

# The Chronology of the Second Muslim Civil War between Shared and Competing Historical Memories

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## Abstract

*The events of the second Muslim civil war have been reported in Muslim sources and Christian chronicles. John bar Penkāyē is by far the most important non-Muslim source because he lived throughout the events that he documented in the Book of Main Points (Ktâbâ d-rêšê mellê) which he wrote in 67/687. Although some of the events reported by John are corroborated by Muslim sources and Christian chronicles as shared historical memories, he is also the main source of competing historical memories. As the sequence of events that John describes in his narrative does not often match with what has been reported in the Muslim sources, this article applies the methodology of Specific Date Verification, primarily derived from Muslim sources, to attempt to shed light on the competing historical memories. It concludes that John's narrative was not influenced by a later editor and that his work, along with that of other Christian chroniclers, raises important questions about the events of the second civil war.*

## Keywords

John bar Penkāyē, second civil war, Specific Date Verification, al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī, al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, al-Mukhtār al-Thaqafī.

## Introduction

The *Ktâbâ d-rêšê mellê*, whose title in English may be rendered as the *Book of Main Points*,<sup>1</sup> was penned by John bar Penkāyē (precise death date unknown), a monk belonging to the Assyrian Church of the East who spent most of his life in the Monastery of Yoḥannan of Kmol.<sup>2</sup> It is by far

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<sup>1</sup> For a good discussion, see Michael Philip Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 85-88.

<sup>2</sup> For a good study on John bar Penkāyē and his work, see Emmanuel Joseph Mar-Emmanuel, "The Book of Resh Melle by Yoḥannan bar Penkaye: An Introduction to the Text and a Study of Its Literary Genres" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2015).

the most valuable non-Muslim testimony about the second Muslim civil war, or the second *fitnah*, which John describes in the fifteenth volume of his work up until the year 67/687.<sup>3</sup>

Although a theological history, John's work presents unique information not found in Muslim sources about the second civil war which he lived through. More importantly, he frequently appears to offer an alternative sequence of events for its major episodes that can be summarized as follows: the death of Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān; a smooth transition of power to his son Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah who died following a short reign with apparently no civil disturbances; the rise of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and his declaration of war against the Umayyads; the defeat of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr coinciding with the bombardment of the Ka'bah; the rise of two generals in the east, al-Mukhtār b. Abī 'Ubayd al-Thaqafī and an unknown one by the name of bar Nīṭrōn; the attack of bar Nīṭrōn against the people of Kufa; the freeing of the Persian slaves (*mawālī*) by al-Mukhtār; the battle of Khāzīr and the defeat of the Umayyads; the killing of Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar's brother by the *mawālī* (and presumably Ibrāhīm himself); the people of Kufa's rebellion against al-Mukhtār resulting in his death; and finally the rise of the *mawālī*.

The events reported by John will be complemented in this article with what Christian chronicles have recalled about the second civil war. The works of the Byzantine monk Theophanes the Confessor (d. 818 CE), the West Syrian Patriarch Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē (d. 845 CE), and Agapius the bishop of the north Syrian city of Manbij who was writing in the 940s CE will be examined. Although the *Chronicle of Dionysius* has not come down to us, Andrew Palmer attempted to reconstruct it based on the anonymous *Chronicle of 1234 AD* and the *Chronicle of Michael*, the Jacobite Patriarch better known as "Michael the Syrian" (d. 1199 CE). All of these extant historical works, it would seem, relied either directly or indirectly on the lost *Chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa* (695-785 CE), "a fine work of history"<sup>4</sup> that has been reconstructed by Robert Hoyland.

Additional Christian sources that will be referenced in this study are the anonymous *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD*; the *History of the Armenian* writer Ghevond Vardapet (d. ca. 790 CE); Thomas of Margā's the *Book of Governors* (written around 840 CE); the *History of the Patriarchs*

<sup>3</sup> For a French translation from the Syriac of John's narrative which is the subject of this study in this article, see Alphonse Mingana, *Sources Syriaques* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1908), 1:182-97. Also see Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims*, 98-107.

<sup>4</sup> Robert G. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Liverpool: University Press, 2011), 6, quoting Bar Hebraeus' *Chronography*.

of the Coptic Church of Alexandria by Severus b. al-Muqaffa', the Bishop of Hermopolis Magna (d. 987 CE); the *Annals* of Eutychius Patriarch of Alexandria (d. 940 CE); the *Chronography* of Elias bar Shīnāya, the Metropolitan of Nisibis (d. 1046 CE); and the *History* of the Coptic historian Jirjis b. al-'Amīd al-Makīn (d. ca. 1273 CE).

The information provided in these non-Muslim historical sources will not only be cross-compared to one another but also to Muslim historical works, the most important being Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Sa'd's (d. 230/845) *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*; Khalīfah b. Khayyāt's (d. 240/854) *Ta'rīkh*; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir al-Balādhurī's (d. 279/892) *Ansāb al-Ashraf*; Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa 'l-Mulūk*; Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. A'tham al-Kūfī's (d. ca. the first half of the fourth/tenth century)<sup>5</sup> *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*; 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibat Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh al-Dimashqī, known as Ibn 'Asākir's (d. 571/1176) *Ta'rīkh Madīnat Dimashq*; and Abū 'l-Fiḍā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl b. 'Umar b. Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) *al-Bidāyah wa 'l-Nihāyah*. As al-Ṭabarī is generally considered the most authoritative historian of the Islamic world, his work will be the main Muslim source to be consulted in this study.

The main methodology this study will employ to identify the problems of chronology in the historical sources is "Specific Date Verification" (SDV), a term coined by Prof. Ibrahim Zein and myself. This methodology looks at the specific day of the week, the day of the month and the year that has been recorded in the Muslim sources, and then converts these Hijrī dates to align them with the Julian calendar to see if and when they match. As the new day in the Islamic calendar occurs after sunset on the "Standard Astronomical Calendar" (SAC), the date conversion which returns will always be one day earlier than on the "Standard Civil Calendar" (SCC). Prof. Zein and I noted that there needs to be a certain degree of caution when dealing with SDV as it suffers from several inherent problems such as leap year calculations, the visibility of the moon, and even human error on the part of historians. On its own, it does not tell us much, but as we have argued in the dating of the Battle of Badr, it can be a useful tool for historical reconstruction when there is systematic consistency for more than one converted date for a particular historical event.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī's death, see Ilkka Lindstedt, "Al-Madā'inī's Kitāb al-Dawla and the Death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām," in *Case Studies in Transmission*, ed. I. Lindstedt et al. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 118–23.

<sup>6</sup> See Ibrahim Zein and Ahmed El-Wakil, "On the Origins of the Hijrī Calendar: A Multi-Faceted Perspective Based on the Covenants of the Prophet and Specific Date

The convergence of SDV with an analysis of Christian chronicles and Muslim sources can provide new perspectives for historical analysis. For instance, when one examines the assassination of the second Caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, one finds that Theophanes, Agapius, and Michael the Syrian all relay how a solar eclipse occurred around that time. Hoyland points out that “Theophanes, Agapius and Dionysius differ somewhat in their dating of this eclipse but all place it right by the assassination of ‘Umar I.”<sup>7</sup> Theophanes notes that the eclipse happened on Saturday, November 5, 644 CE,<sup>8</sup> while Agapius tells us that it was on Friday, November 1, 644 CE.<sup>9</sup> In reality, the eclipse occurred on Friday, November 5, 644 CE (28 Dhū ’l-Hijjah 23 AH on the SCC) according to modern astronomical calculations, with a magnitude of 0.83 and an obscuration of 0.755 between 14:51 and 16:26 which would have made it visible by all.<sup>10</sup> Remarkably this timing matches Theophanes’ report that it occurred “in the ninth hour”<sup>11</sup> after dawn. Interestingly, it is reported that right after ‘Umar’s death, his son ‘Ubayd Allāh, in a zeal to avenge his father, killed the Hurmuzān, Jufaynah, and Abū Lu’lu’ah’s daughter. ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 211 /827) reports:

He [i.e., ‘Ubayd Allāh] approached the daughter of Abū Lu’lu’ah, a young slave girl who embraced Islam, and he killed her. Medina became dark on its people that day.<sup>12</sup>

‘Abd al-Razzāq does not state that Medina became dark because of a solar eclipse, but in light of the Christian chronicles this is what seems to be implied. This suggests that these chronicles based themselves on accurate historical sources and so it is the information they relay that

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Verification,” in “The Letters, Treaties, and Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad,” ed. John Andrew Morrow, special issue, *Religions* 12, no. 1 (2021): 1-21, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12010042>.

<sup>7</sup> Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle*, 127n302.

<sup>8</sup> Harry Turtledove, *The Chronicle of Theophanes: An English Translation of Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (AD 602-813)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 42.

<sup>9</sup> Mahboub De Mendbidj known as Agapius of Hierapolis, *Kitab al-‘Unvan: Histoire Universelle*, ed. and trans. Alexandre Vasiliev (Paris: Patrologia Orientalis, 1909), pt. 1, p. [219] 479.

<sup>10</sup> NASA Eclipse Website, JavaScript Solar Eclipse Explorer, <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/JSEX/JSEX-AS.html>. By inserting the coordinates of Medina, N 024 deg. 28.11 min. latitude; and E 039 deg. 36.85 min. longitude; 608 metres altitude; it is possible to know all solar eclipses that took place in Medina.

