

# The History of al-Ṭabarī

VOLUME XIII

The Conquest of Iraq,  
Southwestern Persia,  
and Egypt



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TRANSLATED BY GAUTIER H. A. JUYNBOLL

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***THE HISTORY OF AL-ṬABARĪ***

AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION

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VOLUME XIII

*The Conquest of Iraq,*

*Southwestern Persia, and Egypt*

THE MIDDLE YEARS OF 'UMAR'S CALIPHATE

A.D. 636-642 / A.H. 15-21



**The History of al-Ṭabarī**

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

VOLUME XIII

**The Conquest of Iraq,  
Southwestern Persia, and Egypt**

translated and annotated  
by

***Gautier H. A. Juynboll***

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## Preface

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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.



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## Abbreviations

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**BOS:** *Bonner Orientalistische Studien.*

**EP<sup>2</sup>:** *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Leiden, 1960—.

**GAS:** F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, Vol 1, Leiden, 1967.

**IJMES:** *International Journal of Middle East Studies.*

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

**JSAL:** *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam.*

**WKAS:** *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache*, ed. M. Ullmann et al., Wiesbaden, 1970.

**ZDMG:** *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.*

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## Translator's Foreword

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This volume is almost exclusively associated with Sayf b. 'Umar (d. between 170/786 and 193/809), that controversial collector of material mainly dealing with the early conquests. With Oriental scholars in the Middle Ages as well as with western scholars during the last one hundred years or so, Sayf's material has always been a matter of debate as to whether or not it has any historical basis. However, this volume does not offer historical analysis; that I gladly leave to others better qualified. There is only one thing that I should like to dwell on briefly; that is the question of Sayf's seemingly inflated numbers.

If one reads through a volume such as this, one cannot help but wonder from where Sayf got his numbers. Presumably from his authorities. But who is responsible for inflating them? Now, whether it is Sayf himself, or an authority between him and Ṭabarī, or Ṭabarī himself (which seems the least likely), or an authority from Sayf down to the eyewitness of the event, who is responsible for multiplying the original numbers by a certain figure in order to inflate them is a matter of guesswork. In fact anybody qualifies; the question defies answering. But I cannot help feeling that if, just for the sake of argument, we assume that the anonymous multiplier consistently used *one and the same* multiplication coefficient for all the numbers, for sums of money as well as for numbers of soldiers participating in a certain battle, the modern reader would be able to reconstruct Sayf's numbers by dividing them by this same coefficient. The main problem we are left



with, then, is to decide on a hypothetical coefficient which, once applied, reduces Sayf's figures in such a way that the historical account becomes somewhat more plausible.

I have found that the constituting elements of the historical reports presented here become a great deal more believable when a certain division coefficient is applied. Then most of the reports begin to make historical sense, or at least, they cease to be utterly grotesque.

While I was doing the translation, it occurred to me that the figure one hundred could be deemed a suitable coefficient. Every number in a Sayf report divided by one hundred produces a result, the proportions of which are at least believable. Since nearly all Sayf's numbers are above one thousand, this could be done on a wide scale. Suddenly the accounts of "skirmishes" involving 5,000, say, become skirmishes (without quotes) in which only fifty take part, figures of one million dirhams become 10,000 dirhams, etc. Even if there is not a shred of evidence for this surmise, reading an historical account which is in so many other aspects delightful and in which the numbers assume believable proportions is, I think, a much more rewarding pastime than being constantly reminded of the compulsive inflation of the figures due to the interference of a collector/transmitter, who was under the impression that inflated numbers made his story more heroic and thus more popular.

But then, what do we do with figures that produce numbers too low to fit the context when divided by the coefficient one hundred? I have found that figures lower than one thousand, which divided by one hundred no longer make sense, do produce a plausible number when divided by, say, ten.

