



ḌŪ QĀR

ḌŪ QĀR, watering place near Kūfa in Iraq where a battle was fought between Arab tribesmen and Persian forces in the early 7th century. In the 6th century the Sasanians relied on the Arab Lakhmid dynasty, with its capital at Ḥīra in Iraq, for defense of their southwestern frontier against incursions by Arab tribes. Nevertheless, in the second half of the century Arab tribes sometimes defeated Lakhmid forces and also attacked Persian caravans (Jād al-Mawlā et al., pp. 2-5, 94-98, 107-08; Ḥellī, p. 367; Simon, p. 30). In 602 Ḳosrow II Parvēz (590-628, with interruption) imprisoned the Lakhmid No'mān b. Monḍer and abolished the dynasty, appointing Īās b. Qabīša, an Arab of the tribe of Ṭayye', as governor. Subsequently, at an indeterminate date, an open clash between the Persians and their Arab auxiliaries, on one hand, and Arab tribesmen, on the other, occurred at ḌŪ Qār. According to certain Muslim traditions, the battle took place in the year 1/623 or 2/624 (Ḥellī, pp. 158, 192). Ebn Ḥabīb (p. 360) dated it earlier, between 606 and 622, but modern scholars have narrowed this range to 604-11 (Rothstein, p. 123; Caussin de Perceval, p. 184; Bosworth, p. 608).

In the Arab sources the Persian force is numbered at 2,000 soldiers, with 3,000 Arabs led by Īās b. Qabīša. The enemy was from the Bakr b. Wā'el, a large tribal confederation whose territory extended from southwestern Iraq into the eastern Arabian peninsula (Donner, pp. 16-18, 28; Ṭabarī, I, pp. 1030-31; Ḥellī, pp. 410-11). The most prominent constituent tribe was Šaybān, the other groups being Banū Ejl, Banū Ḍohl, Banū Qays b. Tha'laba, Banū Taym-Allāh b. Tha'laba, and Banū Yaškor. These groups do not seem to have coordinated



their efforts on the battlefield, nor did they have a single commander-in-chief. Rather, leadership seems to have shifted among various warriors. Nevertheless, the Bakrīs defeated the combined Persian and Arab forces.

Arab authors pieced together elements from disparate traditions on the battle of Dū Qār. The outlines of two main versions are discernible, one ultimately traceable to Abū ‘Obayda (d. 209/824), the other to Ebn Kalbī (d. 204/819). According to Abū ‘Obayda’s more anecdotal version, Kōsrow Parvēz was angry with the Hīran king No‘mān for refusing to give him his daughter in marriage and insulting Persian women; he therefore imprisoned No‘mān, who died in prison. Subsequently Kōsrow sent armed forces against the Šaybānī leader Hānī b. Qabīša, who refused to hand over to him No‘mān’s family and armor, but these forces were defeated at Dū Qār. According to Ebn Kalbī’s version, when No‘mān was deposed Bakrī tribesmen raided Persian territory in Iraq. The Šaybānī Qays b. Mas‘ūd made an agreement with Kōsrow by which he received tracts of land in return for preventing Arab incursions into Persian territory. Qays’s rivals within his own tribe deliberately continued the raids in order to foil this contract, and, indeed, Kōsrow imprisoned Qays and demanded Bakrī hostages as a condition for his release (or as a guarantee against further incursions). The Bakrīs refused to give such hostages, and Kōsrow sent armies against them, meeting with defeat at Dū Qār. Modern scholars generally prefer Ebn Kalbī’s version, on the grounds that it is less colorful and therefore more plausible. Persian sources on the Sasanian period are silent about this battle; the relatively small number of soldiers involved, as well as the Persian defeat, may explain this silence.

Religious, as well as Arab, sentiment must have played a part in shaping accounts of Dū Qār. The Prophet Muḥammad (allegedly) said “This is the first battle in which the Arabs took equitable vengeance on the Persians, and they achieved this victory through me” (Ṭabarī, I, 1031; Mottaqī Hendī, no. 30301; Eṣfahānī, XX, p. 138). Ignaz Goldziher (p. 100) noted the connection between Arab disdain for Persians and elaboration on the victory at Dū Qār.

Some scholars, apparently influenced by the Muslim tradition (e.g., Ḥellī, p. 422; Ya‘qūbī, II, p. 46), have interpreted the battle of Dū Qār as part of a prolonged Arab rebellion against the Persians, which culminated in the Muslim conquest of the Persian empire. As Šaybānī tribesmen, led by Moṭannā b. Ḥāreṭa, assisted in the conquest of Iraq, it has been argued that the Bakr, and especially the Šaybān, had followed a distinct anti-Sasanian policy since Dū Qār. Fred Donner has shown (pp. 28-30), however, that the Šaybān who



supported the Muslims and those who were prominent at Dū Qār belonged to different, even rival clans; some Šaybānī leaders allied themselves with the Persians after Dū Qār, and others even opposed the Muslims during the conquest of Iraq. The battle of Dū Qār thus appears to have had ideological and symbolic meaning for the Arabs far beyond its military and political significance.

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