

The  
History of al-Ṭabarī

VOLUME XXXII

The Reunification  
of the  
'Abbāsīd Caliphate



---

TRANSLATED BY C. E. BOSWORTH



---

---

## Contents



- Abbreviations employed / xvii  
Translator's Foreword / 1  
Genealogical table of the 'Abbāsids (with special reference to those members of the family mentioned in this section of al-Ṭabarī's *History*) / 4  
Maps. 1. Al-'Irāq in the Caliphate of al-Ma'mūn / 5  
2. Baghdad and its environs / 6

### **The Caliphate of al-Ma'mūn / 9**

*[The Remainder of the Events of the Year 198  
(813/814)]*

*The Events of the Year 199 (814/815) / 12*

- Various events in al-'Irāq / 12  
The revolt in al-Kūfah of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, called Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, under the military leadership of Abū al-Sarāyā / 13  
The spread of the revolt to Mecca under Ḥusayn b. Ḥasan al-Afṭas / 19

*The Events of the Year 200 (815/816) / 24*

- Harthamah b. A'yan's recapture of al-Kūfah, and the defeat and execution of Abū al-Sarāyā / 25  
The revolt in the Yemen of the 'Alid Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā al-Jazzār / 28

- The proclamation in Mecca of the 'Alid Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Šādiq as Caliph / 30
- The overthrowing of Muḥammad b. Ja'far's rule by the 'Abbāsīd forces, and his renunciation of power / 34
- The abortive attempt to seize power in Mecca by a member of the 'Aqīlī branch of the Ṭālibīds / 37
- Harthamah b. A'yan's journeying to al-Ma'mūn's court at Marw and his fate there / 39
- The civil strife in Baghdad between the troops of the Harbiyyah quarter and those of al-Ma'mūn's representative in al-'Irāq, al-Ḥasan b. Sahl / 42

*The Events of the Year 201 (816/817) / 46*

- The expulsion from Baghdad of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's representative in the city, 'Alī b. Hishām; the fighting between the Sahlid forces and the leader of the Baghdad rebels, Muḥammad b. Abī Khālīd; the proclamation in Baghdad of the 'Abbāsīd prince Manšūr b. al-Mahdī as al-Ma'mūn's *amīr* and *khalīfah* / 46
- The breakdown of social order in Baghdad, and the movement there of the volunteers and vigilantes under Khālīd al-Daryūsh and Sahl b. Salāma al-Anšārī / 55
- Al-Ma'mūn's designation of the Eighth Imām of the Shī'ah, 'Alī al-Riḍā, as his heir and the adoption of the 'Alid green colour / 61
- The proclamation in Baghdad of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī as anti-caliph / 621
- Various items of information / 641

*The Events of the Year 202 (817/818) / 66*

- Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's assumption of power in central al-'Irāq / 66
- The revolt in al-Kūfah of the 'Alid al-'Abbās b. Mūsā al-Kāzīm, and its suppression by Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's forces / 69
- Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's arrest and jailing of the vigilante leader in Baghdad Sahl b. Salāma / 75

Al-Ma'mūn's decision to leave Marw and to travel westwards and secure al-'Irāq; the murder of his minister al-Faḍl b. Sahl; Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's preparations to withstand al-Ma'mūn's forces / 78

Various items of information / 82

*The Events of the Year 203 (818/819) / 84*

The death of the Imām 'Alī al-Riḍā; al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's nervous breakdown / 84

Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's despairing attempt to retain his caliphal power in Baghdad; his loss of the people of Baghdad's allegiance; his disappearance underground in the city / 86

Various items of information / 92

*The Events of the Year 204 (819/820) / 94*

Al-Ma'mūn's arrival in Baghdad and assumption of authority there; the abandonment of the 'Alid colour of green and restoration of the traditional 'Abbāsīd colour of black / 94

Various items of information / 97

*The Events of the Year 205 (820/821) / 99*

Al-Ma'mūn's appointment of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn as governor of Khurasan and the East; Ṭāhir's suspicions of al-Ma'mūn's good faith towards him and his scheming with the Caliph's minister Ahmad b. Abī Khālid / 99

Various appointments to governorships in the outlying part of the empire / 106

*The Events of the Year 206 (821/822) / 108*

Various items of information / 108

Al-Ma'mūn's appointment of 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir as governor of al-Jazīrah and Syria with the task of suppressing the revolt there of Naṣr b. Shabath / 109

Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's epistle of advice to his son 'Abdallāh on the latter's taking up his post / 110

The epistle's immediate fame / 128

*The Events of the Year 207 (822/823) / 130*

The revolt in Yemen of the 'Alid 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad / 130

The mysterious death in Khurasan of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn / 131

The appointment of his son Ṭalḥah as successor over Khurasan and the East; a variant account of this episode / 133