The figures ten and one hundred are not entirely random. There is one passage in which a certain vacillation with the transmitter in the multiplying of his figures seems to be discernible. See what happens: At a dangerous river crossing, the advance party sent ahead is first described as numbering six hundred, then from them a selection of sixty is made, but in the end the advance party actually identified by name as having established the beachhead comprises six people (plus one anonymous youngster). Six hundred—sixty—six. This last figure begins to make sense. So my choice of the coefficients ten and one hundred seems to work in

this particular context. Is it not tempting to consider this passage, which is presented by Ṭabarī at [p. 2433] below, also as one that allows us a peep into the workshop of our unknown multiplier with a seemingly obvious predilection for the decimal system?

There is another incident, not contained in this volume, but in Volume XII of this series, that conceivably might be taken as an indication that the coefficients one hundred, or with lower figures ten, have something to commend them (see Volume XII, [p. 2305]).

At a certain point in the battle of al-Qādisiyyah, reinforcements of 6,000 troops arrive from Syria to lend support. One of Sayf's heroes, al-Qa'qā' b. 'Amr, leads 1,000 of them to a particular spot, divides his riders into units of ten, and sends them into the fray. These tens, according to the account, make all the difference, and the Muslims, thus "reinforced," carry the day.

One may wonder, then, why the entire force of one thousand was not ordered to attack all at once? The overall outcome of the battle of al-Qādisiyyah could have been decided then and there. But no, it had to be achieved at the hands of units of ten. At the same time, we are asked to believe that units of ten, sent to reinforce an army of tens of thousands, make all that much difference, and if we assume that as large a number as one hundred or more units of ten were mobilized consecutively and sent into battle one after the other, we must realize that that is what the story sets out to convey, although it does not say so in so many words.

If we take this information at face value, we are asked to lend credence to the description of a battle, involving tens of thousands of troops on either side, in which *not* reinforcements totalling 6,000, but small units of ten, determine the outcome. Well, after all the numbers of Persians and Muslims on either side have been divided by one hundred, we are shown a battlefield and a military activity in which fresh injections of ten warriors each may conceivably have swayed the balance in favour of one of the warring parties toward victory, rather than stalemate or defeat. After this division coefficient has been applied, the story is no longer marred by "embellishments" in the shape of inflated numbers, which tend to put the reader off rather than entertain him. Other suitable division coefficients can be expected to give satis-

factory results, as in the case of collectors other than Sayf. Ten and one hundred have worked very well for me in this volume.

For a historiographical evaluation of Sayf's collection, see the recently published translation of A. A. Duri's classic, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, index s.v. The *isnāds*, which Sayf frequently uses, are analyzed in Martin Hinds's paper "Sayf b. 'Umar's Sources on Arabia" in *Studies in the History of Arabia*, 1/2, 3-16. In his *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 446, F. M. Donner announces the forthcoming publication of a general study on early Arabic historical sources, which may be expected to contain new insights into the Sayf saga. Donner also grapples with the convoluted chronology of Sayf which is very much in evidence in this volume. The final word about this controversial issue has not been said, however.

In this translation, my principal objective has been to make Sayf's (or some other anonymous redactor's) difficult and at times ultra concise Arabic available in *readable* English. On numerous occasions that entailed having to add in parentheses words or phrases meant to facilitate comprehension (although, much to my regret, very many of these parentheses were subsequently removed by an editor). Readers interested in the ancient and often quaint Arabic prose of the original need simply skip these insertions. But by reading it in this way, one will quickly realize that, without the insertions, understanding what the early historian or eyewitness was driving at is no mean task. What makes the Arabic in this volume especially difficult is the often seemingly insoluble mishmash of unidentified pronominal suffixes and subject markers. Suffixes like *-hum*, *-hu*, and *-hā*, as well as their corresponding pronouns, occur by the dozen in relatively brief passages that abound in verbs whose subjects are left unspecified, thereby causing the translator many problems which at first defy solution. I was helped by realizing that many of these difficult passages may have begun as stories told by early Islamic storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*), who facilitate their audiences' comprehension with the help of gestures. By pointing, for example, in one direction he indicates "the Muslims," in the other direction "the enemy," and so on, whereas in print we may only find the suffix *-hum* used in both cases.