<sup>11</sup> Turtledove, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 42.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Muṣannaḥ* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1972), 5:479.

concerns us the most, not whether or not they were actually penned by Theophanes, Agapius, or Dionysius, which is of secondary importance.<sup>13</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī reported a tradition that ‘Umar was killed on “Wednesday night, three nights remaining in Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah in 23 AH,”<sup>14</sup> which accurately returns as Wednesday 26 Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 23/3 November 644 on the SCC. Al-Ṭabarī also reported that ‘Umar’s assassination was on “Wednesday, four nights remaining in Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah in 23 AH”<sup>15</sup> and in another report on “Wednesday, seven nights remaining in Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah [23 AH]”<sup>16</sup> which do not fall accurately on the SAC and SCC respectively. Another account tells us that his death happened “six nights remaining in Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah [in 23 AH]”<sup>17</sup> without mentioning a day of the week. One report tells us that ‘Umar was buried on Thursday (i.e., the next day)<sup>18</sup> and al-Ṭabarī provides us with a specific date for his burial, “Sunday on the first of Muḥarram 24 AH”<sup>19</sup> which returns accurately as Sunday, November 7, 644 CE on the SCC. Dionysius tells us that “‘Umar was killed

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<sup>13</sup> For useful discussions of the authorship of the various Christian chronicles, see Maria Conterno, “Christian Arabic Historiography at the Crossroads between the Byzantine, the Syriac, and the Islamic Traditions” in *Syriac Christian Culture: Beginnings to Renaissance*, ed. Aaron Butts and Robin Young (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 212-55; Conterno, “The Recensions of Eutychius of Alexandria’s Annals: MS Sinai 582 Reconsidered,” *Adamantius* 25 (2019): 383-404; Conterno, “‘Theophilus, the more likely Candidate’? Towards a Reappraisal of the Question of Theophanes’ Oriental Source(s),” in *Studies in Theophanes*, ed. Marek Jankowiak and Federico Montinaro (Paris: Collège de France, 2015), 383-400; Conterno, “‘Storytelling’ and ‘History Writing’ in Seventh-Century Near East.” 2014. halshs-01063730. 1-21; and Muriel Debié, *L’écriture de l’histoire en syriaque: Transmissions interculturelles et constructions identitaires entre hellénisme et islam* (Louvain: Peeters, 2015); Debié, “Theophanes’ ‘Oriental Source’: What Can We Learn from Syriac Historiography,” in *Studies in Theophanes*, ed. Marek Jankowiak and Federico Montinaro (Paris: Collège de France, 2015), 365-82; Debié, *La «descrizione dei tempi» all’alba dell’espansione islamica* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014); Debié “Syriac Historiography and Identity Formation,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1 (2009): 93-114; Debié, “Writing History as ‘Histoires’: The Biographical Dimension of East Syriac Historiography,” *Resource* 16 (2008): 181-96.

<sup>14</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-Rusul wa ’l-Mulūk* (Leiden: Brill, 1879), 3:265. Also see al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Conquest of Iran A.D. 641-664/A.H. 21-23*, trans. G. Rex Smith (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 14:93-95.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 3:266.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:265.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:266.

on November 4, a Thursday,”<sup>20</sup> which is just one day before the eclipse and which more or less matches with an observation made by Qatādah b. Dī‘āmah (d. 118/736), that “‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb was stabbed on a Wednesday and died on a Thursday.”<sup>21</sup>

Sean Anthony argued that the details provided by Dionysius about ‘Umar’s assassination can plausibly be traced back to Theophilus of Edessa.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, he argues that the information that matches with the Islamic sources may have been derived from Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), which is not necessarily the case. Considering Dionysius would most likely have been confronted with different dates from Muslim sources concerning the assassination of ‘Umar, why would he have picked the particular date that he did? Muslim sources may indeed have been consulted and could have filled certain gaps, but it appears that Dionysius, and other Christian chroniclers such as Theophanes who reported the exact timing of ‘Umar’s assassination, largely relied on sources independent of the Islamic tradition and which by and large were given priority over the Muslim sources they came across.

The general independence and overall reliability of Christian chronicles suggest that points of agreement between Muslim and non-Muslim sources form part of a ‘shared historical memory’ rather than being the outcome of cross-communal borrowings. On the other hand, differences between Muslim and non-Muslim sources, or even across the array of non-Muslim sources, call for an extensive analysis of these divergences as ‘competing historical memories’.<sup>23</sup>

### The Death of al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī

The first Muslim civil war ended when a Truce was drafted between Mu‘āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān and al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī. Al-Balādhurī reports that

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew Palmer, Sebastian P. Brock, and Robert Hoyland, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicle* (Liverpool: University Press, 1993), 168. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle*, 129.

<sup>21</sup> Muḥammad b. Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1968), 3:278; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 10: 4522; ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibat Allāh b. ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh Madīnat Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 44: 463.

<sup>22</sup> Sean Anthony, “The Syriac Account of Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē concerning the Assassination of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69, no. 2 (2010): 209-24.

<sup>23</sup> See Ibrahim Zein and Ahmed El-Wakil, “Khālid b. al-Wālid’s Treaty with the People of Damascus: Identifying the Source Document through Shared and Competing Historical Memories,” *Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies* 31, no. 3 (2020): 295-328.

when al-Ḥasan agreed to recognize Mu'āwiyah as Caliph, the latter sent him a blank letter asking him to list all of his terms and conditions.<sup>24</sup> Al-Balādhurī then reproduces a short version of the Truce,<sup>25</sup> while a longer version of it has been reported by Ibn A'tham.<sup>26</sup> Both versions of the text agree that the Caliphate should be settled through consultation (*shūra*) in the event of Mu'āwiyah's death. Agapius renders the Truce a part of the shared historical memory when he notes that both men "came to an agreement with a written text, conditions and witnesses."<sup>27</sup>

According to the *Chronography* of Elias bar Shīnāya, al-Ḥasan gave the pledge of allegiance to Mu'āwiyah on "Monday 21 Rabī' al-Awwal"<sup>28</sup> in the year 41 AH. As the 21 Rabī' al-Awwal 41 AH returns as Sunday, July 25, 661 CE on the SCC, it could either be a one-day margin of error or a mistake on the part of Elias bar Shīnāya who may have meant instead Monday 21 Rabī' al-Ākhir 41/23 August 661 on the SAC. This date could potentially represent the conclusion of the Truce, coinciding with a letter Mu'āwiyah sent to al-Ḥasan "in Rabī' al-Ākhir 41 AH,"<sup>29</sup> bearing four witnesses, and informing him that "I have made peace with you on the condition that you will be granted authority after me (*inn laka al-amr min ba'dī*)."<sup>30</sup> The letter implies that Mu'āwiyah had promised al-Ḥasan the Caliphate after his death, perhaps ratifying the clause in the Truce that the matter should be settled through consultation. The issue of succession becomes even more puzzling when we consider a most curious report by Thomas of Margā informing us that al-Ḥasan had actually outlived Mu'āwiyah:

According to what I have learned from the histories of the Church, all of which I have written down in this book,—now some are taken from written documents, and some from oral tradition,—and according to what I have also found written in the Ecclesiastical History of the excellent Mar Athkēn concerning Mār George the Catholicus, the king who reigned in his time was named Hasan bar-'Ali, and that writer saith, "Hasan began to reign in the same year in which George was appointed [Catholicus]; and when George had ministered in the patriarchate and Hasan had reigned

<sup>24</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:1212.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:1213.

<sup>26</sup> Aḥmad b. A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā', 1991), 4:290-91.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Hoyland, "Agapius, Theophilus and Muslim Sources," in *Studies in Theophanes*, ed. Marek Jankowiak and Federico Montinaro (Paris: Collège de France, 2015), 359.

<sup>28</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *La Chronographie d'Élie bar-Šinaya: Métropolitain de Nisibie*, trans. L. J. Delaporte (Paris: H. Champion, 1910), 88.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:1212.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

twenty-two years, both died in the same year, that is to say when each had ruled twenty-two years.”<sup>31</sup>

A specific date reported by al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699) tells us that al-Ḥasan died on Thursday 7 Ṣafar,<sup>32</sup> but the year dates usually proposed are 48, 49, 50<sup>33</sup> and 51<sup>34</sup> AH, none of which return accurately according to SDV, though it should be borne in mind that 7 Ṣafar 50 AH returns as Wednesday, March 6, 670 CE on the SCC, potentially representing a one-day margin of error. When however we apply the 22-year time frame given by Thomas of Margā on the Hijrī calendar, beginning from Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 41/July 661 when Muʿāwiyah sent his letter to al-Ḥasan, we surprisingly find that 7 Ṣafar 63 AH returns accurately as Thursday, October 16, 682 CE on the SCC. If this specific date is accurate, then it could potentially mean that al-Ḥasan held a Caliphal title and that he ruled as a local governor in Iraq for 22 years. Alternatively, there is the possibility that Thomas of Margā confused al-Ḥasan’s death with that of al-Ḥusayn, who in this case would have died on Friday 10 Muḥarram 63/19 September 682 on the SCC.<sup>35</sup>

### The Death of Muʿāwiyah b. Abī Sufyān

Al-Ṭabarī informs us that there is “general agreement that Muʿāwiyah died in the month of Rajab in 60 AH.”<sup>36</sup> Agapius tells us that Muʿāwiyah “died on Sunday, 6 May, in the year AG 991 [i.e., 680 CE],”<sup>37</sup> a date which returns accurately as Sunday 30 Rajab 60 AH on the SCC. Al-Ṭabarī provides two specific dates for Muʿāwiyah’s death. The first is “Thursday night in the middle of Rajab 60 AH,”<sup>38</sup> which is also reported by Ibn Saʿd.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Bishop of Margā, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Margā AD 840*, trans. and ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (London: Kegan Paul, 1893), 2:207-08. Also see Mathieu Tillier, “Le règne du calife Ḥasan bar ‘Alī d’après une source syriaque,” *Les Carnets de l’Ifpo*, <https://ifpo.hypotheses.org/5489>.

<sup>32</sup> Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār* (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Wafāʾ, 1983), 44:134.

<sup>33</sup> Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Sharhashūb, *al-Manāqib* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1991), 4:34.

<sup>34</sup> Muḥammad b. Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣṣ* (Tehran: Maktabat Naynuwī al-Ḥadīthah, n.d.), 211.

<sup>35</sup> Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 192.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 4:239; al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: Between Civil Wars: The Caliphate of Muʿāwiyah*, trans. Michael G. Morony (New York: SUNY, 1987), 18:210.

<sup>37</sup> Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle*, 172. Also see Agapius, *Kitab al-Unvan*, pt. 1, p. 233, [493]. Hoyland’s translation has occasionally been edited throughout this article by reverting to the Arabic text.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 4:239; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 18:210.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 7:285.



