

iv, 59-60; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, iii, 30; Hādīdjī Khalīfa, v, 629; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿallifin*, iv, 253, xiii, 391.  
(MARIBEL FIERRO)

AL-ṬABARĪ, ABŪ DĪʿFAR MUḤAMMAD B. DĪʿRĪR b. Yazīd, polymath, whose expertises included tradition and law but who is most famous as the supreme universal historian and Qurʾān commentator of the first three or four centuries of Islam, born in the winter of 224-5/839 at ʿAmul, died at Baghdād in 310/923.

#### 1. Life.

It should be noted at the outset that al-Ṭabarī's own works, in so far as they have been preserved for us, give little hard biographical data, though they often give us leads to his teachers and authorities and help in the evaluation of his personality and his scholarly attitudes. Several persons who knew him directly wrote on his life and works at an early date, though none of the works in question has survived *in extenso*, and they are only known from excerpts preserved by later authors. Thus the judge Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Kāmil (d. 350/961) was close to al-Ṭabarī and was an early adherent of al-Ṭabarī's own *madhhab*, the Dīʿariyya (see below), whilst Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh al-Farḡhānī (d. 362/972-3 [q.v.]) knew al-Ṭabarī when al-Farḡhānī was a student, prepared an edition of the latter's *History* and wrote a *ṣila* [q.v.] or continuation to it which contained a long obituary notice of al-Ṭabarī. The Egyptian historian Abū Saʿīd b. Yūnus al-Ṣadafī (d. 347/958 [see IBN YŪNUS]) included a section of al-Ṭabarī in his *K. al-Ḡhurabāʾ* "Book of strangers [coming to Egypt]" because al-Ṭabarī visited Egypt for study (see below). But there seems to have then been an hiatus until al-Ḳifī (d. 646/1248 [q.v.]) compiled an enthusiastic biography, *al-Tahrīr fī akhbār Muḥammad b. Dīʿarīr*. For knowledge of these lost works, we rely on the authors' material cited in the general biographical works of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, in his *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, and of Ibn ʿAsākir, in his *Taʾrīkh Dimashq* (because al-Ṭabarī came to the Syrian capital for study; see *Annales, Introductio*, pp. LXIX ff.), and, above all, the literary biographical work of Yāqūt, the *Ishād al-arīb*.

Al-Ṭabarī stemmed from ʿAmul [q.v.] in Tabaristān, where his father Dīʿarīr seems to have been a moderately prosperous landowner. He provided his son with a steady income during the early part of his life, brought to the latter from Tabaristān to Baghdād by the annual Pilgrimage caravan from Khurāsān, and when he died (at an unknown date), al-Ṭabarī inherited a share of his estate. Whether the family was of indigenous stock or descended from Arab colonists in Tabaristān is unknown. At all events, al-Ṭabarī's modest degree of financial family support enabled him to travel extensively as a student and then, when he was an established scholar, gave him some independence from outside pressures and influences and from the necessity which poorer scholars experienced of seeking patronage.

He was a precocious student who was, as he himself states, a *ḥāfiẓ* or memoriser of the Qurʾān aged seven, qualified as an *imām* or leader of the Muslim worship aged eight and studied the Prophetic traditions aged nine. It seems well-authenticated that he left home aged twelve *fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*, and during a stay of five years in the metropolis of northern Persia, Rayy, he received an intellectual formation which gave him solid grounding for his future career. The most significant of his teachers there was ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī (d. 248/862), who as Ibn Ḥumayd figures as an oft-quoted authority in al-Ṭabarī's *History*,

above all, for information going back to Ibn Ishāq, since Ibn Ḥumayd was an authorised transmitter of Ibn Ishāq's *Kutāb al-Maghāzī* through Salama b. al-Faḍl (d. after 190/805-6). From Rayy, al-Ṭabarī progressed naturally, at the age of less than seventeen, to the intellectual centre of the Islamic world, Baghdād, according to one story, in the expectation of studying with Aḥmad b. Hanbal (unfulfilled, at it happened, since Ibn Hanbal died at that point). After a year in Baghdād, he seems to have left for southern ʿIrāq (by 242/856-7) to study with the leading scholars of Wāsiṭ, Baṣra and Kūfa, whom he was afterwards to cite in his own works, such as Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 255/869) and Muḥammad b. Bashshār, called Bundār (d. 252/866, see Sezgin, i, 113-24) in Baṣra, and Abū Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-ʿAlāʾ (d. 247 or 248/861-2) in Kūfa. He probably returned to Baghdād after less than two years away and spent eight further years there, including a spell as tutor to one of the sons of the caliph al-Mutawakkil's vizier ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yahyā b. Khākān [see IBN KHĀKĀN, 2], hence at some point between 244/858-9 and 248/862.