In order to avoid stiltedness as much as possible, I have made

use of the following devices: I have cut up extended parataxis by resorting to hypotaxis conveying the same meaning. That has also entailed translating main clauses as if they were *ḥāls* or relative clauses. Conversely, I have tried to enhance readability by translating many secondary clauses, *ḥāls* and *ṣilahs* as main clauses. Thus I have often rendered secondary clauses introduced by *ḥattā* followed by a perfect with "Finally. . . ." Furthermore, in many instances, it seemed a good idea to translate *ḥāls* as relative clauses and vice versa. But on the whole I have kept close to the original Arabic.

However, with the numerous poetic fragments scattered over this volume, I have taken the liberty of rendering them somewhat more freely. The reason for this, as well as the methods followed, are outlined in Appendix I. Here we also find a running commentary on the verses, as well as less free renderings, where that has been deemed necessary.

Appendix II contains an early twentieth-century plan of the situation around the city of Tustar, once allegedly besieged by Muslim forces, a siege described in this volume. This description tallies so remarkably well with the details given in Sayf's account that I have decided to include it.

Apart from Sayf, whose reports constitute the bulk of this volume, we occasionally encounter Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī, al-Madā'inī and a few others. But on the whole, this is a Sayfian volume, as the style in which most of the reports are composed makes abundantly clear to those familiar with Ṭabarī's *Annales*. Sayf's material has rarely been drawn upon by other historians. Ibn al-Athīr copied, or better excerpted, Ṭabarī's Sayf material for his own work, but the fact that he left out virtually every passage whose interpretation posed the slightest problem in my view justifies the surmise that Ibn al-Athīr did not himself grasp the meaning, or if he did, perhaps he thought that his readers would not. At any rate, parallel passages in other historical works are few and offer barely any textual overlap that might have helped in the interpretation of Sayf's original. The only other historical work containing extensive Sayf passages is still in manuscript; I mean the *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* by 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh Ibn Ḥubaysh (d. 584 [1147]). This work is preserved in two manuscripts, one in Berlin and one in Leiden.

Apart from two Istanbul manuscripts containing sections of Ṭabari's *Annales* called C and Co, which can be considered as fairly defective, Eugen Prym, the editor of the Ṭabari volume of which this book is a partial translation, had no more manuscript material at his disposal than the manuscripts of Ibn Ḥubaysh's work.

While translating this volume, I have made frequent use of the Leiden Ibn Ḥubaysh (Or. 342). In spite of repeated efforts, I have not been able to obtain microfilms of the Istanbul manuscripts. In the end, I had to make do with Prym's text as it stands. Although I have the greatest admiration for that scholar's obviously phenomenal knowledge of, and feeling for, this ancient Arabic, his edition still contains many passages with which there are some things wrong and which seem to defy any attempt at emendation. Even so, on a few occasions I have proposed corrections duly discussed in the notes.

Of all the friends and colleagues who have given a hand in the solving of the numerous problems encountered in a translation of this kind I shall name here just a few. Thus I should like to thank Peri Bearman (Leiden) and Robert Hillenbrand (Edinburgh) for the care they exercised in going over parts of this translation to rid it of infelicities of style.

But, more than anybody else, Martin Hinds (Cambridge) helped me with constant advice. He read the entire volume and gave me freely of his incomparable expertise. His numerous judicious suggestions and ingenious emendations are scattered throughout the footnotes. He also drew my attention to a number of secondary sources and studies unknown to me, which proved to be valuable in the interpretation of many obscure passages. His untimely death in December of 1988 was a great shock to me, as to all his friends. In deep gratitude and affection I dedicate this volume to his memory.

G. H. A. Juynboll



## The Events of the Year

### I 5 (cont'd)

(FEBRUARY 14, 636—FEBRUARY 1, 637)



Now we will enumerate the reports about those battles, that is [2419]  
the battles that took place until the end of the year. As I mentioned, scholars differed about what took place.<sup>1</sup>

According to al-Sarī<sup>2</sup>—Shu'ayb—Sayf—Muḥammad, al-Muḥallab, 'Amr and Sa'īd: 'Umar enjoined Sa'd, when he ordered him to march on al-Madā'in, to leave the women and children in al-'Atīq<sup>3</sup> and to station an army contingent with them. This Sa'd did. 'Umar also charged him to let these soldiers share in whatever booty there was, as long as they followed the Muslims with the latters' families. They said: After the conquest Sa'd stayed two months in al-Qādisiyyah, corresponding with 'Umar concerning the measures he had to take. He dispatched Zuhrah to al-Lisān, that is to Lisān al-Barr, which is like a tongue of land laid

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1. From here up to and including the battle at Jalūlā' (p. 2470), the account has been summarized in Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, VI, 72 ff, and Morony, *Iraq*, 191–4.

