

The History of al-Ṭabarī

VOLUME XXIV

The Empire in Transition



TRANSLATED BY DAVID STEPHAN POWERS

This page intentionally left blank.

This page intentionally left blank.

THE HISTORY OF AL-ṬABARĪ

AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION

VOLUME XXIV

The Empire in Transition

THE CALIPHATES OF SULAYMĀN, 'UMAR, AND YAZĪD

A.D. 715-724 / A.H. 97-105



The History of al-Ṭabarī

Editorial Board

Ihsan Abbas, University of Jordan, Amman

C. E. Bosworth, The University of Manchester

Jacob Lassner, Wayne State University, Detroit

Franz Rosenthal, Yale University

Ehsan Yar-Shater, Columbia University (*General Editor*)

SUNY

SERIES IN NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

Said Amir Arjomand, Editor



*The preparation of this volume was made possible in part
by a grant from the National Endowment for the
Humanities, an independent federal agency.*



Bibliotheca Persica
Edited by Ehsan Yar-Shater

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

VOLUME XXIV

The Empire in Transition

translated and annotated
by

David Stephan Powers

Cornell University

State University of New York Press

Published by

State University of New York Press, Albany

© 1989 State University of New York

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced
in any manner whatsoever without written permission
except in the case of brief quotations embodied in
critical articles and reviews.

For information, address State University of New York
Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y., 12246

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ṭabarī, 838?-923.

[Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk. English. Selections]

The Empire in transition / translated and annotated by David
Stephan Powers.

p. cm. — (The history of al-Ṭabarī = Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l
mulūk ; v. 24) (SUNY series in Near Eastern studies)(Bibliotheca
Persica)

Translation of extracts from: Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-7914-0072-7. ISBN 0-7914-0073-5 (pbk.)

I. Islamic Empire—History—661-750. I. Powers, David Stephan.

II. Title. III. Series. IV. Series: Ṭabarī, 838?-923. Ta'rikh al-
-rusul wa-al-mulūk. English ; v. 24. V. Series: Bibliotheca
Persica (Albany, N.Y.)

DS38.2.T313 1985 vol. 24

[DS38.5]

909'.1 s—dc19

[909'.097671'01]

88-39752

CIP

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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.

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 translator.

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.



Contents



Preface / v

Abbreviations / xi

Translator's Foreword / xiii

The Caliphate of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik

The Events of the Year 96 (cont'd) (714/715) / 3

The Slaying of Qutaybah b. Muslim / 5

The Events of the Year 97 (715/716) / 30

The Appointment of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab as
Governor of Khurāsān / 31

The Events of the Year 98 (716/717) / 39

Maslamah b. 'Abd al-Malik Besieges Constantinople / 39
[The Conquest of Jurjān and Ṭabaristān] / 42

The Events of the Year 99 (717/718) / 61

[The Death of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik] / 61
Aspects of His Character / 62

The Caliphate of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz

The Events of the Year 99 (cont'd) (717/718) / 69

The Reason Why Sulaymān Appointed 'Umar as Caliph / 69

The Events of the Year 100 (718/719) / 76

The Revolt of the Khārijites / 76

The Capture of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab / 79

The Dismissal of al-Jarrāh b. 'Abdallāh / 82

'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz Appoints 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Nu'aym and
'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Abdallāh al-Qushayrī over Khurāsān / 85

The Beginning of the *Da'wah* / 87

The Events of the Year 101 (719/720) / 89

The Escape of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab / 89

[The Death of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz] / 91

Aspects of His Character / 93

A Supplement to the Biography of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz That
Is Not Part of Abu Ja'far's [al-Ṭabarī's] Book, to the Beginning
of the Caliphate of Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān / 98