He then embarked on his major educational and research journey, this time to Syria, Palestine and Egypt. His precise itinerary is unknown, but he was certainly in Beirut and the considerable number of scholars from or connected with such towns as Hims (a particularly important centre, with its own special tradition of *ḥadīth* transmission), al-Ramla and ʿAskālān probably points to stays in those places and an interchange of views and information with the local scholars. Al-Ṭabarī's entry into Egypt seems to be fixable with some certainty as the year 253/867; he made a side-trip to the Syrian lands and then came back to Egypt, possibly in 256/870, though this is much less sure than the first date. In Egypt he met the leading Egyptian *muhaddith* and authority on the *kirāʾāt* Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā (d. 264/877, see Sezgin, i, 38), and profited especially from contacts with the leading authorities there on Mālikism and Shāfiʿism, including with the Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam [q.v.] family, which had been especially close to the Imām Muḥammad al-Shāfiʿī and whose head was the eminent scholar Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Ḥakam.

Al-Ṭabarī returned from Egypt to Baghdād around the year 256/870. He may at some point have made the Pilgrimage but cannot have made a prolonged stay there for study, since Ḥidjāzī scholars do not seem to figure amongst his teachers. His return to Baghdād marked the end of his student *Wanderjahre*, and he now settled down for the remaining fifty years of his life in order to devote himself to teaching and authorship, producing an amount of high-quality scholarship such as to evoke the admiration, in an age of prolific authors anyway, of both contemporaries and subsequent generations. During this half-century, he merely made two journeys to his native Tabaristān, the second in 289-90/902-3. See, in general, for al-Ṭabarī's years of learning and study, with lists of his teachers, Cl. Gilliot, *La formation intellectuelle de Ṭabarī*, in *JA*, cclxxvi (1988), 203-44, and idem, *Exégèse, langue et théologie en Islam. L'exégèse coranique de Ṭabarī* (m. 311/923), Paris 1990, ch. I, 19-37 (adds additional references to the preceding article).

He was now able to follow a career in a multiplicity of branches of knowledge. This was to embrace not only history, Qurʾān exegesis, *ḥadīth* and *fikh*, but he also possibly wrote in the field of ethics and had an educated person's interest in Arabic poetry. His comfortable, if not luxurious, financial and economic

circumstances enabled him to follow an even tenor of life in which he seems to have eaten temperately, dressed modestly and generally to have avoided excess in all things. Anecdotal evidence suggests that he never accepted any official employment (such as that of *kādī* or judge, for which he would have been supremely well-equipped), although his post as tutor to the son of a vizier would doubtless have given him the entrée to such a career had he wished for it. These stories also stress his high moral standards and his great probity, with a reluctance to accept in return for services costly gifts which he did not feel he had earned or for which he could not give equally valuable presents in return. He did probably add to his income from teaching a wide circle of students, one increasingly attracted by his fame, although he does not seem energetically to have sought after such sources of income; and he may perhaps have received fees for legal advice and opinions, one apparent instance being for services rendered to the caliph al-Muktafi [q.v.]. It does not appear that he ever married, but was wed to his scholarship; his continuator and biographer, the Andalusian Maslama b. al-Kāsim al-Kurṭubī (d. 353/964) says that he lived as an *ḥaṣūr*, one leading a celibate life. On the sketchy evidence of one story, he may conceivably have had a son by a slave mother; his having a *kunya*, Abū Dja'far, does not of course imply in any way that he was a biological father. No progeny of his is mentioned, as one would certainly expect of a man of his celebrity, and all the evidence points to the fact that al-Ṭabarī never married.

In Baghdad, he apparently installed himself on the eastern side of the city, in al-Shammāsiyya, certainly in this quarter by the year 290/903, and lived there till he died, aged about 85 lunar years, on Monday, 27 Shawwāl 310/17 February 923. He was buried in his house on the next day, much eulogised by the scholars of his day; one of these encomia, by al-Ṭabarī's acquaintance the philologist Ibn Durayd [q.v.], is preserved in its entirety.