2. For an appraisal of the *isnāds* in this volume, see the translator's foreword.

3. According to Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, VI, 71, this is a canal of the Euphrates near the place where al-Kūfah was later built.

down in the countryside.<sup>4</sup> Al-Kūfah is situated there nowadays, previously the main city there was al-Ḥīrah. Al-Nakhīrajān was encamped there. However, he left when he heard that Zuhrah was on his way, and he then joined his companions.

They continued: Among the songs that the children chanted in the camp and the women sang out to them while on the riverbank of al-ʿAtīq,<sup>5</sup> was something the women also sang in Zarūd,<sup>6</sup> Dhū Qār<sup>7</sup> and other watery places.<sup>8</sup> That was when they were ordered to march again to al-Qādisiyyah<sup>9</sup> in the month Jumādā II. This cryptic song, which the women sang, was like a nonsense verse, because there is no time between the months Jumādā and Rajab (in *rajaz*):

O wonder of all wonders!

Between Jumādā and Rajab

[2420] There's something that needs doing.

Have seen it those who've perished.

Buried in dust and clamor.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Battle of Burs*

The transmitter said: After concluding the operations at al-Qādisiyyah and sending Zuhrah b. al-Ḥawiyyah forward at the head of the vanguard to al-Lisān, Sa'd set off. Then he dispatched ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mu'tamm after Zuhrah, next Shuraḥbīl b. al-Simṭ after ʿAbdallāh, and finally Hāshim b. ʿUtbah after all these. Sa'd had appointed the last-named as his deputy in the area in which Khālid b. ʿUrfuṭah was commander. Khālid was given command of the rearguard. Then, in late Shawwāl (November 636), Sa'd set out himself, together with all the Muslims, mounted and well-equipped, God having made available to them all the weapons,

4. This "tongue of land" was formed by two arms of the Euphrates, one leading along al-Ḥīrah, the other was more to the east, see Le Strange, *Lands* map II, and also Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, IV, 355, see also WKAS, II/1, 625, right column, penult.

5. There used to be a village, ʿAtīq al-Sājah, which disappeared in the Tigris, see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, III, 613.

6. See *ibid.*, II, 928.

7. See *ibid.*, IV, 10.

8. This specification seems to indicate that all these villages were (partly) surrounded by water.

9. Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, VI, 74, n. 1, probably correctly, suggests reading al-Madā'in here, as above in line 6 of the Arabic text. See also *Glossarium*, p. DCXIX.

10. See Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, VI, 74, n. 1. For some introductory remarks on how I have translated the poetry in this volume, see Appendix I.

mules and riches found in the Persian camp. Zuhrah marched until he stopped at al-Kūfah. A *kūfah* is a place wholly covered with pebbles mixed with red sand. Then 'Abdallāh and Shuraḥbil arrived, and Zuhrah set out for al-Madā'in. When he reached Burs, Buṣbuhrā confronted him at the head of a troop of soldiers. They engaged him in a skirmish and Zuhrah routed them. Buṣbuhrā and those men with him fled to Bābil, where those who had escaped from al-Qādisiyyah had gathered together with the rest of their commanders, al-Nakhīrajān, Mihrān al-Rāzī, al-Hurmuzān and their peers. They stayed there, choosing al-Fayruzān to command them. Buṣbuhrā arrived there also, but, having escaped with a spear wound, he died thereof.

According to al-Sarī—Shu'ayb—Sayf—al-Naḍr b. al-Sarī—Ibn al-Rufayl—his father: Zuhrah speared Buṣbuhrā at the battle of Burs. He fell into the river and then died of his wound after reaching Bābil. When Buṣbuhrā was routed, Bisṭām, the dihqān of Burs, approached Zuhrah and entered into an agreement with him. He made pontoon bridges for Zuhrah and brought him news of those who had assembled at Bābil.