The Caliphate of Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān

The Events of the Year 101 (cont'd) (719/720) / 105

The Slaying of Shawdhab the Khārijite / 108

Yazīd b. al-Muhallab Renounces His Allegiance to

Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik / 111

The Events of the Year 102 (720/721) / 127

The Slaying of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab / 127

Maslamah Appoints Sa'īd Khudhaynah as Governor of
Khurāsān / 150

Sa'īd's Dismissal of Shu'bah and the Battle at the Fortress of al-Bāhili / 152	
Sa'īd Khudhaynah's Military Expedition against the Soghdians / 158	
The Dismissal of Maslamah from Iraq and Khurāsān / 162	
The Slaying of Yazīd b. Abī Muslim / 165	
<i>The Events of the Year 103 (721/722) / 166</i>	
The Dismissal of Sa'īd Khudhaynah as Governor of Khurāsān / 166	
'Umar b. Hubayrah's Appointment of Sa'īd al-Ḥarashī as Governor of Khurāsān / 168	
The Soghdians Leave Their Country for Farghānah / 169	
<i>The Events of the Year 104 (722/723) / 172</i>	
The Battle between al-Ḥarashī and the Soghdian Army / 172	
Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik's Dismissal of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk from Medina / 180	
'Umar b. Hubayrah's Dismissal of Sa'īd b. 'Amr al-Ḥarashī as Governor of Khurāsān / 183	
The Appointment of Muslim b. Sa'īd as Governor of Khurāsān / 187	
<i>The Events of the Year 105 (723/724) / 192</i>	
Muslim b. Sa'īd's Expedition against the Turks / 193	
The Death of Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik / 193	
Aspects of His Character / 194	
Bibliography of Cited Works / 197	
Index / 201	

This page intentionally left blank.



Abbreviations



EI: The Encyclopaedia of Islām, first edition

EP: The Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition

GAS: F. Sezgin, Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums. Leiden, 1967–

This page intentionally left blank.



Translator's Foreword



During the ten-year period covered in this volume, the reins of Umayyad power were held by three caliphs bearing distinctive personalities: Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 96–99/715–717), a man with a reputation for luxurious living who is nevertheless favorably remembered for reversing the policies of al-Ḥajjāj and appointing 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz as his successor; the pious 'Umar (r. 99–101/717–720), a quasi-messianic figure whose accession to the caliphate, engineered by Rajā' b. Ḥaywah, constituted a virtual coup d'état; and Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 101–105/720–724), a profligate whose own demise was caused by his inconsolable grief for his singing slave girl, Ḥabābah.

By the year 96/714–715, the Arab conquests had reached what ultimately would become their farthest limits in both the East and the West. With the exception of the disastrous third and final campaign against Constantinople, Sulaymān adopted a cautious policy that favored the consolidation of previous conquests over further expansion. This policy was taken to its logical extension by 'Umar II, who recalled Maslamah from the campaign against Constantinople, ordered a complete stop to every expedition on the eastern front, and called for a general withdrawal of the Arab soldiers from Transoxiana. Initially, this same cautious policy was continued by Yazīd II, whose governor over Khurāsān, Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, did not pass beyond Samarqand. On the two occasions on which he crossed over the Oxus River, he punished his own raiding parties, and was dubbed "Khudhaynah," "the little princess," by his own soldiers because of his perceived weakness. But the governorship of Khudhaynah's successor, Sa'īd al-Ḥarashī,

marked a return to a more aggressive policy that resulted in the brutal pacification of Soghdia and the subjugation of Kiss and Rabinjān.