However, as 15 Rajab 60 AH returns as Friday, April 20, 680 CE on the SAC, it could represent a one-day margin of error, perhaps because of his burial which took place the next day. In that regard the *Chronography* of Elias bar Shīnāya correctly reports the accession of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiyah to the Caliphate on Friday 15 Rajab 60/20 April 680 after Mu‘āwiyah’s death.<sup>40</sup> The second specific date provided by al-Ṭabarī for Mu‘āwiyah’s death is “Thursday, eight [calendar nights] remaining before the end of Rajab”<sup>41</sup> which is 22 Rajab 60 AH and returns with a one-day margin of error on the SAC as Friday, April 27, 680 CE. Khalīfah b. Khayyāṭ also reports this specific date but for the year 59 AH which is inaccurate according to SDV.<sup>42</sup>

According to Dionysius, Mu‘āwiyah died “at Damascus, AH 59 = year 11 of Constantine,”<sup>43</sup> having been “a general for twenty-one years and . . . king for a further twenty.”<sup>44</sup> Even though there is no specific date to support Mu‘āwiyah’s death in the year 59 AH, it should not be completely ruled out. Ibn al-‘Amīd alludes to 59 and 60 AH as plausible year dates in which he died, explaining in one report that his Caliphate was “19 years and 94 days, beginning on a Saturday and ending on a Friday, resulting in 59 years having passed [on the Hijrī calendar],”<sup>45</sup> and in another that Mu‘āwiyah died in 60 AH “on the first day (*fī mustahall*), or some say in the middle of Rajab”<sup>46</sup> after ruling for “19 years, 3 months, and 5 days.”<sup>47</sup> According to the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn*, Mu‘āwiyah’s reign was 21 years;<sup>48</sup> *A List of Caliphs Composed after 705 AD*,<sup>49</sup> *An Account written in 775 AD*,<sup>50</sup> the

<sup>40</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *Chronographie*, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:239; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 18:210.

<sup>42</sup> Khalīfah b. Khayyāṭ, *Ta’rīkh* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 1985), 226.

<sup>43</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 196.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Jirjis al-Makīn ibn al-‘Amīd, *Historia Saracenicæ Arabicæ & Latinæ*, ed. and trans. Thomas Erpenius (Lugduni Batavorum: Ex Typographia Erpeniana Linguarum Orientalium, 1625), 49.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* If Mu‘āwiyah’s death was on Friday 1 Rajab 60/6 April 680 on the SAC, and the length of his rule was 19 years, 3 months and 4 days, i.e., 19 years and 94 days, then he would have become Caliph on Saturday 27 Rabī‘ al-Awwal 41/31 July 661 on the SCC. Had he passed away on Friday 1 or 15 Rajab 60/6 or 20 April 680 on the SAC, and the length of his rule was 19 years, 3 months, and 17 days as reported by al-Ṭabarī, then his accession to the Caliphate would have been on Saturday 14 or 28 Rabī‘ al-Awwal 41/17 or 31 July 661 on the SAC.

<sup>48</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 59.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

*Chronicle of 819 AD*,<sup>51</sup> Theophanes,<sup>52</sup> Agapius,<sup>53</sup> and Michael the Syrian<sup>54</sup> all assert that he ruled for 20 years; Ghevond tells us that it was 19 years and 4 months;<sup>55</sup> and *A List of Caliphs translated from an Arabic Source of 724 AD* states that his reign was 19 years and 2 months.<sup>56</sup> Al-Ṭabarī is the most detailed of all Muslim historians concerning Mu‘āwiyah’s reign, informing us that it was 19 years and 3 months, at times being more specific by adding 17 or 27 days based on his different informants.<sup>57</sup>

According to Khaled Keshk, Mu‘āwiyah “was recognized by most of the community as caliph in Rabī‘a I or Jumādā I, 41 A.H./July or September 661 C.E.”<sup>58</sup> If Mu‘āwiyah’s rule spanned 19 years and 2 months as reported by *A List of Caliphs translated from an Arabic Source of 724 AD*, then his accession to the Caliphate would have been in Jumādā al-Ūlā 61/September 661. Had Mu‘āwiyah’s death been on Friday 1, 15 or 22 Rajab following a reign of 19 years, 3 months, and a disputable number of days, then this could suggest he acceded to the Caliphate in Rabī‘ al-Awwal 41/July 661. This could potentially mean that the *Maronite Chronicle’s* observation that “In July of the same year the emirs and many Arabs gathered and proffered their right hand to Mu‘āwiyah”<sup>59</sup> as a king could have been a reference to AG 972 (1 October 660/20 Jumādā al-Ūlā 40 to 30 September 661/29 Jumādā al-Ūlā 41). Nevertheless, a report by al-Balādhurī supporting an earlier death date for ‘Alī places Mu‘āwiyah’s accession to the Caliphate in AG 971 (1 October 659/8 Jumādā al-Ūlā 39 to 30 September 660/19 Jumādā al-Ūlā 40), on Saturday (the weekday reported by Ibn al-‘Amīd) 5 Rabī‘ al-Awwal 40 AH on the SAC, which is the equivalent of 18 July 660 CE:

When ‘Alī was assassinated, the people of Greater Syria were called to pledge allegiance to Mu‘āwiyah. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Khālīd b. al-Walīd said: “We are the believers and Mu‘āwiyah is our commander so he is ‘amīr al-

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>52</sup> Turtledove states that he died on 6 May 680 CE and that he ruled as Caliph for 24 years. See Turtledove, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 55. Hoyland corrects Turtledove, noting how Mu‘āwiyah’s rule as Caliph was 20 years. See Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle*, 171.

<sup>53</sup> Agapius, *Kitab al-‘Unvan*, pt. 1, p. 233, [493].

<sup>54</sup> Jean Baptiste Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1901), 2:468.

<sup>55</sup> Lewond, *History of Lewond the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians*, trans. Zaven Arzoumanian (Wynnewood: St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Church, 1982), 52.

<sup>56</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 49.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:239-40; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 18:210-11.

<sup>58</sup> Khaled Keshk, “When Did Mu‘āwiyah Become Caliph?” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69, no. 1 (2010): 32.

<sup>59</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 32.

*mū'minīn*." The people of Greater Syria pledged allegiance to him while he was in Jerusalem 5 nights having passed in Rabī' al-Awwal 40 AH. The period between the assassination of 'Uthmān and the people's pledge of allegiance to Mu'āwiyah was 4 years, 2 months and 17 nights."<sup>60</sup>

If the above report is accurate, then it could suggest that al-Ḥasan recognized Mu'āwiyah as Caliph shortly thereafter and that the Truce between them was not in 41 AH, but rather on Monday 21 Rabī' al-Awwal 40/3 August 660 on the SAC. Needless to say, the conflicting historical reports surrounding Mu'āwiyah's accession to the Caliphate either in Rabī' al-Awwal 40 or 41/July 660 or 661, and his passing away in Rajab 59 or 60/April-May 679 or 680 could perhaps be reconciled if we propose that he was recognized as Caliph by the people of Greater Syria on Saturday 5 Rabī' al-Awwal 40/18 July 660 and that he officially began to rule as a universal Caliph a year later in Rabī' al-Ākhir 41/August 661 after he sent his letter to al-Ḥasan. He would have then reigned for a period of 19 years and a little over 3 months before his burial either on Friday 15 or 22 Rajab 60/20 or 27 April 680 on the SAC, or Sunday 30 Rajab 60/6 May 680 on the SCC.

### The Duration of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah's Reign

The duration of Yazīd's reign is a source of competing historical memories, with most chronicles telling us that his rule was 3 years and 5, 6 or 8 months.<sup>61</sup> Agapius tells us that "They buried him [i.e., Mu'āwiyah] at Damascus and Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah reigned after him for three years and five months."<sup>62</sup> Dionysius tells us that Yazīd "died after a reign of three years and five months,"<sup>63</sup> Michael the Syrian informs us that "His son Yazīd ruled after him for three years and six months,"<sup>64</sup> and *A List of Caliphs Composed after 705 AD*<sup>65</sup> and the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn*<sup>66</sup> both state that his reign was for 3 years and 6 months. Eutychius says that his reign was 3

<sup>60</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 3:1177.

<sup>61</sup> For other chronicles, see Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century. The Extracts from the Chronicles of AD 819 and AD 846* mention that his reign was for 3 years and 5 months (p. 78) and 3 years and 6 months (p. 82). An account written in 775 CE states it was 3 years and 8 months (p. 50) and another report informs us that it was 3 years (p. 51).

<sup>62</sup> Agapius, *Kitab al-Unvan*, pt. 1, p. 233, [493]; Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, 172. Hoyland's translation has been edited.

<sup>63</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 197.

<sup>64</sup> Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, 172. Also see Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 2:468.

<sup>65</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 43.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

years and 8 months.<sup>67</sup> A specific date provided by Elias bar Shīnāya<sup>68</sup> which can also be found in al-Ṭabarī<sup>69</sup> tells us that Yazīd died on Tuesday 14 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 64/10 November 683 which falls accurately on the SAC and which would render his rule 3 years and 7 months (but spanning over 8 different months) assuming he became Caliph on Friday 15 Rajab 60/20 April 680.<sup>70</sup>

Sources telling us that Yazīd's rule was less than 3 years are Ghevond who informs us that he ruled for 2 years and 5 months,<sup>71</sup> and a report in al-Ṭabarī that "He ruled for two years and eight months and died on 14 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 63 AH,"<sup>72</sup> which is more or less corroborated by the *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* when it appears to have rounded his reign to "three years."<sup>73</sup> Al-Ṭabarī provides us with another specific date concerning his death, noting that "Yazīd b. Muʿāwiyah died on Thursday 14 nights having passed in the month of Rabīʿ al-Awwal 64 AH"<sup>74</sup> and that news of his death reached the people of Medina "on Tuesday, at the beginning (*li-hilāl*) of Rabīʿ al-Ākhir."<sup>75</sup> These two specific dates are only credible for the year 63 AH, implying that his death date was on Thursday 14 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 63/21 November 682 according to the SAC and that news of its arrival in Medina would have been on Monday 1 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 63/8 December 682 according to the SCC with a one-day margin error due to the visibility of the moon. The proposed death date of Yazīd on Thursday 14 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 63/21 November 682 is supported by *The Chronicle of 819 AD* when it unequivocally states that in AG 994, i.e., 10 September 682 to 29 August 683, "Lord Severus Bar Mashqē, the Patriarch, died. The same year Yazīd b. Muʿāwiyah died and Marwān b. al-Ḥakam reigned for a year and a half."<sup>76</sup> The *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* also

<sup>67</sup> Euty chius Patriarch of Alexandria, *Annales* (Beirut: E. Typographeo Catholica, 1909), 7:39.

