

The History of al-Ṭabarī

VOLUME XXXIII

Storm and Stress along
the Northern Frontiers of the
ʿAbbāsid Caliphate



TRANSLATED BY C. E. BOSWORTH

The History Of Altabari Suny Series In Near Eastern Studies

Mark Steyvers



The History Of Altabari Suny Series In Near Eastern Studies:

Set - History of al-Ṭabarī Ehsan Yarshater, 2007-06-01 Collecting all forty volumes of The History of al abar The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 6 Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 1988-01-01 The sixth volume of the translation of al abar s History deals with the ancestors of Mu ammad with his own early life and then with his prophetic mission up to the time of his Hijrah or emigration to Medina The topics covered mean that this volume is of great importance both for the career of Muhammad himself and for the early history of Islam Al abar was familiar with and made use of the main early source of these matters the Sirah or life of Mu ammad by Ibn Is q a work which is still extant Although his own treatment is briefer than that of Ibn Is q it complements the latter in important ways by making use of other sources Where Ibn Is q gave only the version of an event which he preferred al abar includes any variants which he considered of value Thus he mentions the dispute about the first male to become a muslim Ali or Ab Bakr or Zayd and has also several variant accounts of the call to hostility toward Muhammad from many of the leading Meccans and their attempts to put pressure on his family to stop his preaching The negotiations with the men of Medina which eventually led to the Hijrah are fully described and there is then an account of how Mu ammad escaped an assassination attempt and arrived safely in Medina A concluding section discusses some chronological questions This volume does not merely give a straightforward account of the earlier career of Mu ammad and the beginnings of Islam but also contains valuable source material not easily accessible otherwise or not accessible at all

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 38, 2015-07-08 The concluding pages of al abar s History cover the caliphates of al Mu ta id and al Muktaf and the beginning of the reign of al Muqtadir altogether a period of 23 turbulent years in world history Although al abar has woven skillful narratives and quoted important documents verbatim much of the information consists of brief notes jotted down by an observant and well placed contemporary who witnessed the events as they occurred The reporting is thus both vivid and within limits historically reliable Happenings at court military activities on the northern and eastern frontiers of the empire and the difficulties caused by the Qarmatian movement are all brought to life in this volume

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 27, 2015-07-09 By 735 an Arab empire stretched from Arles and Avignon in southern France to the Indus River and Central Asia and a vital young civilization fostered by a new world religion was taking root Yet the Muslim conquerors were divided by tribal quarrels tensions among new converts and religious revolts In 745 a vigorous new successor to the Prophet took control in Damascus and began to restore the waning power of the Umayyad dynasty Marw n II s attempts were thwarted however by revolts on every hand even among his own relatives The main body of dissidents was a well trained group of revolutionaries in Khurasan led by the remarkable Abu Muslim By 748 they had seized control of the province and drive the governor Na r ibn Sayy r al L ythi to his death and were advancing westward This volume tells of the end of the Umayyad caliphate the Abb sid Revolution and the establishment of the new dynasty The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 30 Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 1989-01-01 This volume of al abar s History covers

nearly a quarter of a century and after covering the very brief caliphate of al-Hādī concentrates on that of Harun al-Rashīd. During these years the caliphate was in a state of balance with its external foes: the great enemy Christian Byzantium was regarded with respect by the Muslims and the two great powers of the Near East treated each other essentially as equals while the Caucasian and Central Asian frontiers were held against pressure from the Turkish peoples of Inner Eurasia. The main stresses were internal including Shi'ite risings on behalf of the excluded house of Alī and revolts by the radical equalitarian Kharijites but none of these was serious enough to affect the basic stability of the caliphate. Harun al-Rashīd's caliphate has acquired in the West under the influence of a misleading picture from the Arabian Nights a glowing image as a golden age of Islamic culture and letters stemming from the Caliph's patronage of the exponents of these arts and sciences. In light of the picture of the Caliph which emerges from al-Tabarī's pages however this image seems to be distinctly exaggerated. Al-Rashīd himself does not exhibit any notable signs of administrative competence, military leadership or intellectual interests beyond those which convention demanded of a ruler. For much of his reign he left the business of government to the capable viziers of the Barmakid family; the account of whose spectacular fall from power forms one of the most dramatic features of al-Tabarī's narratives here. And his decision to divide the Islamic empire after his death between his sons was to lead subsequently to a disastrous civil war. Nevertheless al-Tabarī's story is full of interesting sidelights on the lives of those involved in the court circle of the time and on the motivations which impelled medieval Muslims to seek precarious careers there. A discounted price is available when purchasing the entire 39 volume History of al-Tabarī set. Contact SUNY Press for more information.