The Baghdad years were filled with his various scholarly activities which, as noted above, embraced not only the traditional "Arab" sciences in which he excelled and with which he was primarily concerned, but also the "foreign" science of medicine; he possessed a copy of the medical encyclopaedia, the *Firdaws al-ḥikma*, of his older contemporary and compatriot 'Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. in the 850s or early 860s? [q.v.]), and occasionally prescribed medical treatment for friends and students. All his surviving works indicate that he had a reverence for scholarship and wished to present what must have already become, over the course of some two-and-a-half centuries, a formidable body of knowledge in such fields as *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* and *akhbār* in as concise and accurate a manner as possible. An anecdote says that he originally intended his *History* and his *Commentary* to be much lengthier and more detailed, but cut them down to more manageable proportions for his students and later scholars; the tale is very probably apocryphal, but indicates al-Ṭabarī's concern for conveying essentials in a form which could be used by the following generations.

In his approach to scholarship, most notable is his emphasis on *idtiḥād* [q.v.] or independent exercise of judgement. After quoting his sources—in his major works, he depended essentially on existing written works and reports—he gives what he considers to be the most acceptable view. His own dogmatic beliefs appear to have been basically within the framework

of "orthodox" Islam as conceived, e.g. in the environment of Ibn Ḥanbal just before al-Ṭabarī's time and that of al-Ash'arī after him. This is clear from his extant dogmatic writings such as the *Sharḥ al-sunna* and the partly-preserved *Tabṣīr ulī 'l-nuhā wa-ma'ālim al-ḥudā* (see below, section 3., nos. v, vi) and he further appears as a firm opponent of all "heretical innovations" (*bida'*) [see BW'A]. On the question of the imāmate or headship and leadership of the Muslim community, the most hotly-disputed dogmatic question of his time, when Shī'ism was becoming a force not only in peripheral areas like the Caspian provinces and Yemen but also in the heartland of the caliphate itself, he was a resolute defender of the pre-eminence of all four of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, venerating Abū Bakr and 'Umar and defending the rights of 'Alī equally. Nevertheless, since accusations of Shī'ī sympathies, however ill-founded, were a standard weapon at this time against opponents, al-Ṭabarī seems to have found himself accused of such sympathies by his Ḥanbalī opponents, who were to stir up the Baghdad mob against al-Ṭabarī on more than one occasion. Yet despite his origins from Tabaristān—which had not, in any case, become in the early 3rd/9th century so closely identified with Zaydī Shī'ism as it was later to become—there is no evidence whatever of any inclination by al-Ṭabarī towards Shī'ism beyond the admiration for 'Alī as a person which was often found in the staunchest of Sunnīs. In *fiqh*, al-Ṭabarī was at first a Shāfi'ī, but as his views developed into a distinct and self-sustaining corpus of law, he and his followers came to constitute themselves as a separate *madhhab*, that of the Djarīriyya (named after his father, a not uncommon feature of the nomenclature of sects and schools, cf. the Khāridjite 'Adjārida and Azāriqa [q.vv.]). In al-Ṭabarī's later years, his students were considered as adherents of the Djarīriyya, and the school's ranks included several leading scholars of the age; but its principles do not seem to have been distinctive enough from Shāfi'ism to have ensured its future growth and development after al-Ṭabarī's death, especially since the intellectual environment was one in which the three well-established Sunnī *madhāhib* of the Mālikīyya, Ḥanafīyya and Shāfi'īyya were by now firmly entrenched and competing for supremacy in various regions of the Islamic world.

Al-Ṭabarī had debates and altercations with Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Dāwūd, son of the founder of the Zāhiri law school with whom al-Ṭabarī had in fact studied [see DĀWŪD B. 'ALĪ B. KHALAF], but these took place on the level of courtesy and mutual respect. His conflicts with the belligerent and uncompromising Ḥanbalīs were, on the other hand, acerbic and may well have had a disturbing and unsettling effect on al-Ṭabarī's life. Ḥanbalism was at this time struggling to carve a niche for itself alongside the existing three main *madhāhib* and its advocates were pugnacious and often unscrupulous, being ready to whip up the mindless Baghdad mob. Al-Ṭabarī himself had originally been drawn to study at Baghdad by the presence there of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (see above), and he always regarded him with great respect; he and Ibn Ḥanbal's youngest son 'Abd Allāh, the transmitter of his father's teaching, had many common teachers. The break with the Ḥanbalīs seems to have occurred over al-Ṭabarī's legal work, the *Ikhtilāf al-fukahā'* (see below, section 3. no. iii) in which al-Ṭabarī totally disregarded Ibn Ḥanbal as being essentially a *ḥadīth* scholar and not a jurist. This was a perfectly valid and sustainable judgement, but it enraged the touchy Ḥanbalīs. The ensuing dispute—