Internally, the unity of the Umayyad Empire was threatened by several phenomena, the most important being the rise of tribal factionalism. Although scholars disagree over whether the terms "Qays" and "Yaman" refer to tribal confederations, political parties, or interest groups, it is generally accepted that the Qays stood for the expansion of the empire and the exclusion of non-Arab clients, while the Yaman criticized the policy of expansion and advocated equal status for Arab Muslims and non-Arab converts to Islam. The accession of Sulaymān, who had allied himself with the Yamanīs while serving as governor of Palestine, signaled a shift in the balance of power away from the Qaysīs, as the new Caliph proceeded to dismiss the Qaysī governors appointed by his predecessors, replacing them with men from the Yaman. In distant Farghānah, the Qaysī commander, Qutaybah b. Muslim al-Bāhili, realizing that his political usefulness had come to an end, tried to raise a revolt against the new Caliph, but his supporters, both Arab and non-Arab, turned against him, slew him, and returned to their homes. An effort to mollify tribal factionalism was made by 'Umar II, who chose governors over whom he had control and whom he believed to be competent, irrespective of their tribal affiliations. This policy was short-lived, however, as 'Umar reigned for only two years. Under his successor, Yazīd II, who sought to reestablish the old order, the Qaysīs returned to power, embittered by the humiliations they had suffered since the accession of Sulaymān; they were determined to take revenge. It was during the caliphate of Yazīd II, in the year 101/719–720, that Yazīd b. al-Muhallab al-Azdī staged his revolt, an episode to which Ṭabarī devotes considerable attention. Although this was not, strictly speaking, a tribal conflict—Ibn al-Muhallab's own tribe of the Azd sided against him—it nevertheless contributed to the intensification of the factional schism as Qaysīs were installed in Iraq and the East in its aftermath. More than any other factor, these tribal rivalries, which spanned the entire empire, contributed to the downfall of the Umayyads.

The administrative boundaries of Iraq and the eastern provinces shifted several times during the short span of ten years

covered in this volume. Previously, Khurāsān had been governed from the usual seat of the governor in Iraq, but Yazīd b. al-Muhallab persuaded Sulaymān to let him govern from Khurāsān itself, which became the base of his campaigns against Jurjān and Ṭabaristān. Under 'Umar II, who supervised the actions of his governors to an unprecedented degree, the vast eastern governorate was broken up into different units, each responsible to the Caliph. Under Yazīd II, Maslamah was given joint control over al-Kūfah, al-Basrah, and Khurāsān, appointing his own governors over each locality. These shifts in administrative policy point to the fact that by the turn of the century the Umayyad government had effectively lost control of the administration of Khurāsān and the East.

In addition to the conduct of the Holy War, another major concern of the provincial governors was the collection and distribution of tribute money. The governors, the Arab tribesmen, and the Caliph were divided over the issue of whether the income from the yearly tribute should be disposed of in its entirety in the provinces or conveyed to the central government. In the year 97/715-716, Sulaymān, sensitive to the complaints of his subjects in Iraq, who had suffered under the fiscal policy of al-Ḥajjāj, sought to keep the fiscal affairs of that province under his own control by appointing his own personal representative there with special responsibility for taxation. Yazīd b. al-Muhallab was arrested by 'Umar II in the year 100/718-719 because of his failure to convey to the treasury the fifth of the booty that he had collected during the conquest of Jurjān and Ṭabaristān, a sum of six million dinārs about which he had vainly boasted in a letter to Sulaymān. Similarly, Maslamah was dismissed by his half brother Yazīd in the year 102/720-721 when he failed to send surplus revenue to the Caliph in Damascus. His replacement, 'Umar b. Hubayrah, introduced a plan according to which the right of the Arab tribesmen to the yearly tribute was limited to the amount of their stipends, while the surplus belonged to the central treasury. These struggles further reflect the breakdown of central control.

Another major source of discontent was the non-Arabs who expected to be relieved of certain taxes upon converting to Islam. This expectation posed a dilemma for the central government which, in an effort to prevent a decline in revenues, either tried to

prevent conversion to Islam or took no note of it when collecting taxes. The issue seems to have reached a climax during the caliphate of 'Umar II, who instituted his famous fiscal rescript designed to address the problems related to conversion. According to the rescript, non-Arab clients were to be freed from the *kharāj* tax and stipends were to be paid to every Muslim who accepted his military obligation, regardless of whether he was an Arab or a convert. These reforms, however, were allowed to lapse upon 'Umar's death.

