsiyyāt. Studies in the history of the early 'Abbasids*, 46-50; Crone, 66-8, 78; D. Pipes, *Slave soldiers and Islam. The genesis of a military system*, 107-9, 131 ff.

5. Following the preferred reading of n. b, *lā na'manu*.

6. The sources note that Hārūn was wont to call Yaḥyā his "father"; see, e.g., Jahshiyārī, *K. al-Wuzarā' wa-al-kuttāb*, 134; Abū al-Faḍl Bayhaqī, *Ta'rikh-i Mas'ūdi*, 414; anon., *K. al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq*, 282, 285; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, 88. As Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 490, and Ibn Khallikān, VI, 221, tr. IV, 104-5, explain, al-Mahdī had entrusted his son Hārūn to the suckling of Yaḥyā's womenfolk, so that the young prince and al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā were foster-brothers.

7. *K. al-'Uyūn*, 282; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 96.

8. Secretary and boon-companion of al-Mahdī, in charge of the office of account-

have they said?" So Hārūn told him. Yaḥyā said, "I don't agree with that view." Hārūn replied, "Why?" Yaḥyā said, "Because this is an affair which cannot be concealed, and I do not feel confident that the army, when they get to know, will accompany his funeral bier and that they will not say, 'We won't let it go forward freely until we are given pay allotments for three years or more,' or that they will not make arbitrary claims [*yataḥakkamū*] and act wrongfully. My judgement is that his corpse—may God have mercy on him!—should be buried secretly here and that you should send Nuṣayr to the Commander of the Faithful al-Hādī¹¹ with the seal ring and the sceptre,¹² with congratulatory greetings (on his accession) and condolences (on his father's death). For Nuṣayr is in charge of the postal service [*barīd*]; hence no one will regard his departure with any suspicion, since he is head of the *barīd* for this district. I also consider that you should order the members of the army at present with you to be paid two hundred (dirhams) each and that you should proclaim among them the imminent return, because once they have got their hands on the money, their only thought will be of their families and their homeland, and nothing will deflect them from getting back to Baghdad."

He related: So Hārūn did this, and when the troops received their money, they all shouted, "To Baghdad, to Baghdad!" They pressed forward in their haste to depart for Baghdad, urging the relinquishment of Māsabadhān. But when they reached Baghdad, and heard the news about the Caliph (i.e., of al-Mahdī's death and the succession of a new ruler), they went along to al-Rabī's gate and set it on fire, demanding more pay allotments and raising a

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ing control [*dīwān al-azimmaḥ*] for that Caliph and subsequently head of the chancery for al-Hādī. See Ṭabarī, III, 598; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, I, 112–3, 121–3.

9. Eunuch slave [*khādim*, *waṣīf*] of al-Mahdī's. See Ṭabarī, III, 461, 536, 547.

10. Mawlā of al-Mahdī (Ṭabarī, III, 514, 558) and a eunuch (*ibid.*, 562).

11. Bernard Lewis has noted that the honorific *al-Hādī* seems to mark the transition from titles with distinctly messianic connotations (*al-Manṣūr*, *al-Mahdī*) to purely regnal ones. See "The regnal titles of the first Abbasid caliphs," *Dr. Zakir Husain presentation volume*, 22 n. 30.

12. On the insignia of royalty, which included the Prophet's cloak [*burdah*], the sword [*sayf*], and the parasol [*mizallah*], as well as the seal ring [*khātām*] and sceptre [*qaḍīb*], see Sourdel, "Questions de cérémoniale 'abbaside,'" *REI*, XXVIII (1960), 135; M. M. Ahsan, *Social life under the Abbasids 170–289 AH*, 786–902 AD, 52; *El*² s.v. Marāsīm. 1. Under the Caliphate and the Fātimids (P. Sanders).

great clamor. Hārūn reached Baghdad. Al-Khayzurān then sent to al-Rabī' and Yaḥyā b. Khālīd seeking their advice over this matter. Al-Rabī' did in fact go to her, but Yaḥyā would not go, knowing the intensity of Mūsā's resentment. He related: Money was gathered together until the army was paid two years' pay allotments, so that they then quietened down.¹³ The news reached al-Hādī, and he then wrote a letter to al-Rabī' in which he threatened him with execution, but another one to Yaḥyā b. Khālīd rewarding him with acts of beneficence and ordaining that he should retain his position as tutor and adviser of Hārūn just as he had always been and should retain charge of his affairs and administrative responsibilities exactly as previously.¹⁴

He related: Al-Rabī', who used to have a great affection for Yaḥyā, used to trust him and used to rely on his judgement, then sent word to Yaḥyā b. Khālīd, "O Abū 'Alī, What do you think I should do, for I can't endure dragging iron fetters around (i.e., the prospect of prison)?" He replied, "I think that you should not move from where you are, but that you should send your son al-Faḍl¹⁵ forward formally to meet his approaching party, bearing with him the most impressive amount of presents and precious objects that you can get together. I am very hopeful that he will not then come back without your being reassured against what you fear, if God so wills." He related: The mother of al-Faḍl, al-Rabī's son, happened to be in a position to overhear their intimate conversation (i.e., of al-Rabī' and Yaḥyā), and she said to al-Rabī', "By God, he has given you sound advice!" He said, "I would like to make my last testament to you (i.e., to Yaḥyā), for I don't know what might happen."

