



The Significance of the Work *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* in the Gradual Presentation of Islamic History

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Annotatsiya

This article analyzes the scholarly significance of Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari's work *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* ("History of the Prophets and Kings") in the gradual presentation of Islamic history. The study examines the position of the work as a historical source, the author's method of presenting historical events on the basis of the narration (riwayah) and isnad system, as well as his methodological approach within Islamic historiography. In particular, the article analyzes al-Tabari's systematic presentation of human history beginning from creation, in close connection with the history of the prophets, the emergence of Islam, the life of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), the period of the caliphate, and subsequent political developments. The article reveals the role of the work in shaping gradual historical thinking, its characteristics in systematically presenting the sequence of events, and its scholarly significance in understanding the history of Islamic civilization on the basis of an integrated conceptual framework. In addition, the value of the work as a primary source in the study of Islamic history, its contribution to preserving historical memory, and its role in the development of scholarly historiographical traditions are evaluated from a scholarly-analytical perspective. The findings of the study demonstrate that *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* is an important source for the periodized, systematic, and scholarly study of Islamic history.

Kalit so'zlar: Islamic history, historiography, gradual approach, history of the prophets, caliphate period, historical sources, Islamic civilization, historical narrations, Muslim historiography, the Qur'an and history, hadith and history, religious thought, historical methodology, early Islamic period, historical heritage, source studies.

Introduction. "*Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*" ("The History of Prophets and Kings") is regarded as one of the most important historical works of Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari that has survived to the present day. This work presents the history of humankind, covering the period from the creation of the world up to 915

CE (302 AH). In the work, historical events from the time of Adam (A.S.) up to the period in which the author lived are systematically presented primarily on the basis of narrations and historical reports. According to sources, the scholar completed the writing of this work over approximately seven years. This work was composed after al-Tabari's famous Qur'anic exegesis, "Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an," and demonstrates the author's high scholarly capacity in the field of historiography. It is precisely this work that served as the basis for al-Tabari's recognition in the Islamic scholarly tradition as the "father of the science of history."

This work is mentioned in scholarly literature under various titles. In particular, it is also referred to as "Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk," "Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Anbiya wa al-Khulafa," and in some sources, briefly as "Kitab al-Tarikh." The author began writing the work in 290 AH (903 CE) and completed it in 302 AH (915 CE). The work systematically presents historical processes from the creation of the world up to the 22nd day of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah in 302 AH. In recognition of al-Tabari's immense contributions to the field of historiography, he was awarded the honorary titles "Abu al-Mu'arrikhin" ("Father of Historians") and "Shaykh al-Mu'arrikhin" ("Shaykh of Historians").

Material and Methods. This work of al-Tabari holds particular significance in that it sheds light on numerous sources that had been produced before it, but which, due to various historical reasons, have not fully reached us. By incorporating important information from earlier historical sources, this work is recognized as one of the most important encyclopedic sources of Islamic historiography. In this regard, al-Tabari's *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* serves not only as a source illuminating historical events of the past, but also as a scholarly bridge transmitting historical memory to future generations. The work has also been widely utilized by later Muslim and Western historians as a reliable and fundamental source.

In composing his historical work, al-Tabari did not limit himself solely to historical narrations, but also made extensive use of the sciences of hadith, tafsir, sirah, and genealogy (nasab). This demonstrates the richness of the work in content, its scholarly foundation, and its multi-disciplinary source-critical character. Al-Tabari presents history through a gradual and systematic approach, conditionally dividing the work into two principal periods: the pre-Islamic period and the post-Islamic period.

In the section of the work devoted to the pre-Islamic period, the primordial stages of human history are discussed, including the creation of the universe, the emergence of night and day, the earth and the heavens, the sun and the moon, the blessings granted to Iblis and his subsequent descent into disbelief, the creation of Adam (A.S.) and his descent to earth, and the story of Cain and Abel. In addition, the histories of the prophets Nuh (A.S.), Ibrahim (A.S.), Lut (A.S.), Isma'il (A.S.), Ishaq (A.S.), Ya'qub (A.S.), Ayyub (A.S.), Shu'ayb (A.S.), Ilyas (A.S.), Musa (A.S.), Dawud (A.S.), Sulayman (A.S.), Salih (A.S.), and Yunus (A.S.) are presented in chronological sequence. Furthermore, important information is provided regarding events related to Isa (A.S.), his ascension to heaven, as well as the history of the Arabs up to the prophetic mission of Muhammad (PBUH), together with the social, political, and religious condition of the Jahiliyyah period.