Various items of information / 135

*The Events of the Year 208 (823/824) / 136*

Al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusayn al-Muṣ'abī's revolt in Khurasan; various appointments to official positions / 136

*The Events of the Year 209 (824/825) / 138*

'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir's lengthy campaigns against Naṣr b. Shabath; 'Abdallāh's letters to Naṣr inviting his submission and guaranteeing his safety; Naṣr's final submission and the demolition of his fortress Kaysūm / 138

Military operations in Azerbaijan against the rebel Bābak al-Khurramī / 144

*The Events of the Year 210 (825/826) / 145*

Al-Ma'mūn's execution of the conspirator Ibn 'Ā'ishah / 145

The capture of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, dressed in woman's clothing, in the streets of Baghdad; Ibrāhīm's ode addressed to al-Ma'mūn seeking the Caliph's forgiveness / 146

Al-Ma'mūn's consummation of his marriage to al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's daughter Būrān and the sumptuous celebrations at Fam al-Ṣilḥ / 153

'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir's march into Egypt to combat the rebel 'Ubaydallāh b. al-Sarī, his capture of Alexandria and expulsion thence of the Andalusians to Crete / 159

The revolt of the people of Qumm against tax burdens / 166

*The Events of the Year 211 (826/827) / 168*

'Ubaydallāh b. al-Sarī's submission to 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir / 168

Anecdote in which 'Abdallāh is cleared of suspected sympathies for Shī'ism / 169  
 Aḥmad b. Yūsuf's letter of congratulation to 'Abdallāh on his restoration of order in Egypt / 172  
 Various items of information / 174

*The Events of the Year 212 (827/828) / 176*

Various items of information / 176

*The Events of the Year 213 (828/829) / 178*

Various items of information / 178

Ghassān b. 'Abbād's appointment as governor of Sind / 179

*The Events of the Year 214 (829/830) / 181*

Various items of information / 181

*The Events of the Year 215 (830/831) / 184*

Al-Ma'mūn's journey to the Byzantine frontier and his campaigning there / 184

*The Events of the Year 216 (831/832) / 187*

Al-Ma'mūn's further campaigns against the Byzantines / 187

Various items of information / 188

*The Events of the Year 217 (832/833) / 191*

Al-Ma'mūn's execution at Adana of 'Alī and Ḥusayn, the two sons of Hishām / 192

Al-Ma'mūn's campaigns in the Byzantine lands; his correspondence with the Emperor Theophilus / 194

*The Events of the Year 218 (833/834) / 198*

Al-Ma'mūn's fortifications at Tyana and his troop levies for the Byzantine wars / 198

Al-Ma'mūn's orders to his governor in Baghdad, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Muṣ'abī, to interrogate the judges and traditionists on the question of the createdness of the Qur'ān: the Caliph's first letter / 199

Al-Ma'mūn's interrogation at al-Raqqah of certain scholars,  
and his second letter to Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm / 204

Ishāq's interrogation at Baghdad of a further group of  
scholars / 210

Al-Ma'mūn's third letter to Ishāq after receiving the scholars'  
replies / 214

Ishāq's despatch of the remaining recalcitrants to the Caliph at  
Tarsus / 220

Al-Ma'mūn's letters to his governors appointing his brother  
Abū Ishāq al-Mu'taṣim and his successor and commending  
him to their obedience / 222

Al-Ma'mūn's fatal illness at al-Budandūn; his last testament  
and commendation to al-Mu'taṣim; his death on 18 Rajab  
218/9 August 833 and burial at Tarsus / 224

*Anecdotes about al-Ma'mūn and his conduct:* / 232

Al-Ma'mūn's answer to Ibrāhīm b. 'Īsā b. Burayhah's request to  
be admitted into the circle of the Caliph's travelling "  
companions / 232

Al-Ma'mūn's suspicious attitude towards the Syrians / 233

His reverence for a document emanating from the Prophet  
himself / 234

His generosity with the revenues collected in Syria / 234

Al-Ma'mūn and the poet of Tamīm from al-Baṣrah / 236

Al-Ma'mūn and the exigent boon companion from Syria / 240

Al-Ma'mūn's dismissal of a poet-judge of Damascus for his  
jesting attitude towards the Islamic faith / 241

The singer 'Allawayh's defence of the Umayyads before his  
master al-Ma'mūn / 243

Stories illustrating al-Ma'mūn's own poetic talent and  
aesthetic judgement; his relations with his court poets and the  
hostile one Di'bil / 244

Al-Ma'mūn and Kulthūm al-'Attābī / 253

More stories about al-Ma'mūn's relations with his court  
poets / 255

## Contents

xv

- Bibliography. 1. Primary sources: texts and translations / 258  
2. Secondary sources and reference works / 261

Index / 267