<sup>68</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *Chronographie*, 92.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 4:384; al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiyah*, trans. Michael G. Morony (New York: SUNY, 1987), 19:225.

<sup>70</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *Chronographie*, 91.

<sup>71</sup> Lewond, *History*, 54.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 4:384; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:226.

<sup>73</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 620.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 4:432; al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Collapse of Sufyānid Authority and the Coming of the Marwānids*, trans. G. R. Hawting (New York: SUNY, 1989), 20:89.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 4:383; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:224. Morony translates it as "Tuesday, 2 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir" which is correct for the year 63 AH. This specific date is unlikely for the year 64 AH where Tuesday would have fallen on either 4 or 5 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir.

<sup>76</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 78.

concur that Yazīd's death occurred in AG 994.<sup>77</sup> If we accept Thursday 14 Rabī' al-Awwal 63/21 November 682 as Yazīd's death date, then depending on whether Mu'āwiyah died in Rajab 59 or 60/April-May 679 or 680, his reign would have been either 2 or 3 years, and spanning over 8 different months.

### Did the Second Civil War Begin during the Reign of Yazīd?

Yazīd's reign, which is associated with the beginning of the second civil war, is one of the major competing historical memories. To begin with, none of the non-Muslim sources report any problem in the transition of power to Yazīd, and his reign is depicted as having been fairly banal, with Michael the Syrian reporting the following event as a case in point:

Yazīd, king of the Arabs, assembled numerous workmen, that is, stonemasons, and sought to bring a canal to Sahsahna. When he had set many to work, he met his end. He died and the waters did not flow out.<sup>78</sup>

John bar Penkāyē criticizes Yazīd for having been a weak ruler but he does not allude to any civil disturbances or the tragic events at Karbalā' having taken place during his reign. John writes:

When M'āwyā ended his days and departed from the world Yazdīn his son ruled after him. He did not walk in his father's ways, but instead was fond of childish games and empty delights. Men's strength failed because of his empty-headed tyranny, and Satan wore down their progress by means of all sorts of tedious labours.<sup>79</sup>

Though Yazīd tends to be remembered as the most reviled of all Caliphs in Islamic history, it is ironic that the *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* recalls him as "a most pleasant man and deemed highly agreeable by all the peoples subject to his rule. He never, as is the wont of men, sought glory for himself because of his royal rank, but lived as a citizen along with all the common people. Few or no victories were achieved in his times in the armies sent forth by him."<sup>80</sup> There is also some evidence to suggest that he had a good relationship with members of the Prophet's family, for he held 'Alī's son, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyyah (d. 80/700), in very high esteem, as witnessed by a letter he sent him

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>78</sup> Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, 174. Also see Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 2:470.

<sup>79</sup> Sebastian P. Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century: Book XV of John Bar Penkāyē's *Rīš Mellē*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 9 (1987): 63-64.

<sup>80</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 620.

inviting him to Damascus.<sup>81</sup> Not only did Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah willingly pledge allegiance to Yazīd when he was appointed as Heir Apparent to Mu‘āwiyah,<sup>82</sup> but he also had much respect for him, even after the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā’.<sup>83</sup> When Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah returned to Medina, he defended Yazīd against his detractors who claimed the latter had deceived him through a display of false piety.<sup>84</sup> Ibn Kathīr reports how ‘Abd Allāh b. Muṭī’ told Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah that “Yazīd drinks wine, forsakes the prayer, and has violated the religion” to which Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah responded: “I have not seen in him what you accuse him of. I was with him and stayed at his house. He adhered to the prayer, enjoined good, would ask about jurisprudence, and would abide by the *sunnah*.” He then tells Yazīd’s critics that the only way they could have known of his sins is if they partook in them along with him.<sup>85</sup>

The different reports about Yazīd, ranging from a disbeliever who denied the revelation of the Qur’ān<sup>86</sup> to a pious friend of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah open up questions about the Muslim community’s acceptance of him for the office of the Caliphate. Mu‘āwiyah is said to have orchestrated several assassinations against his political opponents, notably ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Khālīd b. al-Walīd, Ḥujr b. ‘Adī (d. 51/660) and his Companions, and most serious of all, al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī. At the same time, he is said to have consulted the leading figures of his time, namely al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr in the nomination of Yazīd as future Caliph. Two reports in al-Ṭabarī tell us that al-Ḥusayn informed Mu‘āwiyah that he would acquiesce to Yazīd’s nomination if the other notables agreed to it, which after all seems odd if Mu‘āwiyah had killed his older brother al-Ḥasan.<sup>87</sup> Had Mu‘āwiyah built a consensus around his son becoming the future Caliph, then it would explain why the non-Muslim sources do not report any civil disturbances when power was passed on to Yazīd after Mu‘āwiyah’s death.

<sup>81</sup> Akḥṭab Khawārizm, *Maqṭal al-Ḥusayn* (Mohr: Dār Anwār al-Hudā, 1418 AH), 2:87-88; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 45:325.

<sup>82</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 3:1395.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:1396-97.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar b. Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa ‘l-Nihāyah* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1997), 8:255. Also see al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 3:1397.

<sup>86</sup> For a brief discussion of the verse of poetry ascribed to Yazīd in which he denies revelation, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa ‘l-Nihāyah*, 8:246.

<sup>87</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:225-26; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 18:186.

Muslim sources report that after the death of Yazīd, Mu‘āwiyah II remained in power for either 40 days or three months.<sup>88</sup> The *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* tells us that it was less than “half a year”<sup>89</sup> while the other chronicles make no mention of him, but appear to be unanimous in identifying the start of the civil war after the passing of Yazīd. Severus tells us that “after the death of Yazīd, the son of Mu‘āwiyah, there arose from the land of the Muslims a prince, whose name was Marwān, who rushed forth like a lion when he comes out of his den hungry, and devours the rest or tramples them under foot.”<sup>90</sup> A *List of Caliphs Composed after 705 AD* states in the margin that “After Yazīd they [i.e., the Arabs] were left without a leader for one year,”<sup>91</sup> and A *List of Caliphs Translated from an Arabic Source of 724 AD* records “And dissension following Yazīd, 9 months.”<sup>92</sup> *An Account written in 775 AD* explains that after his death “No king; 9 months,”<sup>93</sup> and Dionysius informs us how “those in Damascus and Palestine remained loyal to the house of Mu‘āwiyah and waited for one of Yazīd’s sons to grow up and become king.”<sup>94</sup> Agapius reports:

Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiyah died. Al-Mukhtār the liar had appeared in Kūfa before the death of Yazīd; he claimed prophecy and collected many followers. So, when Yazīd died, and because he did not leave an adult son who could rule in his place, civil war broke out (*waqa‘at al-fitnah*) and the Arabs split into many factions (*wa taḥazzaba al-‘arab aḥzāban kathīrah*).<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, to the Christian chronicles, John’s text also appears to suggest the start of the second civil war after the death of Yazīd:

God, however, speedily removed him [i.e., Yazīd] and when he too departed from the world, one of the Arabs, by name Zubayr, made his voice heard from a distance. He made it known about himself that he had come out of zeal for the house of God, and he was full of threats against the Westerners, claiming that they were transgressors of the law.<sup>96</sup>

This significant competing historical memory about the start of the second civil war will lead us to question the chronology of the three

<sup>88</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:386-87; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:5.

<sup>89</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 620.

<sup>90</sup> Severus b. al-Muqaffa‘, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria: Agathon to Michael I (766)*, ed. and trans. B. Evetts (Paris: Librairie de Paris, 1907), 3:11-12 [265-66].

<sup>91</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 43.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>95</sup> Agapius, *Kitab al-Unvan*, pt. 1, p. 234 [494]; Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle*, 176. Hoyland’s translation has been edited.

<sup>96</sup> Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century,” 63.

major events that allegedly occurred during the reign of Yazīd, namely the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, the Battle of al-Ḥarrah, and the bombardment of the Ka‘bah.

### The Martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī

Antoine Borrut has quite rightly pointed out that there is “a transmission of silence”<sup>97</sup> in the non-Muslim sources concerning what happened at Karbalā’. John Bar Penkāyē makes no reference to it, except perhaps for a cryptic reference to how ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr “had come out of zeal for the house of God.” Euty chius states that Yazīd “killed al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī at Karbalā’, in Iraq, 10 days having passed in the month of Muḥarram in 61 AH,”<sup>98</sup> after which ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr went to Mecca and the civil war began. The *Chronography* of Elias bar Shīnāya<sup>99</sup> and the *History* of Ibn al-‘Amīd are closest to Islamic chronology, due of course to their heavy reliance on Islamic sources, when they place the death of al-Ḥusayn in 61 AH.<sup>100</sup> Interestingly, Dionysius’ account of what happened at Karbalā’ places these events in the era of Mu‘āwiyah:

On ‘Alī’s death he was succeeded by his son al-Ḥasan, who was poisoned shortly afterward and was succeeded in turn by al-Ḥusayn. These two sons of ‘Alī were born of Fāṭima, the daughter of Muḥammad, the prophet of the Arabs.