13. It is not explicit whether this payment (or eighteen months' pay, according to the next account, that from al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān) was in settlement of pay arrears or whether it was an extraordinary payment intended to secure a smooth succession for al-Hādī. If the latter, it became a dangerous precedent, for similar payments became common in the later third (ninth) and fourth (tenth) centuries. See *EI*² s.v. *Māl al-bay'a* (Kennedy).

14. Dinawarī, *al-Akhhbār al-tiwāl*, 386; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, VI, 261–2 = ed. Pellat, § 2469; Ṭabarī, Persian tr. Bal'amī, tr. H. Zotenberg, IV, 446–7; K. al-'Uyūn, 282–3; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 87–8; L. Bouvat, *Les Barmécides d'après les historiens arabes et persans*, 44–5; Nabia Abbott, *Two queens of Baghdad*, 72–9; Moscati, *Le califat d'al-Hādī*, 5–6.

15. Subsequently chief minister, if not actually with the title of vizier, to Hārūn and then al-Amin, of whom he was a leading supporter. See Sourdel, *Vizirat*, I, 183–94; A. J. Chejne, "Al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī'—a politician of the early 'Abbāsīd period," *IC*, XXXVI (1962), 167–81; Crone, 194; *EI*² s.v. (Sourdel).

He¹⁶ said, "I don't want to stand aside from you in anything, and I don't want to neglect anything which seems necessary, as long as you desire me to play some role in this or in any other matter; but associate with me in this design your son al-Faḍl and this woman, for she is indeed of sound judgment and worthy of being brought into this affair by you." Al-Rabi' accordingly did that and made his testament to (all three of) them.¹⁷

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Al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān¹⁸ has related: When the army rose up against al-Rabi' in Baghdad, released the prisoners in his custody, and set on fire the gates of the houses belonging to him in the main square, al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad,¹⁹ 'Abd al-Malik b. Šāliḥ²⁰ and Muḥriz b. Ibrāhīm²¹ witnessed all these events. Al-'Abbās realized that the troops would (only) be satisfied, their minds set at rest, and the dispersal of their tumultuous gathering brought about, if they were given their pay allotments. So he offered these to them, but they were still not satisfied and did not feel assured about the pay allotments which had been guaranteed to them, until Muḥriz b. Ibrāhīm (personally) guaranteed them, and they were then content with his bond and dispersed. Muḥriz then fulfilled his promise to them over that, and they were given pay allotments for eighteen months, this being before Hārūn's arrival.²²

16. I.e., Yahyā, following the reading *fa-qāla* envisaged in n. h and adopted in the Cairo text, VIII, 188, for the text's *fa-qultu*.

17. Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 89.

18. Presumably the al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān b. Ishāq al-Hāshimī also cited as a *rāwī* in Ṭabarī, III, 598 (below, 86).

19. I.e., the senior 'Abbāsīd prince al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī (d. 186 [802]), younger brother of al-Saffāh and al-Manšūr, and owner of an extensive property to the west of the Round City in the island between the Greater and Lesser Šarāt Canals, named after him al-'Abbāsiyyah. See Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, 377, 381; Le Strange, *Baghdad under the Abbasid Caliphate*, 142, 148; J. Lassner, *The topography of Baghdad in the early Middle Ages*, 75, 80, 188; idem, *The shaping of 'Abbāsīd rule*, 240-1.

20. Also a grandson of 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās, brother of Ibrāhīm b. Šāliḥ and first cousin of al-Saffāh and al-Manšūr, and holder of many governorships until his death in 196 (811-12). See Ibn Qutaybah, 375, 384.

21. Abū al-Qāsim Muḥriz b. Ibrāhīm al-Jūbānī, participant in the 'Abbāsīd Revolution as a lieutenant of Qaḥṭabah b. Shabīb, a *rāwī* for Ṭabarī of events concerning Abū Muslim and an official with the functions of a quartermaster under al-Mahdī. See Ṭabarī, III, 1, 9, 46, 99, 461.

22. Moscati, *Le califat d'al-Hādī*, 6 n. 2, regards this variant account from al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān as less plausible than the first one emphasizing the roles of Yahyā and al-Rabi' in quelling the mutinous troops' outbreak in Baghdad.

When Hārūn in fact arrived, acting as the deputy for Mūsā al-Hādī and accompanied by al-Rabī' as a helper [*wazīr*] of his, he despatched delegations to the provincial main cities [*amṣār*], he announced to them the death of al-Mahdī, he required their oath of allegiance to Mūsā al-Hādī (in the first place) and then to himself as the next designated heir [*walī al-'ahd*] after him, and he got a firm grip of affairs in Baghdad (i.e., he took in hand its pacification).