[2421]

### *The Battle of Bābil*

They said: When Bisṭām brought Zuhrah the news about those who had escaped from al-Qādisiyyah and were now gathered at Bābil, Zuhrah took the time to write<sup>11</sup> this news to Sa'd. When Sa'd stopped with those who were staying with Hāshim b. 'Utbah at al-Kūfah and the news from Zuhrah reached him that the Persians were gathered under the command of al-Fayruzān at Bābil, he sent 'Abdallāh (b. al-Mu'tamm) ahead, followed by Shuraḥbil and Hāshim. Then he departed with the remaining troops. When he arrived at Burs, he sent Zuhrah ahead, followed by 'Abdallāh (b. al-Mu'tamm), Shuraḥbil and Hāshim. Then Sa'd followed them. They descended upon al-Fayruzān at Bābil, having said, "We will fight them in strength,<sup>12</sup> before we disperse." Thus they fought at

11. The Arabic has *aqāma wa-kataba*, which may mean "camped and wrote." If we substitute *qāma* for *aqāma*, we might translate "he wrote forthwith."

12. That is the meaning of *dast*, suggested by *Glossarium*. On the basis of the connotations given in Lane, it is feasible to translate also "with cunning." Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v., suggests among other meanings "a round of wrestling," which seems to fit too. But not one of these possibilities can be substantiated.



Bābil and routed the Persians in a shorter time than (required for) taking off one's cloak. The Persians fled in all directions, nothing else mattered to them. Al-Hurmuzān set off toward al-Ahwāz, seized the province and taxed<sup>13</sup> it as well as Mihrijān Qadhaq.<sup>14</sup> Al-Fayruzān moved out with him and then turned up at Nihāwand, where the treasures of the Persian king were stored. Thus al-Fayruzān took Nihāwand and taxed the two regional centres Māhān.<sup>15</sup> Al-Nakhirajān and Mihrān al-Rāzī retreated toward al-Madā'in until, after they had passed Bahurasir,<sup>16</sup> they crossed to the other bank of the Tigris; then they cut the pontoon bridge. For several days Sa'd remained in Bābil, where the news reached him that al-Nakhirajān had deputed Shahriyār, one of the dihqāns of the Gate,<sup>17</sup> over Kūthā with a troop of men. So Sa'd sent Zuhrah ahead followed by the main army. Zuhrah marched on until he came upon Shahriyār in Kūthā, having first killed Fayūmān and al-Farrukhān in the region between Sūrā and al-Dayr.

According to al-Sarī—Shu'ayb—Sayf—al-Naḍr b. al-Sarī—Ibn al-Rufayl—his father: Sa'd had sent Zuhrah ahead from al-Qādisiyyah. Zuhrah marched with his soldiers and warriors<sup>18</sup> divided in different formations. Every band of men he met, who had been pursuing the fleeing enemy, was sent ahead. Zuhrah ordered his own men to follow; they were not to pass by any (Persian) whom they caught up with without killing him. Sometimes Zuhrah would stay put until, this time, when he was sent ahead from Bābil, he sent Bukayr b. 'Abdallāh al-Laythī ahead and also Kathīr b. Shihāb al-Sa'dī, the brother of al-Ghallāq. This was

13. This rendering was suggested by *Glossarium*. It seems to me that the translation "he consumed (everything in) it" may not be ruled out.

14. See Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, IV, 698.

15. That is Nihāwand and al-Dīnawar; see *Ibid.*, IV, 405.

16. Bahurasir is the name of one of the seven "cities" (in Arabic *al-madā'in*) situated on the west bank of the Tigris which, together with six other "cities" (such as Sābāt) situated on the east bank, make up the city of al-Madā'in; see *ibid.*, I, 768; Le Strange, *Lands*, 34; see also p. 12 below.

17. It is tempting to assume that these are the Persian forerunners of the later Muslim functionaries (guards, chamberlains) the *ḥujjāb* (sing. *ḥājib*); see Morony, *Iraq*, 79–83.