only known to us in the form of conflicting reports from both sides—involved such rallying-points for the Ḥanbalīs as the interpretation of Qurʾān, XVII, 81/79, with its mention of the “praiseworthy position” (*makām<sup>m</sup> mahmūd<sup>m</sup>*) promised to the Prophet: did this mean, as a tradition from the Successor Muḍjāhid b. Ḍjābr [q.v.] stated, that Muḥammad would be seated with God on the divine throne, as the Ḥanbalīs asserted? Al-Ṭabarī discussed the interpretation of the phrase at great length in his *Commentary* (ed. Būlāk, x, 97-100, partial tr. Rosenthal, in *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, i, *General introduction and from the Creation to the Flood*, Albany, N.Y. 1989, 149-51), and in a circumspect and reasoned manner, but—perhaps aroused by Ḥanbalī intransigence and misinterpretation—is said publicly to have denied the credibility of Muḍjāhid’s tradition, and this led to Ḥanbalīs stoning his house in a riot which had to be put down by the Baghdād *shurṭa*. The Ḥanbalīs may have been behind occasional difficulties which al-Ṭabarī had in delivering his lectures and may have deterred students from coming to him from outside Baghdād. Violence around al-Ṭabarī’s house is reported at the time of his death, again involving the controversial *makām<sup>m</sup> mahmūd<sup>m</sup>* formula, although the reports of Ḥanbalī hostility at the time of his funeral may be exaggerated; if al-Ṭabarī’s funeral was a quiet one, attended by few people, it was probably because al-Ṭabarī had thus requested it.

## 2. Al-Ṭabarī’s methodology.

This topic has already been broached in regard to al-Ṭabarī’s emphasis on *iqṭihād* after a thorough consideration of his sources, these being essentially written ones. The great virtues of his *History* and *Commentary* are that they form the most extensive of extant early works of Islamic scholarship and that they preserve for us the greatest array of citations from lost sources. They thus furnish modern scholarship with the richest and most detailed sources for the political history of the early caliphate, above all for the history of the eastern and central lands of the *Dār al-Islām* during the first centuries of the Hidjra, and also for the early stages of the development and subsequent variety and vitality of Islam as a religious institution and corpus of legal knowledge and practice.

In the building-up of these two great syntheses of knowledge, al-Ṭabarī relied, as by this time had become possible, on a wide spectrum of written sources which were available to him. When he introduced sources by such formulae as *haddathānā*, *akhbarānā* or *kataba*, this meant that he had the *idjāza* [q.v.] for the book from which the passage in question was quoted, whilst when he relied on older books for which he had no firm transmission tradition on which he could rely, he used words like *kāla*, *dhakara*, *rawā*, *huddithu*, etc. Hence al-Ṭabarī’s works are above all compilations of material written down during the two centuries from ca. 50/670 to ca. 250/864, and he did not in general use the works of his contemporaries. In his *Commentary*, when he does not trace traditions back to the Prophet, this means that al-Ṭabarī’s sources were books which enshrined the interpretations or exegesis of their authors or their contemporaries.

We must not suppose that al-Ṭabarī worked single-mindedly on a particular work, completed it and then went on to a fresh project. It is likely that all his major works first took shape as dictated lectures (see, concerning this technique, MUSTAMLI), and developed and grew over lengthy periods of his life, especially when the subject-matter concerned allowed of its treatment in self-contained, component sections. This meant that a work might reach its final form on a

certain date but parts of it might well have been in circulation at earlier times. This accounts for the facts that the same work appears under different titles, or that what seem to be works with separate titles are in fact component parts of greater works. But in any case, al-Ṭabarī rarely gives formal titles when he himself cites his works, but rather, he refers to them by their subject-matter; formal titles may never have existed for some (or the majority) of them. All these uncertainties make it difficult to arrange his works chronologically, although there is a certain amount of evidence, internal and external, regarding their times of composition and their issue in final, complete copies.

## 3. Works.

Only al-Ṭabarī’s major works are mentioned here. A complete listing of titles as mentioned in the sources, including those which seem to denote parts of larger works only or which appear to be wrongly attributed to al-Ṭabarī, is given by Rosenthal, in his *General introduction*, 81-134, with a classification by subject and an attempt at placing the works in chronological order, is given in his Appx. B at 152-4. Likewise valuable is Gilliot, *Les œuvres de Ṭabarī*, in *MIDEO*, xix (1989), 49-90 (Gilliot must have been writing contemporaneously with Rosenthal), concentrating with great detail on al-Ṭabarī’s works in the field of the legal sciences; Gilliot points out (49-50) how great a confusion there exists regarding the number, titles and contents of al-Ṭabarī’s works as listed in the sources, in large measure due to the fact that *kitāb* is used both for complete works and also for chapter titles only. Ch. II of his *Exégèse, langue et théologie en Islam* (39-68) modifies his *MIDEO* article in some points. Of older listings, see Brockelmann, I<sup>2</sup>, 148-9, S I, 217-18, and Sezgin, i, 326-8.