Still the civil war was not over. Mu‘āwiyah did battle with al-Ḥusayn in the east and al-Ḥusayn’s side lost. Most of the army and al-Ḥusayn himself were killed at a place called Karbalā’. Al-Ḥusayn was killed by Shamir, an Arab; but first he was tortured by thirst. The victors slaughtered most of the tribe and kin of ‘Alī. They took their wives and children and tormented them beyond the limit of endurance. After this the only survivor in power was Mu‘āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān from the tribe of the Umayyads. . . .<sup>101</sup>

When we analyze Abū Mikhnaf’s account, as reported in al-Ṭabarī, we notice that he provides six specific dates for al-Ḥusayn’s movements until his martyrdom at Karbalā’, none of which match the calendar for the years 60-61 AH. We could as a result argue that the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn occurred six months prior to Mu‘āwiyah’s death, on Friday 10 Muḥarram 60/21 October 679 on the SAC, which would render Dionysius’ observation that “‘Alī’s son al-Ḥusayn had perished in the war against

<sup>97</sup> Antoine Borrut, “Remembering Karbalā’: The Construction of an Early Islamic Site of Memory,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015): 258.

<sup>98</sup> Euty chius, *Annales*, 7:38.

<sup>99</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *Chronographie*, 91.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn al-‘Amīd, *Historia Saracenicæ Arabicæ & Latinæ*, 50-52.

<sup>101</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 185-86.



Mu'āwiyah"<sup>102</sup> correct. Another possibility could be that his martyrdom occurred during the Caliphate of Yazīd in 60 AH after Mu'āwiyah's death in Rajab 59 AH.

A more controversial reading of the sources would propose al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom having occurred after the death of Yazīd in the midst of the second civil war. In that regard, Dionysius may have confused the events of the first civil war with those of the second when he noted that "the civil war was not over." We could of course forgive Abū Mikhnaf for having made an occasional mistake, but when we transpose all six dates that he provides to either 59-60 AH or 64-65 AH, we find that they unanimously match the calendar for these years, as demonstrated in Table 1:

Text	Corrected dates during Mu'āwiyah's reign or right after Mu'āwiyah's death	Corrected dates during the second civil war
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Al-Ḥusayn left under cover of night. It was Sunday night, two [calendar] days remaining in the month of Rajab in the year 60 AH.<sup>103</sup></li> <li>• Al-Ḥusayn left Medina for Mecca on Sunday, two nights remaining in Rajab [i.e., 28 Rajab] 60 AH.<sup>104</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Sunday 28 Rajab 59/15 May 679 on the SCC</p>	<p>Sunday 28 Rajab 64/20 March 684 on the SAC</p>
<p>He had entered Mecca on Friday night, 3 [days]</p>	<p>Friday 3 Sha'bān 59/20 May 679 on</p>	<p>Friday 3 Sha'bān 64/25 March 684 on the SAC</p>

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 195-96.

<sup>103</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ*, 4:252; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:7.

<sup>104</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ*, 4:286; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:64.

having passed in Sha'bān. <sup>105</sup>	the SCC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muslim b. 'Aqīl's rising in Kufa was on Tuesday, 8 nights having passed in Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah 60 AH.<sup>106</sup></li> <li>• I decided to leave Mecca on Tuesday, 8 [calendar days] having passed in Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah, on the Day of <i>al-tarwiyah</i>.<sup>107</sup></li> </ul>	Tuesday 8 Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah 59/20 September 679 on the SCC	Tuesday 8 Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah 64/26 July 684 on the SAC
[He reached al-'Aqr] on Thursday, and this was on the second of Muḥarram 61 AH. <sup>108</sup>	Thursday 2 Muḥarram 60/13 October 679 on the SAC	Thursday 2 Muḥarram 65/18 August 684 on the SAC
['Umar b. Sa'd] prepared to do battle with him [i.e., al-Ḥusayn] on Thursday evening, 9 [calendar days] having passed in Muḥarram. <sup>109</sup>	Thursday 9 Muḥarram 60/20 October 679 on the SAC	Thursday 9 Muḥarram 65/25 August 684 on the SAC
After 'Umar b. Sa'd had performed the morning prayer on Saturday morning—it has also been reported to us that it was Friday—and this was on the Day of	Friday or Saturday 10 Muḥarram 60/21 or 22 October 679 on the SAC and SCC respectively	Friday or Saturday 10 Muḥarram 65/26 or 27 August 684 on the SAC and SCC respectively

<sup>105</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:286; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:64.

<sup>106</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:286; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:64. Al-Ṭabarī reports that some say it was on Wednesday 7 Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah but this appears to be a mistake.

<sup>107</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:297; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:84.

<sup>108</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:309; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:103.

<sup>109</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:315; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:112.

'Āshūrā', he came out with the people who were with him [i.e., 10 Muḥarram 61 AH]. <sup>110</sup>		
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Table 1

If we transpose the first three specific dates of al-Ḥusayn's movements to 62 AH, we find that they do not match the calendar for that year, except if we assume a one-day margin of error for each one of them.<sup>111</sup> We do however find that for the following year, the specific dates return accurately on the SCC as Thursday 2 Muḥarram 63/11 September 682, Thursday 9 Muḥarram 63/18 September 682, and Friday 10 Muḥarram 63/19 September 682.

A narration by the famous traditionist Qatādah informs us that "al-Ḥusayn was killed on the day of 'Āshūrā', on a Friday."<sup>112</sup> The accounts of al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom all stress that he was deprived of water and suffered from thirst, yet out of the three specific dates we have proposed, Friday 10 Muḥarram 65/26 August 684 on the SAC is the one when the weather is the most unbearable. If this date is to be accepted, then the Caliph ultimately responsible for this heinous crime would have been Marwān b. al-Ḥakam. The lack of mention of such an important event by the non-Muslim sources could be explained if it was overshadowed by the Battle of Marj Rāhit which began "in the middle of Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah in 64 AH"<sup>113</sup> i.e., 15 Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah 64/3 August 684 on the SCC.

### The Battle of al-Ḥarrah and the First Attack on the Ka'bah

Agapius explains how 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr rose to power and Marwān b. al-Ḥakam came to be exiled from Medina following the death of Yazīd:

Those in Yathrib and Iraq made 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr king over them, as also did those in Mesopotamia. Those in Syria and Palestine remained loyal, on account of their partisanship, to the family of Mu'āwiyah, and called for them (to rule). Then al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays gathered many troops, came to Damascus and made it known that he was fighting for 'Abd Allāh

<sup>110</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:320; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:120.

<sup>111</sup> The specific dates return on the SCC as Saturday 28 Rajab 62/12 April 682, Thursday 3 Sha'bān 62/17 April 682, and Monday 8 Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah/18 August 682.

<sup>112</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā 'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2002), 3:194, ḥadīth no. 417/4819; 3:198, ḥadīth no. 428a/4830a.

<sup>113</sup> Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq*, 24:296.

b. al-Zubayr. The Arabs in Mesopotamia also called for ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr. Each one proceeded to take a region which they defended and fought for. Al-Mukhtār was victorious in Kufa. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam departed from Yathrib, taking his children with him, and made his way to Damascus.<sup>114</sup>

The *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* relays similar details:

With the death of Mu‘āwiya the younger the armies of all the provinces chose two rulers for themselves, one by name ‘Abd Allāh (*Abdella*) and the other called Marwān (*Maroan*). . . . But before an interval of almost two years [had passed] ‘Abd Allāh was elected ruler with the consent of all and Marwān was expelled in odium from the territory of Medina (*Almidina*) by ‘Abd Allāh himself together with all his children and relatives and was ordered into exile at Damascus.<sup>115</sup>

Ibn al-‘Amīd concurs that it was after ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr became caliph that Marwān was exiled along with his son ‘Abd al-Malik from Medina to Damascus.<sup>116</sup> Ibn ‘Asākir reports that ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr was given the pledge of allegiance on 7 Rajab 64<sup>117</sup>/29 February 684 on the SCC from the people of the Ḥijāz, while Ibn al-‘Amīd places it slightly later, “nine days remaining in the month of Rajab”<sup>118</sup> i.e., on 21 Rajab 64/4 March 684 on the SCC.

Muslim sources agree that it was after the completion of the Ḥajj in Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah 62/November 681 that a group of notables expelled Marwān from Medina after publicly denouncing their allegiance to Yazīd. Khalīfah b. Khayyāṭ tells us how ‘Abd Allāh b. Muṭṭi‘ was made leader over Quraysh, ‘Abd Allāh b. Hanḏalah over the Anṣār, and Ma‘qal b. Sinān over the Muhājirūn, and that it was these men, not ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, who forced the Umayyads out of the Ḥijāz.<sup>119</sup> Marwān’s exile was however short-lived, for he camped at Wādī ‘l-Qurā and returned to Medina with the army of Muslim b. ‘Uqbah<sup>120</sup> who rhetorically asked the inhabitants of the Prophet’s city: “Will you pledge allegiance to the

<sup>114</sup> Agapius, *Kitāb al-Unvan*, pt. 1, p. 234-35 [494-495]; Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle*, 176. Hoyland’s translation has been edited.

<sup>115</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 620-21. Hoyland’s translation has been edited.

<sup>116</sup> Ibn al-‘Amīd, *Historia Saracenicā Arabicè & Latinè*, 50.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 28:245.

<sup>118</sup> Ibn al-‘Amīd, *Historia Saracenicā Arabicè & Latinè*, 49.

<sup>119</sup> Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Ta’rīkh*, 236-37. Also see Omar Suleiman al-Ageili, “A Critical Edition of Kitāb al-Miḥan by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Tamīmī” (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 1981), 66.

<sup>120</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Battle of al-Ḥarra, see M. J. Kister, “The Battle of the Ḥarra: Some Socio-Economic Aspects,” in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. Myriam Rosen Ayalon (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977): 33-49.

servant of Allah Yazīd, Commander of the Believers, and those who will come after him?”<sup>121</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī reports that “the Battle of al-Ḥarrah was on Wednesday, two [calendar nights] remaining in the month of Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 63 AH. Some, however, say that it was three [calendar nights remaining in the month of Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah],”<sup>122</sup> which return accurately as Wednesday 26 or 27 Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 63/26 or 27 August 683 on the SAC and SCC respectively. Al-Balādhurī reports on the authority of al-Wāqidī that “the Battle of al-Ḥarrah was on Friday, three [calendar nights] remaining in the month of Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 63 AH”<sup>123</sup> which is inaccurate according to SDV. If this specific date is accurate, then Friday 26 or 27 Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah (depending on whether the month was 29 or 30 days) would match the calendar for the year 62 AH, returning as Friday, September 5, 682 CE on the SAC and SCC respectively.