(Previously to this), Nuṣayr the slave [*al-waṣīf*]²³ had immediately set off from Māsabadhān to Jurjān with the news of the death of al-Mahdī and the giving of allegiance to al-Hādī. When Nuṣayr had reached al-Hādī, the latter had given the signal for departure and had forthwith set off by means of the *barīd* service,²⁴ as if he were a noble, swift horse, accompanied by Ibrāhīm (i.e., his brother) and Ja'far (i.e., his son) from his own family and by 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād al-Kātib, the head of his chancery, and Muḥammad b. Jamīl,²⁵ his secretary for military affairs, from among his administrative staff [*al-wuzarā'*].²⁶ Now, when he drew within sight of the City of Peace, a group of people from his own family and others came out to meet him. Al-Hādī had meanwhile been showing resentment towards al-Rabī' for what he had been doing, including his sending out delegations and his giving pay allotments to the army before al-Hādī's arrival. For his part, al-Rabī' had despatched his son al-Faḍl. He went to meet al-Hādī with all the presents prepared for him and came face-to-face with him at Hamadhān. Al-Hādī summoned him into his presence and brought him close, and said to him, "How was my master (i.e., al-Rabī') when you left him?" Al-Faḍl then wrote back these words to his father. Al-Rabī' thereupon went forth to meet al-Hādī. The

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23. This seems to be the correct rendering here of this—i.e., as a common noun, but it can also be a personal name of slaves, as with the Turkish military slave, the *ḥājib* Waṣīf, prominent in the events of the reigns of al-Mutawakkil and his successors.

24. In *Jahshiyāri*, 125, and *Tha'ālibī*, *Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif*, 131, tr. C. E. Bosworth, 104–5, it is recorded as noteworthy that al-Hādī was the first and only Caliph personally to use the *barīd* system.

25. Caliphal mawlā, subsequently governor of al-Baṣrah and Egypt for al-Rashīd. See Crone, 191.

26. See Sourdél, *Vizirat*, I, 117; and for 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād b. Abī Laylā, who died shortly after this (*Jahshiyāri*, 127), *ibid.*, I, 119–20.

latter reproached him gently, but al-Rabī' made his excuses and informed him of the reasons which had impelled him to behave thus. Al-Hādī accepted this apology, and appointed him vizier in place of 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād b. Abī Laylā, and added to his responsibilities the office of control of expenditure [*al-zimām*], which 'Umar b. Bazī' had until then exercised.²⁷ He appointed Muḥammad b. Jamīl over the financial department [*dīwān al-kharāj*] concerned with the two Iraqs (i.e., Mesopotamia and western Persia, 'Irāq 'Ajamī). He appointed 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād over the financial administration of Syria and adjoining lands. He confirmed 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān²⁸ as commander of his personal guard [*ḥaras*], adding to his responsibilities the department of the army [*dīwān al-jund*]. He appointed 'Abdallāh b. Mālik (al-Khuzā'ī)²⁹ as commander of the security police [*shuraṭ*] (in Baghdad) in place of 'Abdallāh b. Khāzim.³⁰ Finally, he entrusted the seal ring to the hands of 'Alī b. Yaqtīn.³¹

Mūsā al-Hādī's arrival at Baghdad, at the time of his journey from Jurjān, was on the nineteenth of Ṣafar (August 31, 785) in this year.³² It has been mentioned in this connection that he travelled from Jurjān to Baghdad in twenty days.³³ When he actually arrived in Baghdad, he established himself in the palace known as al-

27. On these administrative arrangements, see Jahshiyārī, 125; al-Khalīfah b. Khayyāt, *Tārīkh*, II, 709; K. al-'Uyūn, 283; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 89; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, I, 119.

28. Son of a deputy *naqīb* and *dā'ī* in Marw during the 'Abbāsīd Revolution, who founded a leading Abnā' family in Baghdad; during al-Amin's caliphate, he was one of the Caliph's most strenuous supporters, and died in battle against al-Ma'mūn's general Ṭāhir. See Crone, 178-9.

29. Son of one of the twelve *naqībs*, Mālik b. Haytham al-Khuzā'ī, from Khurāsān who participated in Abū Muslim's rising; 'Abdallāh eventually recovered favor under Hārūn, despite his support at this juncture for al-Hādī. See Crone, 181-2; Kennedy, *The early Abbasid Caliphate. A political history*, 80-1.

30. Read thus for the text's Hāzim. 'Abdallāh's father Khāzim b. Khuzaymah al-Tamīmī had been one of the deputy *naqībs* from Marw al-Rūdh in the 'Abbāsīd Revolution, hence he stemmed from a prominent family of the Abnā'. See Crone, 180-1; Kennedy, 81-2.

31. On him, already earlier in life suspected of Shī'ī sympathies, see Sourdel, *Vizirat*, I, 112, 120; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ed. Pellat, *Index*, VII, 520. For all these administrative arrangements, see Abbott, 78-80; Moscati, *Le califat d'al-Hādī*, 17-18; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, II, 119-20.

32. Ṭabarī-Bal'amī, tr. IV, 447, has the date of the tenth of Ṣafar.

33. Cf. Tha'ālībī, loc. cit.