i. The *History*, usually simply referred to as such because of its fame; its most authentic title, as given by al-Ṭabarī himself in the colophon of one of the manuscripts, would appear to be *Mukhtaṣar ta’rīkh al-rusul wa ’l-mulūk wa ’l-khulafā*, but others are found. The use of the term *mukhtaṣar* “short version, epitome” apparently reflected the author’s own modesty and may also have reflected the report that the fuller, original version was ten times as long as the extant version, which itself fills twelve-and-a-half volumes in the printed Leiden edition made by the team of editors brought together by M.J. de Goeje in the later 19th century (*Annales quos scripsit Abu Ḍjafar Mohammed ibn Ḍjarir at-Ṭabarī*, 1879-1901, 15 vols. including Introduction, Glossarium, Addenda et corrigenda, Indices, etc.).

In form it is a universal history, dealing firstly with the Creation, the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, the rulers of ancient Israel and of the ancient Persians, and the culmination of the prophets before Muḥammad, Jesus, before arriving at the history of the Persian Sāsānids. Then, after the account of the career of the Prophet Muḥammad, the *History* is arranged annalistically, with very great detail on the conquests period, the Umayyads and ‘Abbāsids, ups to the date 22 Ḍhu ’l-Hiḍjja 902/6 July 915. Al-Ṭabarī’s sources included an Arabic version of the Persian *Kh<sup>h</sup>atāy-nāmag* or “Book of Kings” for pre-Islamic Persian history and an array of *akhbārīyyūn* for early Islamic history, such as al-Zuhri, Abū Mikhnaḥ, al-Madā’inī, Sayf b. ‘Umar, Naṣr b. Muzāhim, ‘Umar b. Shabba, Ibn Ishāk, Ibn Sa’d, al-Wākidī, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfur [q.v.], etc. (Sezgin, i, 324 n. 1, mentions a study published as articles from 1950 to 1961 by the ‘Irākī scholar Ḍjawād ‘Alī, on al-Ṭabarī’s sources, *Mawāriḍ Ta’rīkh al-Ṭabarī*). Al-Ṭabarī gave parallel accounts from all these last authorities of earlier Islamic

times, rather than attempting to furnish a conflated, connected story of historical events, even when the parallel accounts could not easily be harmonised or were even contradictory. His aim was, rather, to present the evidence for the course of the early Islamic history of the lands between Egypt and the far eastern fringes of the Iranian world so that others could evaluate it in a more critical fashion should they so wish. Hence a later historian like Ibn al-Athīr was to use the *History* very extensively, in general simplifying it, endeavouring to harmonise disparate accounts and trying to supply gaps from other sources. It was, indeed, through intermediaries like Ibn al-Athīr that subsequent historians continued indirectly to use the *History*, at a time when complete manuscripts of the original were less and less copied and were becoming harder to find: Ibn Khaldūn at first copied the famous *waṣīyya* or charge of Ṭāhir Dhu 'l-Yamīnayn to his son 'Abd Allāh from Ibn al-Athīr, and was only later able to collate this with the original text of al-Ṭabarī (actually itself stemming from Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr) (see *Mukaddima*, tr. Rosenthal, ii, 139 n. 751). The specific relationship between al-Ṭabarī's *History* and Ibn al-Athīr's *Kāmil* was examined by C. Brockelmann in his dissertation *Das Verhältnis von Ibn al-Aṭīr's Kāmil fit-ta'riḥ zu Ṭabarī's Aḥbār er-rusul ual mulūk* (Strassburg 1890).