Religious opposition also posed a threat to the Umayyad regime. A Khārijite revolt in the year 100/718–719, led by Shawdhab, was initially handled in a diplomatic manner by 'Umar II, "the righteous man," who summoned representatives of the rebels to enter into negotiations. After 'Umar's untimely death, the revolt was brutally suppressed by Yazīd II. Religious opposition was a factor in the revolt of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, who summoned his followers to "the Book and the *Sunnah*," and received support from both the Khārijites and the Murji'ites. But the main source of religious opposition was the clandestine 'Abbāsīd movement that would eventually topple the dynasty. Ṭabarī reports that 'Abbāsīd propaganda began in earnest in the year 100/718–719, when three emissaries who were sent to Khurāsān by Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās succeeded in enlisting seventy recruits for the movement. Even if the suspicions of Western scholars regarding the chronological accuracy of this report are justified, it is nevertheless the case that the 'Abbāsīd propaganda was in place by the year 104/722–23.

Ṭabarī presents the events of the years 96–105/715–724 in considerable detail and with great vividness. We listen to the stirring speeches of Qutaybah b. Muslim in which he urges his followers to renounce their allegiance to Sulaymān; are present at the disastrous third and final attempt to take Constantinople; watch from behind the scenes as Rajā' b. Ḥaywah skillfully engineers the accession of 'Umar II; and follow the remarkable career of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, first as a governor and conqueror, then as a prisoner, and finally as a rebel. Throughout this volume we observe the struggle of the Umayyad regime to maintain control over a rapidly expanding but increasingly dissatisfied subject population. Governors are appointed and dismissed with dizzying

rapidity, administrative boundaries are drawn and redrawn, Arab tribesmen express dissatisfaction with the diminishing rewards of military conquest, non-Arab converts chafe at the differential treatment they receive, and religious opponents revolt in the name of "the Book and the *Sunnah*." Important in their own respect, the events of this period also constitute an essential key to understanding the 'Abbāsid revolution that was about to unfold.

There remains the pleasant duty of acknowledging the indispensable assistance of friends and colleagues who contributed to the making of this translation. My colleague, Samia Mehrez, read through much of the Arabic text with me and helped to clarify the meaning of many difficult expressions. Richard Jacquemond offered valuable comments on an early draft of the manuscript. Three members of the Ṭabarī editorial board who read parts or all of the manuscript with great care, Franz Rosenthal, Jacob Lassner, and Ihsan Abbas, were especially helpful with difficult sections of the Arabic text and poetry. Finally, I am grateful to Judith Ginsburg for assistance with the Latin glosses of the Leiden text, to Penny Beebe for help with matters of style, and to Raihana Zaman for her patience and fortitude when called upon to type seemingly endless drafts of the translation. Needless to say, the responsibility for any mistakes that remain are mine and mine alone.

David Stephan Powers

This page intentionally left blank.



The Caliphate of Sulaymān
b. ʿAbd al-Malik



This page intentionally left blank.



The Events of the Year

96 (cont'd)

(SEPTEMBER 16, 714—SEPTEMBER 4, 715)¹

[1281]



Abū Ja'far (al-Ṭabarī) said: In this year, the oath of allegiance was rendered to Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik as Caliph.² This took place in al-Ramlah on the day on which al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik died.³

In this year, Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik dismissed the governor of Medina, 'Uthmān b. Ḥayyān.⁴ Muḥammad b. 'Umar mentioned that Sulaymān removed 'Uthmān from Medina on the twenty-fourth of Ramaḍān in the year 96 (June 3, 715). Abū Ja'far continued: He served as governor of Medina for three years. It is also said: His term of office was two years, less seven nights.

[1282]

According to al-Wāqidī: 'Uthmān b. Ḥayyān consented to a

1. For other sources on the caliphate of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik, see Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, 360–61; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, III, 38–45; Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, VII, 252–306; *FHA*, 16–37; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* (Beirut), III, 173–81; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, IX, 166–84; Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, 257ff.

2. See Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 314; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, IX, 166.

3. Al-Walīd died on a Saturday in the middle of Jumādā II in the year 96 (February 23, 715). See text above, II/1269–70.

4. That is, 'Uthmān b. Ḥayyān al-Murri, who al-Walīd had appointed in Sha'bān of the year 93 (May 13—June 10, 712) or Shawwāl of 94 (June 30—July 28, 713). See text above, II/1255, 1258ff.; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, III, 39.