One possible interpretation of the events would be to suggest that there was a rebellion in the Ḥijāz following Yazīd’s death, with the Battle of al-Ḥarrah ensuing on Wednesday 26 or 27 Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 63/26 or 27 August 683 after Marwān’s brief expulsion to Wādī ’l-Qurā, though he was expelled for good after ‘Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr was given the pledge of allegiance. The first attack on the Ka’bah could have been in 63 or 64 AH.

According to al-Ṭabarī, the Ka’bah was bombarded “on a Saturday, when three days had passed in the month of Rabī’ al-Awwal 64 AH.”<sup>124</sup> As 3 Rabī’ al-Awwal for the year 64 AH returns as Friday, October 30, 683 CE on the SCC, it could potentially represent a one-day margin of error. The second specific date has ‘Abbās b. Sahl b. Sa’d recall that he had fought the Syrians on the day when the Ka’bah had been set alight alongside ‘Abd Allāh b. Muṭṭī and al-Mukhtār on “Sunday, 15 nights having passed in Rabī’ al-Ākhir 64 AH.”<sup>125</sup> Though this specific date of Sunday 15 Rabī’ al-Ākhir is inaccurate for the year 64 AH, it does return accurately for the year 63 AH as Sunday, December 21, 682 CE on the SAC. The third specific date concerning the bombardment of the Ka’bah has been transmitted by Khalīfah b. Khayyāṭ when he explains that al-Ḥuṣayn b. Numayr set fire to the Ka’bah and attacked it with ballista “on Tuesday, five [days]

<sup>121</sup> Al-Ageili, “A Critical Edition of Kitāb al-Miḥan,” 70.

<sup>122</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:380; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:208, 217.

<sup>123</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 5:2194.

<sup>124</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:382-83; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 19:223-24.

<sup>125</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:446; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:15.

having passed in the month of Rabī' al-Ākhir in 64 AH,<sup>126</sup> which accurately returns as Tuesday, December 1, 683 CE on the SCC.

If Yazīd died on Tuesday 14 Rabī' al-Awwal 64/10 November 683, then there is no reason to doubt that he would have been responsible for the Battle of al-Ḥarrah. As for the bombardment of the Ka'bah, it could have occurred either slightly before his death (if we accept al-Ṭabarī's date with its one-day margin of error) or shortly thereafter (if we accept Khalīfah b. Khayyāṭ's date). Alternatively, if Yazīd passed away on Thursday 14 Rabī' al-Awwal 63/21 November 682, then the Battle of al-Ḥarrah may have taken place during his reign on Friday 26 or 27 Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah 62/5 September 682, and followed by the first attack on the Ka'bah which could have been after his death on Sunday 15 Rabī' al-Ākhir 63/21 December 682.

### Marwān b. al-Ḥakam as a Counter-Caliph

According to Elias bar Shīnāya, Marwān died on Sunday 27 Ramaḍān 65/7 May 685<sup>127</sup> which proves accurate on the SCC. *The Chronicle of 819 AD* states that "Marwān b. al-Ḥakam reigned for a year and a half,"<sup>128</sup> which from Ramaḍān 65/7 May 685 would mean he became a counter-Caliph around Rabī' al-Awwal 64/November 683. Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956) tells us that Marwān was given the pledge of allegiance "in Rajab of the year 64 AH, after a long dispute among the party of Banū Umayyah between those who favoured him to rule, and those who wanted Khālīd b. Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah. This dissension happened after [the death of] Mu'āwiyah b. Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah."<sup>129</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī informs us that Marwān was given the pledge of allegiance in al-Jābiyah on "Wednesday, three days having passed in Dhū 'l-Qa'dah in 64 AH,"<sup>130</sup> a correct date which returns as Wednesday, June 22, 684 CE on the SCC. Ibn Sa'd informs us that he was given the pledge of allegiance "on Monday 15 Dhū 'l-Qa'dah 64 AH"<sup>131</sup> which also proves to be accurate and returns as Monday, July 4, 684 CE on the SCC. The *Chronography* of Elias bar Shīnāya states that he was given the pledge of allegiance on Tuesday 6 Muḥarram 65/23 August 684<sup>132</sup> which too is an

<sup>126</sup> Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Ta'rikh*, 255.

<sup>127</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *Chronographie*, 92.

<sup>128</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 78.

<sup>129</sup> 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa 'l-Ishrāf* (Beirut: Dār Ṣa'b, n.d.), 266.

<sup>130</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:412; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:55.

<sup>131</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 5:41.

<sup>132</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *Chronographie*, 92.

accurate date on the SCC, implying that it was granted to him after his victory at the Battle of Marj Rāhit as Agapius reports:

Marwān arose with his troops seeking al-Ḍaḥḥāk [b. Qays] and they encountered him at Marj Rāhit. They fought and Marwān killed him and most of his men. The survivors pledged allegiance to Marwān. He returned to Damascus and settled in it; he married the wife of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah and lived in her residence. Marwān determined to travel to Egypt to receive the allegiance of its people, but some illness afflicted him and he died after ruling for nine months. His son 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān ruled after him for twenty-two years, starting from the year 65 of the Arabs and AG 996 (684-685 [CE]).<sup>133</sup>

Overall, it appears that Marwān was given the pledge of allegiance on different occasions by different groups of Muslims, the earliest being perhaps in Rabī' al-Awwal 64/November 683. The latest and most important pledge of allegiance was on Tuesday 6 Muḥarram 65/23 August 684, after which he ruled for nine months before passing away on Sunday 27 Ramaḍān 65/7 May 685.

### 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and the Hope of the Caliphate

The Islamic sources record several specific dates for 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr's political activities after he was given the pledge of allegiance. Al-Ṭabarī tells us that al-Mukhtār al-Thaqafī arrived in Kufa "on Friday in the middle of Ramaḍān"<sup>134</sup> i.e., Friday 15 Ramaḍān 64/6 May 684 on the SCC, followed by 'Abd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Anṣārī al-Khatmī and Muḥammad b. Ṭalḥah b. 'Ubayd Allāh al-A'raj on "Friday, eight [nights] remaining in the month of Ramaḍān 64 AH,"<sup>135</sup> i.e., Friday 22 Ramaḍān 64/13 May 684 according to the SCC. All of them had been sent to Kufa by 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr. 'Abd Allāh b. Muṭī' was later sent there to act as a governor on behalf of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr on "Thursday, 5 [calendar nights] remaining in the month of Ramaḍān in 65 AH,"<sup>136</sup> i.e., Thursday 25 Ramaḍān 65/4 May 685 on the SAC. Interestingly enough, the Christian chronicles only inform us of al-Mukhtār having been active in Kufa after the death of Yazīd, keeping completely silent about 'Abd Allāh b. Muṭī'.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Agapius, *Kitab al-'Unvan*, pt. 1, p. 236 [496]; Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, 177. Hoyland's translation has been edited.

<sup>134</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:433; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:92.

<sup>135</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:434; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:92.

<sup>136</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 4:489; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:186.

<sup>137</sup> Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, 176.

Although ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr may initially have had the upper hand, Marwān’s fortunes changed after his exile from the Ḥijāz as the *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* explains:

But after a limited passage of time, with the consent of a good many from the army, he (Marwān) was carried forward to power with God turning a blind eye (*conivente*). Waging countless great battles against each other through a second year [i.e., in 65 AH/684-685 CE] without a break, an innumerable multitude of men fell from each army in their mutual battles conducted amongst themselves. Since he perceived his troops to be weakened more and more by fighting so much successively, Marwān, king of one side, sent envoys and requested beseechingly from Constantine Augustus that a peace be granted to him.<sup>138</sup>

The defeat of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr would come shortly afterwards at the hands of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān. The *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* continues:

‘Abd al-Malik achieved the apex of royal power and ruled for 20 years. In the first year of his reign [i.e., presumably from Shawwāl 65/May 685 to Shawwāl 66/May 686], applying all his experience and the courage of his mind against ‘Abd Allāh, whom his father had attacked many times in various battles, [he came] finally to Mecca, the home of Abraham as they think, which lies between Ur of the Chaldees and the city of Ḥarrān (*Carras*) in the desert. When a clash was initiated, king ‘Abd Allāh was killed by the general of the army, *Tahihis* by name, appointed by the king ‘Abd al-Malik, and the head of the aforementioned king ‘Abd Allāh was cut off and presented to ‘Abd al-Malik, the son of king Marwān, by the army general *Aiais* [i.e., al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf] in Damascus.<sup>139</sup>

These observations are corroborated by Eutychius when he informs us that the bombardment of the Ka‘bah took place under the command of al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, during the era of ‘Abd al-Malik,<sup>140</sup> and by Dionysius, when he discusses the closure of the second civil war and the death of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr:

Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, meanwhile, went against Yathrib to fight ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr; and ‘Abd al-Malik sent word to his brother Muḥammad to muster a force and go to al-Ḥajjāj’s assistance. By their combined forces ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr’s army was defeated and his general, Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar, was killed. ‘Abd Allāh himself escaped with a few men and sought sanctuary in the Ka‘ba, i.e., the house of worship used by the prophet and his followers in Mecca. Al-Ḥajjāj pursued them there and penned them up within the building, then used catapults to demolish the enclosure wall,

<sup>138</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 621.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 622.

<sup>140</sup> Eutychius, *Annales*, 7:40.



thus enabling his men to rush in, take ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and kill him. They cut off his head and sent it to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān; then they rebuilt the sanctuary. After this ‘Abd al-Malik made al-Ḥajjāj lord of al-Kūfa and of Yathrib, of Mecca and of all Iraq.<sup>141</sup>

Similarly to the *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* which appears to infer that ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr was defeated in the first year of ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign in 66 AH, John also suggests an earlier date for his death:

He [i.e., ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr] came to a certain locality in the South where their sanctuary was, and lived there. Preparations for war were made against him and he was overpowered; in this way they even burnt their own sanctuary, as well as spilling much blood there.<sup>142</sup>

John’s text insinuates that ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr’s death coincided with the bombardment of the Ka‘bah. As al-Mukhtār was in Kufa when ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr was defeated, we could here assume that the Ka‘bah was attacked twice. The first time would have been on Sunday 15 Rabī‘ al-Ākhir 63/21 December 682, after which it was repaired by ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, and the second time by al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf during his expedition to the Ḥijāz.