The work's fame speedily led to continuations by other Arabic scholars, such as the *Ṣīla* of the Andalusian scholar 'Arib b. Sa'd al-Kurṭubī; the *Mudḥayyil* or *Ṣīla* of al-Ṭabarī's pupil Abū Muḥammad 'Alī al-Farḡhānī, who had his master's *iqḍāza* to transmit the *History*; the *Takmila* of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Hamadḥānī; continuations by Hilāl b. al-Muḥassin al-Ṣābī and his son Ḡhars al-Ni'ma; etc. A Persian adaptation was made in 352/963 by the Sāmānid vizier Abū 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bal'amī [see BAL'AMĪ] which epitomised the original but added a certain amount of new matter, making it to some extent an additional historical source besides being of philological interest for students of early New Persian (see G. Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane*, Paris 1963, 38-41; E.L. Daniel, *Manuscripts and editions of Bal'amī's Tarjamah-i tārikh-i Ṭabarī*, in *JRAS* [1990], 282-308), with further Arabic and Turkish translations made from this last. See Sezgin, i, 327, and *Ṣīla*, at vol. IX, 604b; and for knowledge of the *History* in the West, and previous translations of parts of it before the appearance of the English translation under the general editorship of Ehsan Yarshater (*The History of al-Ṭabarī, an annotated translation*, Albany N.Y. 1985-, to be completed in 38 vols.), see Rosenthal, *General introduction*, 135-47. See also on the *History*, D.S. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic historians*, Calcutta 1930, 110-12; Rosenthal, *A history of Muslim historiography*<sup>2</sup>, Leiden 1968, index.

ii. The *Commentary*, the official title of which, *Ḍiāmī' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl al-Kur'ān*, is mentioned in the *History* but was never apparently much in general use, the work being simply known as the *Tafsīr* par excellence. Al-Ṭabarī worked on this, too, over many years, and it was not ready for dissemination till some date between 283/896 and 290/903. It was immediately regarded very highly, and probably considered as al-Ṭabarī's outstanding achievement, even more so than his works on law and tradition; it has retained its importance for scholars till the present day. The Jacobite Christian philosopher and theologian Yahyā b. 'Adī (d. 363/974 [q.v.]) reportedly copied it twice for sale to provincial rulers. Also like the *History*, it is said to have been longer than its present very

extended form; an authority cited in Yāqūt's *Irshād* says that he saw a manuscript of it in Baghdād of 4,000 folios, although this does not seem to be extraordinarily longer than the 3,000 and more closely-printed pages of the text which we have.

In his work, al-Ṭabarī in general treated the Qur'anic verses from a grammatical and lexicographical standpoint, but also made dogmatic theological and legal deductions from the Qur'ān text. After the commentary of Muḳātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767 [q.v.]) al-Ṭabarī's is the first major commentary to have survived—perhaps one should say that it is the first major running commentary *tout court* to have survived—other ones antedating al-Ṭabarī, such as those of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī [q.v.], having to be reconstructed or such as those of Muḍjāhid b. Dījabr and 'Abd al-Razzāk b. Hammām al-Ḥimyarī al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/827 [q.v.]) having survived only fragmentarily in late, possibly reconstituted manuscripts. Al-Ṭabarī took over al-Ḥimyarī's commentary in its entirety for his own work. H. Horst, in his *Zur Überlieferung im Korankommentar al-Ṭabarī*, in *ZDMG*, ciii (1953), 290-307, surmised that al-Ṭabarī in fact used several, complete, older commentaries now lost.

The *Commentary*'s great value and its popularity ensured that supercommentaries upon it and epitomes early appeared, with an abridgement speedily made by the Baghdādī scholar of Turkish origin, Ibn al-Ikḥshīd (d. 326/938, cf. Sezgin, i, 624, and D. Gimaret, *Elr art. Ebn al-Ekḥṣīd*). A Persian translation was commissioned by the Sāmānid amīr Maṣṣūr I b. Nūḥ I (d. 365/976) and made by a group of scholars in Transoxania; this translation, or rather, adaptation, has survived in far fewer copies than al-Bal'amī's *Tarjama-yi Ta'rikh-i Ṭabarī*, but these manuscripts are old and the text likewise of great philological interest (see Lazard, *op. cit.*, 41-5). A French abridged translation and an English translation have recently started to appear (see Rosenthal, *Introduction*, 111), though it may be doubted whether any modern translation can convey the subtlety of al-Ṭabarī's thought and scholarship except in a very circuitous and prolix fashion. See further, TAFSĪR, and the extensive works on early Qur'ān exegesis by Gilliot, including his *Textes anciens édités en Egypte*, in *MIDEO*, xix (1989) to xxii (1996), *Les débuts de l'exégèse coranique*, in *RMMM*, lviii (1990), 82-100, *Exégèse, langue et théologie en Islam*, and *Mythe, récit, histoire du salut dans le commentaire coranique de Ṭabarī*, in *JA*, cclxxxii (1994), 235-68. The *Commentary* was first printed in 30 vols. at Cairo, 1321/1903, with a further edition (considered the better of these two) in 1323/1905, and more recently edited by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir and A.M. Shākir, 16 vols. Cairo 1954-68, incomplete (up to sūra XIV, 27); the best, complete edition is now that of A.S. 'Alī, *Muṣṭafā al-Sakḳā et alī*, Cairo 1954-7, repr. Beirut with indices, 30 vols.

