

The History of al-Ṭabarī

VOLUME XIV

The Conquest of Iran



TRANSLATED BY G. REX SMITH

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This volume covers the years 21-23/641-43 of the caliphate of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. It can be divided into two distinct and almost equal parts: The first concerning the Muslim conquests in Iran and the east, and the second concerning 'Umar himself, his assassination, and an assessment of the caliph and the man.

The volume begins with the caliphal order to the Muslim troops, recently victorious at the famous battle of Nihāwand in 21/641, to penetrate farther into infidel lands in the east. The might of the Persian empire had been broken, and a golden opportunity offered itself to the Muslim community to expand its territories. The territorial gains thus achieved are recounted in this volume. Moving out of the garrison towns of al-Kūfah and al-Basrah, the Muslim forces' conquests of Iṣfahān, Hamadhān, al-Rayy, Qūmis, Jurjān, Tabaristān, Azerbaijan, Khurāsān, parts of Fārs province, Kirmān, Sijistān and Makrān as far as the Indus, are all described in these pages.

Contained in these accounts of far-reaching conquests are the peace documents, which are of considerable historical importance. They are typically the documents issued by the victorious Muslim commanders on the ground to the subjugated local inhabitants, laying out in precise terms the obligations of the latter toward their Muslim conquerors in return for safe conduct.

Leaving the Muslim forces on the bank of Indus, Tabarī switches his account to Medina, where in 23/643 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb was assassinated by a Christian slave. After full accounts of this deed, the reader is provided with details of the caliph's genealogy, his physical description, his birth date and age, the names of his children and wives, and the period of time he was a Muslim. A lengthy section follows, in which the deeds of 'Umar are recounted in anecdotal form. There are also quotations from his addresses to his people and some poetic eulogies addressed to him.

The volume ends with 'Umar's appointment of the electoral council, five senior figures in the Islamic community, to decide on his successor, and the fascinating and historically greatly important account of the workings of the council with all the cut and thrust of debate and the politicking behind the scenes. Thus was 'Uthmān b. 'Affān appointed to succeed 'Umar.

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(Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)

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translated and annotated
by

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you think has most right to (the office)?" He replied, "'Alī." Then ('Abd al-Raḥmān) took al-Zubayr on one side and addressed him in the same way as he had 'Alī and 'Uthmān. He replied, "'Uthmān." Then ('Abd al-Raḥmān) took Sa'd on one side and spoke to him. He answered "'Uthmān." 'Alī met Sa'd and quoted, "'Fear God by whom you make demands one of another, and the wombs [which bore you]. God is ever watching you."⁷³⁶ I am asking you, in the name of the relationship (*raḥim*) of this son of mine⁷³⁷ with the Messenger of God and that of my paternal uncle, Ḥamzah,⁷³⁸ with you, not to stand with 'Abd al-Raḥmān, assisting 'Uthmān against me. I have connections 'Uthman does not." 'Abd al-Raḥmān went round at night meeting the Companions of the Messenger of God and those army commanders and nobles who arrived in Medina and consulting with them. Everyone he took to one side gave him instructions to opt for 'Uthmān. Then on the eve of the morning of the deadline, he came to the house of al-Miswar b. Makhramah well into the night and woke him up, saying, "You're asleep, when I have had very little tonight? Off you go and summon al-Zubayr and Sa'd!"

[2784]

So (al-Miswar) summoned them and ('Abd al-Raḥmān) began with al-Zubayr at the back of the mosque under the covering (*ṣuffah*) that adjoins the house of Marwān,⁷³⁹ saying, "Let the rule go to the sons of 'Abd Manāf!"⁷⁴⁰ (Al-Zubayr) said, "I throw in my lot with 'Alī." ('Abd al-Raḥmān) said to Sa'd, "We are cousins. Throw in your lot with me so that I can choose." He replied, "If you choose yourself, that is fine! But if you choose 'Uthmān, then I prefer to support 'Alī. Have yourself accepted [as caliph], give us some respite and raise up our heads." ('Abd al-Raḥmān) said, "Abū Ishāq, I have withdrawn from (the ca-

736. Qur'ān, IV:1.

737. The text has a singular, "son," presumably al-Ḥasan, who was born from the womb of Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter. The parallel text of the *Iqd* (IV, 278), however, has a dual, "these two sons of mine"; viz., al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.

738. Ḥamzah b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the brother of 'Alī's father, Abū Ṭālib.

739. This is perhaps the young Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, the future fourth Umayyad caliph, who died in 65/685.

740. That is, 'Alī and 'Uthmān. See note 727, above.