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 1, 2015-06-10. Volume I of the thirty-eight volume translation of al-Tabarī's great History begins with the creation of the world and ends with the time of Noah and the Flood. It not only brings a vast amount of speculation about the early history of mankind into sharp Muslim focus but it also synchronizes ancient Iranian ideas about the prehistory of mankind with those inspired by the Qur'an and the Bible. The volume is thus an excellent guide to the cosmological views of many of al-Tabarī's contemporaries. The translator Franz Rosenthal, one of the world's foremost scholars of Arabic, has also written an extensive introduction to the volume that presents all the facts known about al-Tabarī's personal and professional life. Professor Rosenthal's meticulous and original scholarship has yielded a valuable bibliography and chronology of al-Tabarī's writings, both those preserved in manuscript and those alluded to by other authors. The introduction and first volume of the translation of the History form a ground-breaking contribution to Islamic historiography in English and will prove to be an invaluable source of information for those who are interested in Middle Eastern history but are unable to read the basic works in Arabic.

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 2 Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, 1987-01-01. This volume records the lives and efforts of some of the prophets preceding the birth of Muhammad. It devotes most of its message to two towering figures: Abraham the Friend of God and his great grandson Joseph. The story is not however simply a repetition of Biblical tales in a slightly altered form; for al-Tabarī sees the ancient pre-Islamic Near East as an area in which the

histories of three different peoples are acted out occasionally meeting and intertwining Thus ancient Iran Israel and Arabia serve as the stages on which actors such as Biwarasb the semi legendary Iranian king Noah and his progeny and the otherwise unknown Arabian prophets Hud and Salih appear and act In the pages of this volume we read of the miraculous birth and early life of Abraham and of his struggle against his father s idolatry God grants him sons Ishmael from Hagar and Isaac from Sarah and the conflicts between the two mothers the subsequent expulsion of Hagar and her settling in the vicinity of Mecca all lead to the story of Abraham s being commanded to build God s sanctuary there Abraham is tested by God both by being commanded to sacrifice his son and here abar shows his fairness by presenting the arguments of Muslim scholars as to whether that son was Ishmael or Isaac and by being given commandments to follow both in personal behavior and in ritual practice The account of Abraham is interlaced with tales of the cruel tyrant Nimrod who tried in vain both to burn Abraham in fire and to reach the heavens to fight with God The story of Abraham s nephew Lot and the wicked people of Sodom also appears here with the scholars once again arguing this time over what the exact crimes were for which the Sodomites were destroyed Before proceeding to the story of Joseph which is recounted in great detail we linger over the accounts of two figures associated with ancient Arabia in Muslim tradition the Biblical Job who despite his trials and sufferings does not rail against God and Shu ayb usually associated with the Biblical Jethro the priest of Midian and father in law of Moses Finally we meet Joseph whose handsome appearance paternal preference and subsequent boasting to his brothers lead to his being cast into a pit and ending up as a slave in Egypt His career is traced in some detail the attempted seduction by Potiphar s wife his imprisonment and eventual release after becoming able to interpret dreams and his rise to power as ruler of Egypt The volume ends with the moving story of Joseph s reunion with his brothers the tragicomic story of how he reveals himself to them and the final reunion with his aged father who is brought to Egypt to see his son s power and glory This is proto history told in fascinating detail of us in different contexts as well as of others completely unknown to Western readers

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 18 ,2015-06-17 This volume presents for the first time in English abar s complete account of the twenty year long reign of the fifth caliph Mu wiyah 661 680 The importance of this account lies partly in abar s quotation of major portions of the work of earlier authors such as Abu Mikhnaf and other eighth century compilers It is also significant because abar s selection of themes has had a decisive influence on modern interpretations of this period particularly on the identification of what the important issues were in the works of Henri Lammens and Julius Wellhausen Here one can read the exciting account of the Kh rijī revolt of Mustawrid ibn Ullifah the impressive but controversial record of the governorship of Ziy d ibn Ab hi the entertaining escapades of the poet Farazdaq in his youth and the tragic story of ujr ibn Ad abar s presentation of different points of view about these and other events makes his account an indispensable source for early Islamic history