18. This is a meaningless distinction, of course. The Arabic has two terms *jund* and *ḥarb*. One senses that the two groups may constitute specific military units such as "occupation forces" and "assault and defense units." This hunch is based on the contexts in which these words mostly figure, but these connotations are not borne out by evidence from the standard dictionaries.

when Zuhrah crossed the *Ṣarāt*, so that they would catch up with the rest of the enemy, among whom were *Fayūmān* and *al-Farrukhān*; the former was from *Maysān*, the latter from *al-Ahwāz*. *Bukayr* killed *al-Farrukhān* and *Kathīr* killed *Fayūmān* at *Sūrā*. Then *Zuhrah* marched on until he passed through *Sūrā*. He then made camp. *Hāshim* drew near until he alighted there too. *Sa'd* also came that way and made camp there. Then *Zuhrah* was sent ahead and caught up with some men who had been waiting for him between *al-Dayr* and *Kūthā*. *Al-Nakhīrajān* and *Mihrān* had deputed *Shahriyār*, the *dihqān* of the Gate, over their armies and they themselves went to *al-Madā'in*. *Shahriyār* remained a while among his troops.

When the Arabs encountered the army of *Shahriyār* and the vanguard of his cavalry in the neighborhood of *Kūthā*, *Shahriyār* came forward and shouted, "Let any man or rider from among you big and strong enough come forward to me in order that I may teach him a lesson." *Zuhrah* retorted, "A moment ago I had in mind to meet you in combat, but now that I have heard what you said, I won't send anyone but a mere slave out to you; if you wait for him, he will kill you—God willing—, because of your effrontery. If you flee from him, you flee from a slave!" Thus he baited *Shahriyār*. Then he ordered *Abū Nubātah Nā'il b. Ju'shum al-A'rajī*, a courageous *Tamīmī*, to go out and face his adversary. Each had his spear. Both were of sturdy build, except that *Shahriyār* was (tall) as a camel. When he saw *Nā'il*, he flung his spear down in order to grab him by the neck. *Nā'il* did likewise. They drew their swords and hacked at each other. Then they took each other by the throat and crashed down from their mounts. *Shahriyār* fell on top of *Nā'il* like a ton of bricks and held him down under one thigh. He drew his dagger and started to undo the fastenings of *Nā'il's* coat of mail. *Shahriyār's* thumb happened to land in *Nā'il's* mouth and *Nā'il* crushed the bone in it (with his teeth). He noticed a (momentary) slackening (in his opponent's assault) and, attacking him furiously, whipped him off onto the ground, sat on his chest, drew his own dagger and tore *Shahriyār's* coat of mail from his belly. Then he stabbed him in his abdomen and side until he died. *Nā'il* took his horse, his bracelets<sup>19</sup> and his

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19. Bracelets were part of the Persian nobility's distinctive accessories, see Morony, *Iraq*, 186.

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spoils. The dead man's companions withdrew and fled in all directions and Zuhrah stayed on in Kūthā until Sa'd arrived there.

Nā'il was brought before Sa'd, who said, "I have taken the following decision with regard to you, Nā'il b. Ju'shum: After you have put on this Persian's bracelets, cloak and coat of mail, I want you to mount his horse." Thus Sa'd assigned to him all that as his booty. Nā'il went aside, put on the captured armor and then came forward to Sa'd, carrying Shahriyār's weapons while riding his mount. Sa'd said to him, "Do not don bracelets except when you are actively engaged in a war; wear them only then." Thus Nā'il was the first Muslim in Iraq to wear bracelets.