Results. The historian systematically presents historical information while partially relying on the sequence presented in the Torah in narrating events. At the same time, based on the verses of the Holy Qur'an, he also recounts the events related to Satan's temptation of Adam (A.S.). The work describes the expulsion of Adam (A.S.) and Eve (A.S.) from Paradise, as well as the events connected with the conflict that arose between their children. In the subsequent sections, the history of the earlier prophets, their prophetic missions, and information concerning the tribes and peoples to whom they were sent are presented in a consistent manner.

In his work, al-Tabari does not limit himself solely to events related to Islamic history, but also provides important information concerning the histories of the Greek, Jewish, Arab, and Persian peoples. In particular, information is provided about ancient Iranian rulers such as Kaykavus, Kaykhusraw, and Luhrasp in relation to ancient Persian history. In the sections devoted to Jewish history, historical events connected with prophets such as Musa (A.S.), Khidr (A.S.), and Harun (A.S.), their peoples, and their prophetic missions are narrated. Likewise, the Persian kings of the Sasanian period, their political relations with Arab territories, and narrations concerning the Jewish people and their prophets are also discussed.

In the work, the history of the Greeks is presented on the basis of information related to Christianity, and information is provided about the events of the pre-Islamic period as well as the military campaigns during the time of Bukhtunnasr (Nebuchadnezzar). In addition, detailed information is provided about the rulers of Yemen and their relations with Abyssinia and the Persian state. Notably, al-Tabari presents the events in this section not in annalistic (chronological) style, but in a systematized manner according to thematic divisions. This further enhances the scholarly value of the work as a universal historical source.

The second section, entitled "The Post-Islamic Period," is also presented in four principal parts. The first part is devoted to the "Era of Happiness" (*Asr al-Sa'adah*), in which the life of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and the historical events up to 11 AH / 632 CE are systematically described. The second part discusses the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*Khulafa al-Rashidun*) between 10-40 AH (632-660 CE), particularly the Islamic conquests and political-military developments. The third part covers the years 41-131 AH (661-749 CE) and includes the administrative system of the Umayyad state, issues of caliphal succession, and historical events related to military campaigns. The fourth part is devoted to the Abbasid period between 132-302 AH (749-914/915 CE), in which the internal conflicts, political struggles, and details of the historical processes of this era are described.

In the work, information is presented according to the chronological principle, in accordance with the sequence in which events occurred, demonstrating the author's gradual (*tadriji*) approach to historical phenomena. This method makes it possible to comprehend historical processes in a coherent and systematic manner. In works on Islamic history produced after al-Tabari, the presentation of historical events based on a similar traditional periodization is also observed. In particular, Islamic history was often analyzed by dividing it into major stages such as the period of Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the Umayyad

dynasty, and the Abbasid period. This historical classification employed by al-Tabari was continued in the works of later Muslim historians and became a firmly established methodological tradition in Islamic historiography. This initial model of periodization subsequently served as an important methodological foundation for systematizing the histories of other dynasties and historical periods. In particular, the method of systematically presenting historical events according to specific periods was widely applied in narrating the histories of various dynasties such as the Qarakhanids, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, Saffarids, Mamluks, Ottomans, Mongols, and Timurids. This confirms that al-Tabari's historiographical school exerted a significant influence on subsequent Islamic historical writing.

Discussion. Tabari effectively employed the method of titling in presenting historical events in a systematic and chronological manner. In the work, he separated each historical event with a distinct heading corresponding to its content, thereby creating an opportunity for the reader to clearly understand the sequence of events. For example, under the heading “Zikru nasabi Rasululloh (s.a.v.) wa zikru ba‘da akhbari aba’ihi wa ajdadihi” (“Mention of the lineage of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), and mention of information regarding his fathers and ancestors”), information is presented concerning the genealogy and ancestors of Muhammad (PBUH). This approach demonstrates the presence of a method of presenting the history of individuals in a thematic manner within the work. In Tabari's methodology of historical narration, the chronological approach based on the Hijri calendar occupies a special place. He presents post-Hijrah events regularly within the framework of Hijri years. For instance, under the heading “Zikru ma kana minal umuri al-madhkurati fi awwali sanatini minal hijrati” (“Account of the events that occurred in the first year of the Hijrah”), events relating to the first year of the Hijrah are described. The events of the following year are then consistently continued under headings such as “Summa kanatis sanatus saniyatu minal hijrati” (“Then the events that occurred in the second year after the Hijrah”). This method enhanced the scholarly and historical value of the work by organizing historical events according to the criterion of time.