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 4 ,2015-06-11 In this volume abar takes up the history of the ancient world focusing on the Iranians and the Israelites after the time of Solomon He establishes a

comparative chronology between the two nations viewing Bahman the Persian king as the son of Esther and his daughter Khumani the mother of Darius abar's synchronization also leads him into a discussion of North and South Arabia in which stories about King Jadhimah Queen Zabba and the tribes of abar and Jadis appear Falling outside the general scheme of the volume are other details These are concentrated in five chapters on the biblical stories of Samson and Delilah and on Jonah commentary on a Quranic passage concerning three divine envoys and on two stories of Christian antiquity the Seven Sleepers and the martyr Jirjis abar presents a mass of Iranian Jewish Christian and Arabian lore in order to create a unified view of the material His treatment of the mythical Iranian kings as they battle Turanians and other foes extends beyond the time of Alexander and his successors to the era of the Gospels John the Baptist and Jesus Tales of the Israelites include the story of Asa and Zerah the Indian remarkable for its development of the Biblical nucleus and variants of the history of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 29, 2015-06-29 This volume opens when the caliph al Man r has just defeated the rebellion of Mu ammad the Pure Soul in 145 762 3 and is now securely established in power The main concerns of the remaining thirteen years of his reign are the building of his new capital at Baghdad on which al al abar's text contains details not previously published in English and his efforts to have his nephew Is ibn M's replaced as heir apparent by his own son Mu ammad al Mahd a maneuver that required all his political skills The circumstances of al Man r's death in 158 775 are described in vivid detail and this section is followed by a series of anecdotes some serious some humorous most vivid and lively that illustrate his character and habits The last section of the volume describes the reign of al Mahd more pious than his father but also more liberal and open handed Along with routine administration space is devoted to the bizarre intrigues that accompanied the rise and fall of the vizier Ya qub ibn Dawud and the mysterious circumstances of the caliph's own death in 169 785 followed by a short collection of character stories In addition the volume also contains important information about warfare on the Byzantine frontier and in Khurasan A discounted price is available when purchasing the entire 39 volume History of al abar set Contact SUNY Press for more information

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 6, 2015-06-11 The sixth volume of the translation of al abar's History deals with the ancestors of Mu ammad with his own early life and then with his prophetic mission up to the time of his Hijrah or emigration to Medina The topics covered mean that this volume is of great importance both for the career of Muhammad himself and for the early history of Islam Al abar was familiar with and made use of the main early source of these matters the Sirah or life of Mu ammad by Ibn Is q a work which is still extant Although his own treatment is briefer than that of Ibn Is q it complements the latter in important ways by making use of other sources Where Ibn Is q gave only the version of an event which he preferred al abar includes any variants which he considered of value Thus he mentions the dispute about the first male to become a muslim Ali or Ab Bakr or Zayd and has also several variant accounts of the call to hostility toward Muhammad from many of the leading Meccans and their attempts to put pressure on his family to stop his preaching The negotiations with the men of Medina

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witnessed the last five years of the caliphate of the Umayyad Abd al Malik ibn Marw n and the whole of the caliphate of his son al Wal d In retrospect this period can be seen to have marked the apogee of Marw nid Umayyad power It began with the dangerous revolt of the Iraqi tribal leader Ibn al Ash ath which seriously imperilled Marw nid control of Iraq and was countered with considerable difficulty but this proved to be the last of the obstacles faced by Abd al Malik in the wake of the Second Civil War of 685 693 Thereafter he was able to preside over a strong and dynamic Arab kingdom with al ajj j ibn Y suf as his powerful governor of Iraq and the East When Abd al Malik died in 705 the caliphate passed to his son al Wal d during whose decade of office al ajj j remained at his post and further Arab expansion took place in Central Asia in Sind and in the Iberian Peninsula To many of their contemporaries the Arabs of that time must have looked like potential world conquerors The volume ends shortly after the deaths of al ajj j and al Wal d and just two years before the dispatch in 717 of the ill fated Arab expedition to Constantinople **The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 21** Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr

al-Ṭabarī, 1990-03-16 Volume XXI of The History of al abar from the second part of 66 685 to 73 693 covers the resolution of the Second Civil War This conflict which has broken out in 64 683 after the death of the Umayyad caliph Yaz d I involved the rival claims of the Umayyads centered in Syria and the Zubayrids centered in the Hijaz each of whom claimed the caliphal title Commander of the Faithful Both parties contented for control of Iraq which was also the setting for al Mukht r s Sh ite uprising in al K fah during 66 685 and 67 686 Kh rijite groups were active in south western Iran and central Arabia even threatening the heavily settled lands of Iraq By the end of 73 692 the Umayyad regime in Damascus led by Abd al Malik had extinguished the rival caliphate of Ibn al Zubayr and had reestablished a single more or less universally acknowledged political authority for the Islamic community Al abar s account of these years is drawn from such earlier historians as Abu Mikhnaf al Mad in and al Waqidi and includes eyewitness accounts quotations from poems and texts of sermons Notable episodes include al Mukht r s slaying of those who had been involved in the death of al Husayn at Karbala the death of al

Mukhtar at the hands of Mu'ab ibn al-Zubayr the revolt of Amr ibn Sa'd in Damascus the death of Mu'ab at the Battle of Dayr al-Jathaliq and al-Hajjaj's siege and conquest of Mecca on behalf of Abd al-Malik There are excursuses on the chair that al-Mukhtar venerated as a relic of Ali the biography of the colorful brigand Ubayd Allah b. al-Urr and the development of the secretarial office in Islam The translation has been fully annotated Parallels in the works of Ibn Sa'd al-Baladhuri and the Kitabal-Aghani have been indicated in the notes where these accounts supplement or diverge from that of al-Abar The History of al-Tabari Vol. 34 ,2015-07-01 The events described in this volume took place during al-Abar's own time Al-Abar was thus writing contemporary history and his narrative often based on first hand reports is drawn in vivid and arresting detail The volume portrays the summit of the Sarr period following al-Mu'tasim's transfer of the Abbasid capital upstream from Baghdad to Samarra Three caliphs are portrayed in this volume al-Mu'tasim's son and successor al-Wathiq al-Wathiq's brother al-Mutawakkil and al-Mutawakkil's son al-Muntasir At this time the Abbasid caliphs came under the dominant influence of the Turkish military elite The crowning example of Turkish power and Abbasid frailty was the dramatic assassination of al-Mutawakkil by Turkish officers within the precincts of his own palace The Turks were afterward not only instrumental in raising al-Muntasir the caliphate they also forced him to depose his two brothers as heirs apparent Finally they had al-Muntasir himself killed During the period of al-Wathiq and al-Mutawakkil insurrections erupted in the center of the empire and serious revolts broke out in distant provinces including Africa and Armenia The Byzantine raids on Damietta and Samosata were memorable events and periodic Muslim forays were made into Byzantine territory Prisoner exchanges between Muslims and Byzantines are reported in engaging detail on the basis of eyewitness testimony The report of a prisoner release by a Shiite emissary to the Byzantine emperor contains a charming description of his visit to Constantinople and his audience with Michael III A discounted price is available when purchasing the entire 39 volume History of al-Abar set Contact SUNY Press for more information **The History of al-Tabari Vol. 30** ,2015-06-29 This volume of al-Abar's History covers nearly a quarter of a century and after covering the very brief caliphate of al-Hadi concentrates on that of Harun al-Rashid During these years the caliphate was in a state of balance with its external foes the great enemy Christian Byzantium was regarded with respect by the Muslims and the two great powers of the Near East treated each other essentially as equals while the Caucasian and Central Asian frontiers were held against pressure from the Turkish peoples of Inner Eurasia The main stresses were internal including Shiite risings on behalf of the excluded house of Ali and revolts by the radical equalitarian Kharijites but none of these was serious enough to affect the basic stability of the caliphate Harun al-Rashid's caliphate has acquired in the West under the influence of a misleading picture from the Arabian Nights a glowing image as a golden age of Islamic culture and letters stemming from the Caliph's patronage of the exponents of these arts and sciences In light of the picture of the Caliph which emerges from al-Abar's pages however this image seems to be distinctly exaggerated Al-Rashid himself does not exhibit any notable signs of administrative competence military leadership or

intellectual interests beyond those which convention demanded of a ruler For much of his reign he left the business of government to the capable viziers of the Barmakid family the account of whose spectacular fall from power forms one of the most dramatic features of al-Tabarī's narratives here and his decision to divide the Islamic empire after his death between his sons was to lead subsequently to a disastrous civil war Nevertheless al-Tabarī's story is full of interesting sidelights on the lives of those involved in the court circle of the time and on the motivations which impelled medieval Muslims to seek precarious careers there A discounted price is available when purchasing the entire 39 volume History of al-Tabarī set Contact SUNY Press for more information

