



DĀT-AL-SALĀSEL

DĀT-AL-SALĀSEL (lit., “provided with chains”), place near Obolla in southern Iraq where in 633 C.E., according to Sayf b. ‘Omar, one of Ṭabarī’s informants, Kāled b. Walīd and an Arab force of about 18,000 men defeated a small Sasanian garrison led by a frontier commander named Hormoz (Ṭabarī, I, pp. 2021, 2023-25; cf. Ebn al-Aṭīr, II, p. 294; Donner, p. 179; for questions about the veracity of Sayf in general and the suggestion that his unique report of this battle is fictional, see Wellhausen, pp. 3-7; Ṭabarī, tr., XI, pp. xiii-xxx, 13 n. 86; Sebeos [d. 66], whose account of the Muslim conquest is the earliest to have survived, did not mention Kāled in this connection). This engagement was supposedly one of several along the western bank of the Euphrates in that year, during the first phase of Kāled’s invasion of Mesopotamia. At that time the Sasanians were in disarray, owing, first, to a revolt of the imperial army and, second, to the murder of Kōsrow II (590-628, with interruption), followed by the massacre of the royal princes by Šērūye (Kavād II, r. 628). The defense of the borderlands had thus been left to local commanders like Hormoz and magnates (*dehqān*) of Sasanian descent like Anūšajān and Qobād (Kavād), who commanded the two wings of the army. Hormoz was allegedly killed by Kāled (for the legendary character of such reports, cf. Müller, p. 227), but the other two fled with the survivors to Maḍār, where they were subsequently defeated (Ṭabarī, I, pp. 2026-28).

Ṭabarī’s assertion that the site was called Dāt-al-Salāsel because the Persian commanders had chained their troops together (presumably in order to prevent their fleeing from battle) is probably a fabrication (Ṭabarī, I, pp.



2025-26; cf. Dāt-al-Salāsel in the Ḥejāz in Arabia; Donner, pp. 65, 101-04). Equally the view that the name reflected “the resemblance of the ranks of the armoured Iranian cavalymen to an iron chain” (Zarrīnkūb, p. 7) is unsubstantiated. A chain fence would, however, have been a useful device for a force fearing a surprise attack by night. Indeed, Sasanian military experts had prescribed related devices: “iron traps [to] be placed in localities, where a night attack is feared” (cf. similar advice in a Byzantine military manual; Inostrancev, pp. 14, 31).

After Kāled’s victories in southern Mesopotamia the Persian frontier defenses near the tip of the Persian Gulf lay open, and he proceeded toward Meysān unhindered, having dispatched Ma’qel b. Moqarren to sack Obolla.

See ‘ARAB ii.

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