In presenting events after the Hijrah, Tabari not only indicates the Hijri year as the principal heading, but also pays attention to separating important events that occurred within that same year under distinct subheadings. This demonstrates the developed nature of his methodology for systematizing historical information and highlighting significant events. In some instances, he employs expressions in the headings that directly indicate the content of the event. For example, when explaining the reason for the conversion of Amr ibn al-‘Ass to Islam, he uses a heading such as “Wa qala sababu islami Amri ibn al-‘Ass ma haddasana Ibn Humayd” (“And the reason for the conversion of Amr ibn al-‘Ass to Islam, as narrated to us by Ibn Humayd”), thereby revealing the essential content of the event in advance. This is significant as a stylistic approach that enables the reader to understand the content of the text beforehand.

It is observed that Tabari paid particular attention to chronological indicators in his historical narration. He attempted to organize historical events according to years and, in certain instances, months. However, he also acknowledges that chronological indicators were not always precisely recorded in historical information relating to the

early Islamic period. In this regard, he refers to the hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH), including the statement, “We are an unlettered nation that does not engage in calculation,” as well as narrations related to the sighting of the new moon. This indicates that the system of time reckoning and the calendar in the early Muslim community had not yet fully developed in the form known today. Nevertheless, Tabari’s reorganization of these historical events according to a chronological system demonstrates the maturity of his methodological approach in historiography.

Acknowledgement. A number of noteworthy features characteristic of the methodology of presenting historical events can be observed in al-Tabari’s work. First of all, the author employed a distinctive chronological approach in expressing time and dates. In particular, when describing months and years, he takes into account the characteristic of dates changing with the onset of night and uses the term “ليل” (night) in describing historical events that occurred during the night. This indicates that the Islamic calendar system was based on lunar reckoning and that the principle of counting the day from the night was observed.

In the work, historical events are often presented not by specifying an exact date, but rather by mentioning the names of months. The majority of the information presented is based on lunar months, while in some cases the author limits the timing of an event to the expression “في هذه السنة” (“in this year”), being content merely with indicating the year. In expressing the first day of the month, he uses phrases such as “اول ليلة في الشهر” (“the first night of the month”) or “اول ليلة منه” (“the first night thereof”). This demonstrates that al-Tabari paid particular attention to systematizing historical events on the basis of periodic and chronological order.

In addition, various time-indicating concepts were also employed in the work for the purpose of clarifying time. For example, the word “عشية” is used in the meanings of “evening time,” “a time close to dusk,” or “the period after noon,” thereby providing greater precision regarding the time at which an event occurred. For instance, while describing an event related to Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him), al-Tabari records: “Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) delivered a speech to the people on Tuesday evening after noon.” This method served to reflect not only the date of historical events, but also details concerning a specific part of the day.

Furthermore, the term “بقية” also appears in the work. This word is derived from the Arabic verb “بقي,” meaning “to remain,” and in sources it is generally used to indicate how many days or nights remained until the end of the month. For example, while describing the Battle of Khaybar, al-Tabari narrates: “Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) set out for Khaybar during the remaining days of the month of Muharram.” In another instance, he states: “Allah the Exalted created the moon, the stars, and the sun three hours before the end of Friday.” Such expressions show that the author also employed relative chronological units in expressing time.

The extent of the presentation of historical events in the work is likewise not uniform. While some events are described in detail over dozens of pages, information concerning certain years is limited to only a few lines. For example, the events related to the 25th year after the Hijrah are presented very briefly. This demonstrates that the author adopted a selective approach based on the historical significance of events, the

volume of available narrations, and the scope of source materials. Likewise, at the end of each year, al-Tabari records important individuals and scholars who passed away during that period, the dates of their deaths, information related to provinces and cities, appointments of governors, pilgrimage journeys, and other significant events pertaining to that year. This demonstrates the significance of the work not only as a narrative of political-historical events, but also as an important encyclopedic source relating to biographical, administrative, and social history.

Conclusion. Tabari's *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* occupies a special place as one of the most important sources of Islamic historiography due to its comprehensive, systematic, and scholarly presentation of historical events. In this work, the author paid particular attention to the meticulous collection of historical data, their comparative analysis, and the consistent presentation of historical processes based on the principle of gradual development (*tadrijiylik*). Beginning from the earliest periods, the work presents the important stages of human history, the activities of the prophets, and the processes of formation and development of various peoples, states, and dynasties in chronological sequence, based on both oral and written sources. Tabari is distinguished not merely by presenting historical events in the form of simple narration, but also by his effort to analyze them within a specific historical context. The presentation in the work of the gradual nature of historical developments, historical continuity, the interconnection of political and social transformations, and the application of the principles of accuracy and source criticism in historical scholarship further enhances the scholarly value of this work.

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