iii. The *Ikhtilāf al-fukahā'*, partially preserved, seems to have had the full title *Ikhtilāf 'ulamā' al-amṣār fi ahkām shara'i' al-Islām*. In this work on the differences between the approaches and doctrines of the 'orthodox' great jurists of early Islam, al-Ṭabarī, according to Yāqūt, presented the legal scholarship of Mālik b. Anas, al-Awzā'i, Sufyān al-Thawrī, al-Shāfi'i, Abū Hanīfa, Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad al-Shaybānī and (?) Abū Thawr Ibrāhīm al-Kalbī, but excluded any representation of the Mu'tazila (and, as noted above, in section I., he excluded Ibn Hanbal as not primarily a *fakih*). Yāqūt also reports that the original ran to about 3,000 folios. The Cairo fragment was edited by F. Kern, Cairo 1902, and the Cairo one by

J. Schacht; *Das Konstantinopler Fragment des Kitāb iḥtilāf al-fuqahā'*, Leiden 1933. See Rosenthal, *General introduction*, 103-5; Gilliot, *Les œuvres de Ṭabarī*, 52-6.

iv. *Tahdhib al-āthār* [wa-taṣṣīl ma'ānī al-ṭhābit 'an Rasūl Allāh min al-akhbār] was al-Ṭabarī's most ambitious work on traditions, arranged according to the latest transmitter of the *ḥadīths* and also according to the Prophet's Companions, but apparently never completed. It is more than a mere collection of traditions like Ibn Hanbal's *Musnad*, but examines exhaustively the philological and legal implications of each tradition, discussing its meaning and characteristics (e.g. whether it has any 'īlāl or weaknesses) as well as its significance for religious practice; its contents thus amount to monographs on a number of topics. Only fragments are preserved, including those in which al-Ṭabarī took material from the *Musnads* of traditions going back to the Companions 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Alī and 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās [see *MUSNAD*, at vol. VII, 706 a, middle]. What remains of the *Musnads* going back to the second and third of these three authorities has been published by Mahmūd Muḥammad Shākir, 3 vols. Beirut n.d., introd. dated 1982. See Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, 128-30; Gilliot, *op. cit.*, 68-70; idem, *Le traitement du ḥadīth dans le Tahdhib al-āthār de Ṭabarī*, in *Arabica*, xli (1994), 309-51.

v. *Tabṣīr ulī 'l-nuḥā wa-ma'ālim al-hudā*, partly preserved and still in manuscript, is a statement of the principles of the faith (*uṣūl al-dīn*) written at the request of the scholars of his home town of Āmul. See Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, 126-8.

vi. *Ṣarīḥ al-sunna*, a brief profession of faith or creed ('*akīda*'), preserved, and published with a French translation by D. Sourdel, *Une profession de foi de l'historien al-Ṭabarī*, in *REI*, xxxvi (1968), 177-99. See Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, 125-6.

vii. *al-Faṣl bayn al-kirā'a*, preserved but unpublished, on Kur'ānic readings, also mentioned under the title *al-Djāmi' fi 'l-kirā'āt*; this last was conceivably, but improbably, a separate work. Yāqūt quotes Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ahwāzī (d. 446/1054-5) that the latter had seen a copy of it in 18 volumes, admittedly in a large script. See Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, 95-7; Gilliot, *op. cit.*, 73.

viii. *Dhayl al-mudḥayyāl*, only surviving in a brief selection (*muntakhab*), was a supplement to al-Ṭabarī's *History*, with historical information on the religious scholars needed in connection with the *History*. The surviving text was appended to the Leiden edition of the *History* at iii, 2295-2561. The whole work would appear to be that often mentioned by the literary biographers, etc., as the *Ta'rikh al-Riḍā'*, i.e. of religious scholars. See Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, 89-90; Gilliot, *op. cit.*, 72.