If we attempt to harmonize the *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* and John’s text to an earlier date for the second attack of the Ka‘bah, we could postulate using SDV that the date provided by al-Ṭabarī was subject to confusion and that it was instead of the year 64 AH on Saturday 3 Rabī‘ al-Awwal 66/7 October 685 on the SAC. After recalling the defeat of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and the bombardment of the Ka‘bah, John appears to shift the focus of his narrative to his father al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām:

From that time on the kingdom of the Arabs was no longer firmly established [presumably after the death of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr]. When Zubayr [i.e., presumably al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām] died they set up his son [i.e., presumably ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr] in the emirate (*‘amīrūtā*).<sup>143</sup>

John seems to imply that ‘Abd Allāh had like his father held an important political office, but by 67 AH, he had already been killed. Ghevond also notes how in the second year of ‘Abd al-Malik’s Caliphate there was very fierce fighting between the Arabs which spanned 3 years:

Then ‘Abd al-Malik, son of Merwan, succeeded his father [Merwan] and lived for twenty-one years and then died. The following is an account of his conduct. He was a cruel and fierce warrior. In the second year of his reign [i.e., most likely a reference to 66 AH], a terrible confusion and war

<sup>141</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 201.

<sup>142</sup> Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century,” 63.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

broke out among the *Tachiks* (Arabs) resulting in endless bloodshed among themselves. This terrible civil war lasted three years [i.e., presumably ending at the close of 69 AH] and claimed innumerable lives, thereby fulfilling David's prophecy, saying: "Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken [Psalm 37:15]."<sup>144</sup>

In contrast to the Muslim sources which place the end of the second civil war in 73 AH/692 CE, Theophanes, like Ghevond, suggests an earlier date for when it finally came to a close. He tells us that after the defeat of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, by 31 August 690/19 Rabī' al-Awwal 71, "the Arabs' civil war ended."<sup>145</sup> Dionysius also notes an earlier date for the end of the second civil war when he informs us that by the beginning of AG 1002 [i.e., 1 October 690/20 Rabī' al-Ākhir 71] "'Abd al-Malik was at last free from conflicts."<sup>146</sup> Similarly, the *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* reports that 'Abd al-Malik had overcome all civil wars by 690 CE/71 AH:

So in the sixth year [i.e., 71 AH] of the aforesaid ruler, after the internal struggles had been settled everywhere round about, he very wisely turned upon the territory of external enemies, for he had made tributary to his authority the provinces, cities, estates, towns and forts of many peoples.

The Muslim sources differ as to whether 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr died on Tuesday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā or Jumādā al-Ākhirah,<sup>147</sup> but both are inaccurate for the year 73 AH/692 CE. Elias bar Shīnāya believes it was on Monday 17 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 73 AH,<sup>148</sup> but this specific date has a one-day margin of error as the 17 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 73 AH returns as Sunday, November 3, 692 CE on the SCC. In an attempt to harmonize 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr's death date to John's text, we could make the case that he was killed on Tuesday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā 66/19 December 685 which is accurate according to the SAC. This date would thus fall a little over 2 months after our proposed date for the bombardment of the Ka'bah, on Saturday 3 Rabī' al-Awwal 66/7 October 685.

If we are to follow a chronology aligned to that of Theophanes and Dionysius, then SDV may suggest another date for the second attack on the Ka'bah, namely Saturday 3 Rabī' al-Awwal 69/5 September 688 on the SCC or Tuesday 5 Rabī' al-Ākhir 69/6 October 688 on the SAC; and the death of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr on Tuesday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā 69/17 November 688 on the SCC or Tuesday 17 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 69/15

<sup>144</sup> Lewond, *History*, 54.

<sup>145</sup> Turtledove, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 63.

<sup>146</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 205.

<sup>147</sup> For reports providing both dates, see Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Madīnat Dimashq*, 28:212, 245, 248, 251.

<sup>148</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *Chronographie*, 94.

December 688 on the SAC. If this chronology is correct, then it would suggest that John redacted his work in 69/*ca.* 689, but this also raises the question as to why he failed to refer to the ascendancy of ‘Abd al-Malik which he would have witnessed. Still, despite these competing historical memories pertaining to the dating of these major events, the Muslim and non-Muslim sources have a shared historical memory of an Umayyad army bombarding the Ka‘bah resulting in the killing of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr.

### **The Rise and Fall of al-Mukhtār b. Abī ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafī**

John devotes a lot of attention to the rebellion of al-Mukhtār, indicating that he was familiar with the political developments in Mesopotamia at the time. He explains:

The Westerners had a general called ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bar Zāyāt, while the Easterners had one named Mukhtār. Now at that time the Westerners controlled Nisibis, and an emir called bar ‘Uthmān was in control of it. Another emir from among the Easterners, whose name was bar Nīṭrōn, advanced against him. The Westerners claimed that, because Nisibis had belonged to the Romans, it was right that they should have it, while the Easterners claimed that it had belonged to the Persians, and so was theirs. This was the reason for the great unrest in Mesopotamia. The Westerners won, and the Easterners were driven away.<sup>149</sup>

The name “‘Abd al-Raḥmān bar Zāyāt” should be regarded as a mistake as the person meant would have been ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād. As for “bar ‘Uthmān” and “bar Nīṭrōn,” they cannot be identified in the Islamic sources. John continues:

At the turn of the year bar Nīṭrōn got together a large army, and horsemen, like sand in number, made ready with him. Goaded on by enormous pride he set his face to go down to fight the ‘Aqūlāyē, taking with him John, who was metropolitan of Nisibis at that time. Seeing that the Patriarch of the Church of Christ in the East, Mar Gīwargīs, had already departed this life for a more blessed one, and Mar Ḥnānīshō the exegete had been appointed in his place, bar Zāyāt promised John ‘if you will accompany me, I will depose him and establish you in the patriarchate in his place.’ In this way he already considered that victory was his, seeing that he had many army commanders with him.<sup>150</sup>

The decision of bar Nīṭrōn, the eastern emir, to fight the people of Kufa, i.e., the ‘Aqūlāyē (perhaps by allying himself with the Westerners), suggests a possible division in the eastern ranks. The Muslim sources

<sup>149</sup> Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century,” 64-65.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

also tell us nothing about promises having been made to John the metropolitan of Nisibis to replace Mar Ḥnānīshō as the Catholicos of the Assyrian Church of the East. John continues:

Now Mukhtār, angry with the ‘Aqūlāyē on the grounds that they were useless to him in war, had given orders that all their slaves should be liberated and go into battle in their masters’ stead. When this order had been issued, several thousand of them, slaves of captive origin, collected around him, and he appointed them a commander whose name was Abraham.<sup>151</sup>

Al-Mukhtār had indeed been disappointed with the Kufans’ ability to make war and John’s account here is a shared historical memory that can be corroborated by al-Ṭabarī. The latter reports that the Kufan notables had complained that al-Mukhtār “made himself commander over us without our consent. He has drawn our *mawālī* near to himself, mounted them on horses, given them stipends, and assigned our *fay’*, to them. Our slaves have disobeyed us, and our orphans and widows have thus been despoiled.”<sup>152</sup> Al-Mukhtār’s main frustration with the Kufans was the humiliating defeat of Sulaymān b. Ṣurad, who after calling the people to avenge the blood of al-Ḥusayn on Friday 5 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 65/18 November 684<sup>153</sup> according to the SAC, was defeated along with the penitents (*al-tawwābūn*) at the Battle of ‘Ayn al-Wardah on Wednesday 22 Jumādā al-Ūlā 65/4 January 685<sup>154</sup> according to the SCC. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar, whom John refers to as “Abraham,” was indeed appointed by al-Mukhtār as his “commander,” and the details which John subsequently provides for the Battle of Khāzir ought to be regarded as accurate:

This man [i.e., Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar] he sent against bar Zāyāṭ with 13,000 men, all footsoldiers, without arms or equipment, without horses or tents: all that they had in their hands was either a sword or a spear or a stick. They set off, and when the two armies met on the river named the Ḥāzar [i.e., Khāzir], there was a fierce battle in which all the warriors of the Westerners were slain. Thus was their pride turned to deep shame, seeing that they had been defeated, not by able-bodied men, but by weaklings. The man who was all prepared for the patriarchal throne [i.e., John the metropolitan of Nisibis] only barely escaped with his cloak. The Westerners were utterly broken and their general [i.e., ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād] was slain as well. As for all the stores they had collected, and their

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Victory of the Marwānids*, trans. Michael Fishbein (New York: SUNY, 1990), 21:11.

<sup>153</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:456; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:131.