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 24 ,2015-06-29 In this volume which covers the caliphates of Sulaymān Umar II and Yazīd II al-Tabarī provides vivid and detailed accounts of the events spanning the period from 97 105 715 724 We listen to the stirring speeches of Qutaybah ibn 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 Raja ibn al-Awwah skillfully engineers the accession of Umar II and follow the remarkable career of Yazīd b al-Muhallab first as governor and conqueror then as prisoner and finally as 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 right the events of this period provide an essential key to a proper understanding of the Abbasid revolution that lay just over the horizon A discounted price is available when purchasing the entire 39 volume History of al-Tabarī set Contact SUNY Press for more information

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 31 ,2015-06-29 This section of the History of al-Tabarī covers the caliphate of Mu'ammad al-Amin who succeeded his father Harun al-Rashid on March 24 809 and was killed on September 25 813 The focus of this section is a single event the civil war between al-Amin and his half brother al-Ma'mun Before his death al-Rashid had arranged for the succession in a series of documents signed at Mecca and deposited for safekeeping in the Ka'bah Al-Amin was to become caliph al-Ma'mun was to govern Khurasan with virtual autonomy from Baghdad Al-Amin could neither remove his brother from office nor interfere with his revenues or military support Furthermore al-Ma'mun was named as al-Amin's successor and al-Amin was forbidden to alter the succession If either brother violated these conditions he was to forfeit his rights It soon became apparent that the good will to carry out these arrangements did not exist Disagreement broke out when al-Amin insisted that many of the forces that had accompanied al-Rashid and al-Ma'mun to Khurasan return to Baghdad When the majority of army commanders obeyed the new caliph's orders al-Ma'mun was enraged and countered with measures to secure his position Angry letters were exchanged with al-Amin pressing his brother to make concessions that al-Ma'mun regarded as contrary to the succession agreement By March 811 military conflict was imminent Al-Amin demanded

that certain border districts be returned to the control of Baghdad When al Ma m n refused al Am n despatched an expedition to seize the districts Al Am n s resort to force ended in disaster Al Ma m n s forces led by hir ibn al usayn and Harthamah ibn A yan quickly closed in on Baghdad In a siege lasting over a year Baghdad suffered extensive damage from the fighting and from bombardment by siege engines Gangs of vagrants and paupers organized by al Am n into irregular units fought a kind of urban guerrilla war But with Tahir and Harthamah enforcing the siege and with most of al Am n s associates having switched their loyalties to the winning side the caliph was forced to sue for terms These were worked out among representatives of al Am n Tahir and Harthamah However when the caliph boarded the boat that was to take him into Harthamah s custody troops loyal to Tahir assaulted and capsized the boat Al Am n fell into the Tigris was apprehended and was executed that night on orders from Tahir Thus ended this phase of the civil war Al Ma m n was now caliph Al abar i s history of these years includes accounts by participants in the event diplomatic letters between al Am n and al Ma m n Tahir s long letter to al Ma m n on the circumstances of al Amin s death and a dramatic eyewitness account of al Am n s last hours Also noteworthy is a 135 verse poem describing the devastation of Baghdad The section ends with a series of literary anecdotes on the character of al Am n

The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. 37, 2015-07-07 This volume of al abar s annals deals almost exclusively with the final stages of the Zanj revolt the most serious external challenge faced by the central authorities in the last half of the third ninth century The rebellion which began as an Alid uprising but soon gave way to Kh rijite influences was a movement that attracted the disenfranchised elements of society in lower Iraq Their battle against the tested armies of the Caliphate continued over three decades And while the Zanj were never able to translate their localized successes into any decisive victory they caused widespread chaos and great concern for those who had a vested interest in political and economic stability In many respects the Zanj resemble modern revolutionary movements that live off the countryside and harass the authorities They emerged occasionally for conventional battles but more often than not they resorted to unconventional warfare taking advantage of the extremely difficult terrain in the marshy areas of the region that gave rise to them To defeat them the government armies had to improvise new tactics and a strategy based on the lessons of early defeats

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