Numerous other, substantially lost works are mentioned both within al-Ṭabarī's own works or in later literature, including a *Latīf al-kawāl fi sharā'i' al-Islām* (many variants of this title), a "slim" work on the laws and principles of the Islamic faith; separate works on the *fadā'il* or merits of the first four caliphs and of the Prophet's uncle al-'Abbās, on which al-Ṭabarī seems at times to have lectured and for which he gathered material, without living long enough to put this into a single, compendious work; on the interpretation of dreams, *Ṭbarat al-nu'yā*; a refutation of the founder of the Zāhiriyya, Dāwūd b. 'Alī, *al-Radd 'alā dhī 'l-asfār*; a refutation of some of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's view on Mālik, originating during his stay in Egypt; etc. There were also various works which were probably falsely attributed to al-Ṭabarī, including, e.g., *al-Radd 'alā 'l-Hurkūṣiyya*; cf. on this last work, Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, 123-4 (accepting the possibility that it was by

al-Ṭabarī), and Gilliot, *op. cit.*, 24-6 (sceptical of the attribution).

*Bibliography*: For earlier works, see the *Bibl.* to R. Paret's *ET* art. The more recent bibl. is given by Rosenthal—combined with that for his tr. of the first 201 pp. of the *History*—in his *General introduction* . . . , 373-8, and Gilliot has a very detailed bibliography appended to his *Exégèse, langue et théologie en Islam*. References are also given within the body of the present article, which is based substantially on Rosenthal's exhaustive *General introduction*. Finally, one should note, of most recently-appeared works, Gilliot, *Ṭabarī et les chrétiens taglibites*, in Université Saint-Joseph, Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, *Annales du Département des Lettres Arabes*, vi/B (1991-2) [1996] (= *In memoriam Professeur Jean Maurice Fiey, o.p., 1914-1995*), 145-59 (al-Ṭabarī held that the People of the Book should be expelled from the whole of the *Dār al-Islām* when they were no longer of use to the Muslim community); and idem, *Al-Ṭabarī and "The history of salvation"*, in H. Kennedy (ed.), *Proc. of the conference on the life and works of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī*, St. Andrews 30 August-2 September 1995, forthcoming.

(C.E. BOSWORTH)

AL-ṬABARĪ, al-Kāḍī al-Imām ABU 'L-ṬAYYIB ṬĀHIR B. 'ABD ALLĀH b. 'Umar b. Ṭāhir, principal authority of his time in the 'Irākī branch of Shāfi'ism [see SHĀFI'YYA], born at Āmul in Ṭabaristān in 348/959-60, died in Baghdād in Rabī' I 450/May 1058.

At fourteen years of age, Abu 'L-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī began his legal training under the tutelage of Abū 'Alī al-Zadīdjādī, who had been a pupil of Ibn al-Kāss, in his turn a disciple of the great Ibn Suraydj [q.v.]. Al-Ṭabarī completed his education with various Shāfi'i masters, primarily Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Māsardjīsī but also Abū Ishāk al-Isfarā'īnī, who taught him theology and *uṣūl al-fikh*, and Abū Ḥamid al-Isfarā'īnī, in Djurdjān, Nisābūr and Baghdād, where he established himself definitively.

"The Judge" (*al-Kāḍī*), as he was called by 'Irākī Shāfi'is, pursued parallel careers as an educator and a judge. He apparently composed a considerable body of work in various branches of legal sciences but only a fragment of one of his texts, *al-Ta'tīka* (it is either a commentary which he wrote on the *Mukhtasar* of al-Muzanī or his commentary on the *furū'* of Ibn al-Haddād), has survived to this day in manuscript form (Istanbul, Ahmet III, no. 850, see G. Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqīl*, Damascus 1963, 204). In fact, as is indicated by the manner in which al-Ṭabarī is introduced by al-Nawawī ("the master of the author of the *Muḥadḍhab*": *Tahdhib al-asmā' wa 'l-lughāt*, Beirut n.d., ii, 247), his renown was rapidly eclipsed by that of his more famous disciple, Abū Ishāk al-Shīrāzī [q.v.], who devoted to him one of the most laudatory notices in his *Tabaqāt al-fukahā'*, describing him as "the greatest *muḍṭahid*" whom he had ever encountered (Beirut n.d., 135). Only the titles of his other works have been preserved (besides the two above-mentioned works: *al-Muḍḥarrad*, *al-Minhādī fi 'l-khilāfiyyāt* and *Tabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya*, Beirut 1988, 210-11). Al-Ṭabarī conducted his lectures in a *masǧid* in the *Bāb al-Marātīb* quarter of Baghdād, attracting large numbers of students. Among his disciples or pupils who are still renowned, are included the Shāfi'i historian and traditionist al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and the Hanbalī Ibn 'Aqīl [q.vv.].

An important personality of Baghdād (*madīnat al-salām*), and already well advanced in age, al-Ṭabarī was appointed to the post of judge (*kāḍī*) of the Karkh