<sup>154</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:464; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:144.

riches, belongings, arms and silver, all this their enemies inherited, while they retreated until they had crossed the Euphrates.<sup>155</sup>

The Battle of Khāzīr is a shared historical memory but its precise date is contentious. Ibn A‘tham reports that “Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar departed Kufa on Saturday, eight nights having passed in Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah in 66 AH”<sup>156</sup> which is inaccurate according to SDV. Rather, we find that it returns accurately a year earlier as Saturday 8 Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah 65/15 July 685 on the SAC. According to al-Ṭabarī, the Battle of Khāzīr was on “Saturday, eight [calendar nights] remaining in Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah 66 AH,”<sup>157</sup> a date which again proves to be incorrect, but accurate for the year 65 AH, returning as Saturday 22 Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah 65/23 July 685 on the SAC. Furthermore, it is telling that Michael the Syrian also suggests an earlier date for the Battle of Khāzīr:

At the beginning of AG 996 [i.e., 1 October 684/15 Ṣafar 65 to 30 September 685/24 Ṣafar 66] on the 22nd or the 23rd of the month of Elul [i.e., 20 or 21 Muḥarram 66 AH], the Arabs engaged themselves in a very violent battle. The battle prolonged for many days. They mutually destroyed each other and many men fell on both sides. It is said that the number of dead went up to 400,000. These things happened by the river Khāzīr in the region of Nineveh.<sup>158</sup>

Although the month of Elul is toward the end of AG 996, the occurrence of the Battle of Khāzīr in Dhū ‘l-Ḥijjah 65 AH-Muḥarram 66/July-August 685 corroborates with the *Byzantine-Arab Chronicle of 741 AD* and Ghevond that intense fighting took place when ‘Abd al-Malik acceded to power. The rise to power of the captives whom al-Mukhtār freed is then explained by John who alludes to Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar having been killed by the *ṣurtē*, not by ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān:

Those captives, who were nicknamed *ṣurtē* signifying their zeal for righteousness, entered Nisibis and held it, thus gaining control over the whole of Mesopotamia. Wherever their enemies poked their noses out, the *ṣurtē* would win another victory. When they had entered Nisibis, Abraham appointed his brother as commander over them, and he himself went down to ‘Aqūlā. Since, however, they preferred to have someone from their own ranks as commander – Abraham and his brother belonged to the Ṭayy – they rose up against him and slew him and all his associates. They then set up an emir from among themselves, whose name was Abuqarab [i.e., Abū Qārib Yazīd b. Abī Ṣakhr].<sup>159</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century,” 65-66.

<sup>156</sup> Ibn A‘tham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 6:268.

<sup>157</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘rīkh*, 4:548; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 21:67.

<sup>158</sup> Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 2:471.

<sup>159</sup> Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century,” 66.

John afterwards tells us of the fighting that took place between the notables of Kufa and al-Mukhtār. Assuming that they had gained the upper hand shortly after the Battle of Khāzir, we could suggest that al-Mukhtār decided to rebel against them on “Thursday night, on the fourteenth of Rabī’ al-Awwal 66 AH”<sup>160</sup> which returns accurately as Thursday, October 19, 685 CE on the SCC. Al-Ṭabarī tells us that al-Mukhtār’s rebellion was against ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr’s governor and the people of Kufa, but if it took place during al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf’s expedition to the Ḥijāz at a time when the Ka‘bah was attacked for a second time, then this may imply that the notables of Kufa whom he rebelled against may not have necessarily been allied to ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr. John explains:

The ‘Aqūlayē repented of what they had done when they saw that their slaves had rebelled against them, and so they rose up against Mukhtār and made war on him. After defeating them several times, he was himself finally defeated, and they killed both him and a large army of the ex-captives that he had with him. Others of captive origin collected together and joined those who were in the city of Nisibis. Every day more would turn up, from every quarter, and join them. They captured a number of fortresses, and the fear of them fell on all the Arabs (Ṭayy). Wherever they went they were successful.<sup>161</sup>

The Battle of Jabbānat al-Sabī’ is believed to have occurred in parallel to the Battle of Khāzir, “on Wednesday, six nights remaining in Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 66 AH,”<sup>162</sup> a date which proves to be inaccurate according to SDV. We could argue that it happened a year earlier in 65 AH and that we are dealing with a one-day margin of error, with its date having been on Tuesday 24 Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 65/1 August 685 on the SCC. However, when we read John’s description of the events that led to the death of al-Mukhtār, another possibility arises, namely that he was killed at the Battle of Jabbānat al-Sabī’ on Wednesday 24 Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 67/10 July 687 when the notables of Kufa rebelled against him.

John’s recollection of the death of al-Mukhtār is a competing historical memory that stands in contrast to the Muslim sources which inform us that he died on 14 Ramaḍān 67/2 April 687<sup>163</sup> at the hands of Muṣ‘ab b. al-Zubayr, whom John does not mention. Theophanes<sup>164</sup> states

<sup>160</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:496; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 20:200.

<sup>161</sup> Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century,” 66-67.

<sup>162</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:528; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 21:31.

<sup>163</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 4:577; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 21:117.

<sup>164</sup> Turtledove, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 62. The text of Agapius reported by Hoyland states more or less the same. See Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle*, 185.

that Muṣ‘ab was the murderer of al-Mukhtār, while Dionysius is silent on that, only noting that al-Mukhtār “would not be subjected either to Ibn al-Zubayr or to those who remained loyal to the house of Mu‘āwīya.”<sup>165</sup> It is well known that al-Mukhtār had given ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr the oath of allegiance, but in the end, he is said to have recanted it. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar was indeed al-Mukhtār’s right-hand man but after al-Mukhtār’s death at the hands of Muṣ‘ab, Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar is curiously said to have allied himself to both Muṣ‘ab and ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr as the lesser evil against ‘Abd al-Malik. The deaths of Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar and Muṣ‘ab are reported by Elias bar Shīnāya as follows:

In 71 AH . . . [having begun on 14 June 690 CE] ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān set-out to fight Muṣ‘ab b. al-Zubayr. He sent before him his brother Muḥammad and Muṣ‘ab sent before him Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar. Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm met near the Catholic monastery [i.e., Dayr al-Jathālīq]. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar was killed and his troops were dispersed. Muṣ‘ab was also killed. His head was cut off and brought to ‘Abd al-Malik.<sup>166</sup>

According to al-Ṭabarī, “Muṣ‘ab was killed on Tuesday, thirteen days having passed in either Jumādā al-Ūlā or Jumādā al-Ākhirah in the year 72 AH,”<sup>167</sup> which is inaccurate according to SDV. However, if we are to rely on the year date provided by Elias bar Shīnāya, then we find that Tuesday 13 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 71/22 November 690 returns accurately on the SCC.

If on the other hand we are to follow the chronology of Theophanes and Dionysius and accept that ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr was killed on Tuesday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā 69/17 November 688 or Tuesday 17 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 69/15 December 688, then it is plausible for Muṣ‘ab to have died a year earlier on Tuesday 13 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 68 AH/24 December 687 according to the SAC.

Had ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr died on Tuesday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā 66/19 December 685 as we have suggested, then a possible date for Muṣ‘ab’s death could be Tuesday 13 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 65/24 January 685 on the SAC. This date however proves problematic if we impose it on Elias bar Shīnāya’s report about him having been killed alongside Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar, as under such circumstances the latter could not have fought ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād at the outset of the Battle of Khāzīr in Dhū ’l-Ḥijjah 65/July 685. The only way to get around this difficulty is to propose that Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar died after Muṣ‘ab and his brother ‘Abd Allāh, but before al-Mukhtār, who appears in John’s text as the last important

<sup>165</sup> Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*, 197.

<sup>166</sup> Elias bar Shīnāya, *Chronographie*, 93-4.

<sup>167</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5:11; al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 21:188.

political figure to fall in Mesopotamia. Another possibility could be that Muṣ‘ab and Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar died approximately one year after ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, but prior to al-Mukhtār, on Tuesday 13 Jumādā al-Ūlā 67/4 December 686 according to the SAC.

John does not give us any more information on the internal dynamics of the time. He tells us that the power of the *šurṭē* rose to such an extent that he believed they would be the reason for the end of the nascent Arab empire. As he explains:

The arrival of these *šurṭē*, and their victory, is from God; and I imagine that they will be the cause of the destruction of the Ishmaelites.<sup>168</sup>

### Reflections on John Bar Penkāyē as a source of competing historical memories

In his analysis of John’s text, Hoyland noted:

The lurid and graphic detail with which John describes these natural disasters and their devastating consequences upon the local population makes one feel that he must have penned them only a very short time after their occurrence “in the year 67 of the rule of the Arabs” (686-87). And that he was an eyewitness of these events is corroborated by his characterisation of various disasters as “of today” (*d-yawmānā*).<sup>169</sup>

Hoyland’s observations make us wonder how John obtained his information. Was he himself involved with some of the protagonists of the second civil war? Did people deliver news to his monastery, and if so, were these sources reliable? Assuming that they were, how accurate was he in their transmittal? Was his misidentification of ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān bar Zāyāṭ merely a slip of the pen, or is there more to it than we know about? Was he correct in reporting an earlier death date for ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr or did he confuse him with his brother Mundhir b. al-Zubayr as Hoyland has suggested?<sup>170</sup> And could it be that John confused the chronology of the main events of the second civil war as he was reporting them? John’s testimony, when read in conjunction with other non-Muslim sources, opens a whole array of questions for which we have no concrete answers. For instance, what was the relationship between the Alids and the Zubayrites during the second civil war? Could Muṣ‘ab and his brother ‘Abd Allāh have been fighting on the same side as Ibrāhīm b. al-Ashtar and al-Mukhtār all

<sup>168</sup> Brock, “North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century,” 73.

<sup>169</sup> Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 189.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 189-90.



along? John's account cannot be ignored, simply because he was a contemporary of the events that he describes, as he himself attests:

In the year 67 of the rule of the Arabs, following on all these fearful signs which we have indicated above, and following those wars and battles by which (God) awoke us and summoned us to repentance – but we paid no attention; in this year 67 the accursed plague began: there had been nothing like it, and I hope that there will be nothing like it again.<sup>171</sup>

If indeed John wrote his text at the close of Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah 67/July 687 following the death of al-Mukhtār, after which his work was not subject to any edits, then it stands out by far as the most reliable source of competing historical memories for the second civil war.

### Conclusion

This study has carefully analyzed the shared and competing historical memories of the second Muslim civil war by applying SDV to important historical events reported in Muslim sources. It has paid particular attention to John Bar Penkāyē's narrative in the *Book of Main Points* and noted that his sequence of events does not generally match that provided in Muslim sources. Unlike the other Christian chronicles which may have been influenced by Muslim accounts, John's work was not edited at a later point in time to fit the Muslim narrative, hence making it a valuable historical source on early Islam. Consequently, the competing historical memories which he provides for the second civil war ought to encourage us to seek and discover new historical sources that will shed more light on this tumultuous period of early Islamic history.

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<sup>171</sup> Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century," 68.