

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

G. Rex Smith

The University of Manchester

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allegiance. 'Alī said, "You have always been partial in his favor!"⁷⁴⁶ This is not the first time you have banded together against us. But [my course is] comely patience and God's help is to be asked against what you describe."⁷⁴⁷ You have appointed 'Uthmān only so that the rule will come back to you. 'Every day God exercises power.'"⁷⁴⁸ 'Abd al-Raḥmān retorted, "Do not lay yourself open to criticism, 'Alī. I have looked into the matter and consulted the people. They regard no one as the equal of 'Uthmān." 'Alī left, saying, "[God's] decree will come in its time!" Al-Miqdād said, "You have indeed, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, passed up the one who makes decisions based 'on the truth and thereby acts justly.'"⁷⁴⁹ ('Abd al-Raḥmān) replied, "I have indeed exerted all my efforts for the Muslims, Miqdād." (The former) said, "If you sincerely did what you did for God's sake, may He reward you as He does those who do good." [But] al-Miqdād said, "I have never seen such things as have been visited upon the people of this house after the death of their Prophet. I am amazed at Quraysh that they have abandoned someone who cannot be matched in my opinion in knowledge and the ability to act justly. What indeed if I were to find supporters against 'Uthmān!" 'Abd al-Raḥmān replied, "Fear God, Miqdād, I am afraid you will cause dissension." Someone questioned al-Miqdād, "God have mercy upon you, who are the people of this house and who is this man?" He replied, "The people of the house are Banū al-Muṭṭalib and the man is 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib." 'Alī said, "The people are looking to Quraysh, while Quraysh are [also] looking to their own house. (Quraysh) say that, if Banū Hāshim are put in authority over you, (the caliphate) will never leave them; but so long as it is in the hands of [clans] other than (Banū Hāshim) of Quraysh, you will pass it around among yourselves."

[2787]

Ṭalḥah arrived on the day on which the oath of allegiance

746. This appears to be what is meant by the Arabic *ḥabawta-hu ḥabwa dahrin*; see *Glossarium*, ccxlv. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Iqd*, IV, 279, has *ḥabawta-hu muḥābātan*.

747. Qur'ān, XII:18.

748. Qur'ān, LV:29.

749. See Qur'ān, VII:159, 181.

was given to 'Uthmān. He was asked to give his own oath to 'Uthmān, but asked, "Do all Quraysh approve of him?" and was told they did. He came to 'Uthman and the latter said, "You still have your options open; if you refuse [to give me the oath of allegiance], I shall reject (the caliphate)." Ṭalḥah said, "Will you really reject it?" 'Uthmān replied that he would. Ṭalḥah asked, "Have all the people given you the oath of allegiance?" 'Uthmān replied that they had. (Ṭalḥah) said, "Then I approve; I shall not go against the general consensus." He gave ('Uthmān) the oath of allegiance.

Al-Mughīrah b. Shu'bah said to 'Abd al-Raḥmān, "You were right to give 'Uthmān the oath of allegiance, Abū Muḥammad." He also said to 'Uthmān, "If 'Abd al-Raḥmān had given the oath of allegiance to anyone other than you, we would not have agreed." But 'Abd al-Raḥmān retorted, "You one-eyed liar! If I had given anyone else the oath of allegiance, you would have done so also and would have said what you say now."

Al-Farazdaq said.⁷⁵⁰

Ṣuhayb led the prayer for three nights; then ('Abd al-Raḥmān) handed over (the caliphate) to Ibn 'Affān, unlimited authority, A caliphate [which passed on] from Abū Bakr to his colleague, [Abū Bakr] rightly guided and ['Umar] under his command—they were [all] sincere friends."

[2788] Al-Miswar b. Makhramah used to say, "I have never seen a man get the better of a group of people in the matter in which they were engaged more effectively than 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf did of (the electoral council) in this case."

Abū Ja'far [al-Ṭabarī] said: We [also] have the account of al-Miswar b. Makhramah. According to Salm b. Junādah Abū al-Sā'ib—Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Abī Thābit b. 'Abd al-

⁷⁵⁰ The meter is *basīf*. Al-Farazdaq is the famous poet, Hammām b. Ghālib b. Ṣa'ṣa'ah, always associated with al-Akḥṭal and Jarīr. Al-Farazdaq died ca. 111/729. Cf. *El²*, s.v. (Blachère); for a more recent assessment of al-Farazdaq and his work, see Jayyusi, "Umayyad Poetry," 401ff. The poet here is eulogizing the Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik and satirizing Yazīd b. al-Muhallab. Cf. al-Farazdaq, *Dīwān*, I, 265.