According to al-Sarī—Shu'ayb—Sayf—Muḥammad, Ṭalḥah, al-Muhallab, 'Amr and Sa'id: Sa'd stayed in Kūthā for some days. He went to the spot where Abraham used to sit in Kūthā and alighted at the place of the people who used to preach (the religion of) Abraham.<sup>20</sup> Sa'd came to the house in which Abraham had been kept prisoner, he inspected it, invoked God's blessing upon His Messenger, upon Abraham and God's Prophets, and recited, "Those days which we send down alternatively upon the people."<sup>21</sup>

*The Story of Bahurasīr in the Month Dhū al-Ḥijjah  
of the Year 15 (January 637) as Related by Sayf*

According to al-Sarī—Shu'ayb—Sayf—Muḥammad, Ṭalḥah, al-Muhallab, 'Amr, Sa'id and al-Naḍr—Ibn al-Rufayl: Then Sa'd sent Zuhrah ahead toward Bahurasīr. Zuhrah left Kūthā at the head of the vanguard until he arrived at Bahurasīr, having had a meeting at Sābāt with Shīrazādh, who offered him a truce and the payment of the *jizā*.<sup>22</sup> Zuhrah sent Shīrazādh to Sa'd and went with him,

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20. This is what it says in the text. Although emending the text should be resorted to only when no other solution seems to present itself, it is indeed tempting to reconstruct this particular passage in such a way that it reads "... people to whom Abraham used to preach." Instead of . . . *alladhīna kānū yubashshirūna Ibrāhīma*, the Arabic should then read . . . *alladhīna kāna Ibrāhīmu yubashshiruhum*.

21. The Qur'ānic verse III, 140, pertains allegedly to the successes and adversities of, respectively, the Muslims and the Meccans at the battles of Badr (2/624) and Uhud (3/625). The verse may be thought of as conveying how Abraham's initial bad luck (see Ṭabarī, II, 263) took a turn for the better later in life.

22. *jizā* is a plural of *jizyah*, the tax paid by non-Muslims in exchange for "protection" (in Arabic *dhimma*). Sayf seems to distinguish between the singular and the plural.

followed by the wings of the army.<sup>23</sup> Hāshim went forth, followed by Sa'd. In the meantime, the contingent formed by Queen Būrān<sup>24</sup> had fled from Zuhrah in the vicinity of al-Muẓlim. Hāshim arrived finally at Muẓlim near Sābāt and waited for Sa'd to join him. That coincided with the return of al-Muqarraṭ, a tamed lion belonging to the king. Al-Muqarraṭ was chosen from the lions of al-Muẓlim. In al-Muẓlim there were several detachments of (a former) Kisrā, a woman called Būrān. Everyday they used to swear by God, "The kingdom of Fārs shall never perish as long as we live." When Sa'd arrived, Al-Muqarraṭ rushed toward the Muslim forces. Hāshim jumped down from his mount and killed it. Therefore his sword was named the Strong One.<sup>25</sup> Sa'd kissed Hāshim on the head; Hāshim kissed Sa'd's foot. Then Sa'd sent him ahead to Bahurasīr. Hāshim camped at al-Muẓlim and recited, "Had you not sworn previously that you would never perish?"<sup>26</sup> When a part of the night had passed, Sa'd departed and marched against the enemy at Bahurasīr. Every time the cavalry advanced on the way to Bahurasīr, the Muslims staying behind would stop what they were doing and shout, "God is great." They continued in that manner until the last warrior accompanying Sa'd had passed by. In all, he stayed with the army, attacking Bahurasīr for two months, and they crossed the river in the third.

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Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb led the people on the pilgrimage that year. His governor over Mecca was 'Attāb b. Asīd. Al-Ṭā'if was governed by Ya'lā b. Munyah, al-Yamāmah and al-Baḥrayn by 'Uthmān b. Abī al-Āṣ. 'Umān was governed by Ḥudhayfah b. Miḥṣan, and the districts of Syria by Abū 'Ubaydah b. al-Jarrāh. Al-Kūfah and its environs were given to Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās, with Abū Farwah<sup>27</sup> in charge of the judiciary there, while al-Mughirah b. Shu'bah had charge over al-Baṣrah and its environs.

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23. Or, conceivably, "horses," see Lane, II, 408.

24. See immediately below and also Morony, *Iraq*, 193.

25. In Arabic, al-Matn; a variant reading has the sword called al-Matīn, which means the same.

26. Q. XIV, 44.

27. *Glossarum*, p. DCXIX, suggests reading Abū Qurrah; this is confirmed by Waki', *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, II, 397.