



## TĀRIḲ-E QOM

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**TĀRIḲ-e QOM** (The History of Qom), an early local history (comp. 378/988) from medieval Persia by Ḥasan b. Moḥammad Qomi, which has been preserved in an early 9th/15th-century Persian translation by Ḥasan b. ‘Ali Qomi. Most Iranian cities in the Middle Ages seem to have had their local histories, but many have been lost, and the remaining ones concentrate mainly on the religious aspects and report about the local ulama, thus rather resembling biographical literature of the *ṭabaqāt* genre (Storey, I, pp. 348-92, 1291-1302; Naršaḳi, tr., Frye’s introd., p. xi; Bulliet, pp. 104-7, 109; Meisami, pp. 9-10; Lambton, 1991, pp. 230-31). By contrast, *Tāriḳ-e Qom* is a unique local medieval history of a Persian city in the precise sense of the term.

*The author.* There are very few biographical dates known about Ḥasan b. Moḥammad Qomi. One such date is the year of the completion of his work that is, 378/988-89, although Ḥosayn Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā’i (p. 12) has argued that the year 379/989-90 is the correct date. Ḥasan was an Arab of Yemeni origin and a descendant of the Aš‘ari family that had ruled the city in the past. Neither the date of his birth nor that of his death is known. The date 406/1015 suggested by Carl Brockelmann (*GAL SI*, p. 211) and repeated by Fuat Sezgin (*GAS I*, pp. 352-53) and Heribert Busse (p. 275) as the year he died cannot be substantiated by any of the biographical sources. The author collected most of his material during the government of his brother, Abu’l-Qāsem ‘Ali b. Moḥammad Kāteb, who had been sent to Qom as tax collector (*āmel*) in the year 352/963 (*Tāriḳ-e Qom*, pp. 11-12, 39, 165). He might have functioned as his brother’s assistant; at any rate he apparently made extensive use of the



administrative archive material on taxation in his work.

Ḥasan b. Moḥammad Qomi was a local Imami Shi'ite scholar as the many historical, poetic, and archival sources that he used for his work indicate, and he is probably the earliest Shi'ite historian in Persia whose work has survived. He does not mention any research trips to use book collections outside Qom, but he does refer to the contacts he had with a number of leading personalities of his time, such as the Buyid vizier Šāḥeb Esmā'il b. 'Abbād (326-85 /938-95), to whom he dedicated his work (*Tāriḳ-e Qom*, p. 10). It is likely that he was also in contact with another renowned minister of that dynasty, Abu'l-Faḏl b. 'Amid (q.v., d. 360/971), since he attributed the inspiration to write his work to Abu'l-Faḏl b. 'Amid's expression of astonishment that there existed no history of Qom (*Tāriḳ-e Qom*, p. 11). Ḥasan was further inspired by his own brother Abu'l-Qāsem, who also was looking for a history of Qom. Ḥasan composed his history on the model of a lost history of Isfahan by Ḥamza Ešfahāni (fl. 4th/10th cent.; *Tāriḳ-e Qom*, pp. 11-12). Ḥasan seems to have met Ḥasan (or Ḥosayn)\* b. 'Ali b. Ḥosayn Bābawayh, a little known brother of the great Imami Shi'ite traditionist and jurist [Shaikh Šaduq Abu Ja'far Moḥammad b. Bābawayh](#) (d. 381/991), whom he quotes (*Tāriḳ-e Qom*, pp. 91-92). Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā'i, however, believes that it was indeed Shaikh Šaduq himself that the author had met (Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā'i, pp. 11, 12, 17-31; see also Najāši, I, pp. 189-90, where a probably identical Ḥosayn is mentioned; Drechsler, pp. 21-22).

*History of the work and its editions.* As in the case of the author's biography, there are also many unclear aspects regarding the work itself. Ḥasan seems to have worked on his book from the time his brother was appointed the tax collector of Qom, collecting any information he that could obtain from the local people and checking documents that he had access to (*Tāriḳ-e Qom*, pp. 11-12). The Arabic original was compiled in twenty chapters (*bāb*), while the available Persian translation is arranged into five chapters, each one of which is subdivided into sections (*faṣl*). Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā'i, who has investigated the question of the Arabic original and its twenty chapters, comes to the conclusion that, despite claims by other scholars (e.g., Anušah; see also Monzawi, *Nosḳahā* VI, p. 4264; idem, *Fehrestvāra*, p. 893), there are no traces of the Arabic original left after the beginning of the 15th century, when it was translated into Persian; and until then it is mentioned only by Ebrāhim b. Nāšer b. Ṭabāṭabā (fl. 5th/11th cent.; pp. 253, 255-57). Based on statements found in the translation and the quotations in Ebn Ṭabāṭabā (referring to persons not mentioned in the printed version), as well as the summaries of the



twenty chapters in the translated version (pp. 15-19), it seems quite likely that the Arabic original was more detailed and arranged in twenty chapters. The question, however, is whether the translated version ever contained all chapters of the original. This translation was done in 805-06/1402-04 by a certain Ḥasan b. ‘Ali b. Ḥasan b. ‘Abd-al-Malek Qomi, who can only vaguely be described as a scholar from the city and who seems to have died sometime before Ramaẓān 847/December 1443-January 1444. *Tāriḳ-e Qom* was translated for the then amir of the town, Ebrāhim b. ‘Ali Ṣafi, who belonged to the leading family of the time and ruled over Qom from 1392 to 1404.

Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā’i, who has studied some of the existing manuscripts of the translated version and all quotations in biographical sources, has not found any sign that there ever existed a complete translation containing all of the twenty chapters. In the view of the present writer, it even seems doubtful that the translator ever had all those chapters of the Arabic original at his disposal.

Among the existing manuscripts, there is an older and a slightly younger type. Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā’i mentions the types of the older manuscripts kept at the National Library in Tehran, the Museum Library of [Konya](#) (Turkey), and at the Library of the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*awqāf*) in Baghdad (status as of 1974). These three manuscripts, which were copied by a son of the translator, do not contain a certain letter (containing Arabic verses) by Ṣāḥeb b. ‘Abbād (Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā’i, pp. 30-31), and the place names display some oddities. The younger type of manuscripts contain this letter in full length but lacks a few pages of the final fifth chapter.

An edition of *Tāriḳ-e Qom* appeared in Tehran in 1934, based on one of the older, more defective, type of manuscripts. In his very brief preface, the editor, Sayyed Jalāl-al-Din Ṭehrāni, mentions the year 1001/1593 as the date of the manuscript used by him, but he fails to provide any further details. In about 1977, Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā’i announced the publication of a new critical edition based on more manuscripts, but only a reprint of the 1934 edition appeared in 1982 (Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā’i, pp. 24-25, 35-43; idem, introd. to Ṣafi-al-Din Qomi, p. 6 and n. 2; *Tāriḳ-e Qom*, pp. 2-3).

*Content of the book.* According to the author himself (pp. 12-13), he originally intended to write two separate works, one on the city itself and one on the Aṣ’aris of Qom; but, when he started to write this history, he decided to merge the materials for both of them into a single book. Thus, *Tāriḳ-e Qom* thus turned out to be a combination of two central themes: the history of the city



and its Yemeni Aš'ari Arab inhabitants, as well as the economical, financial, and socio-geographical situation of the region. It however, also touches on the origins of the city, the pre-Islamic history of the region and many of its villages, its leading Shi'ite ulama, some mythical figures, and also makes a few etymological observations. The translation also contains summaries of each of the twenty chapters of the original Arabic version (pp. 15-19).

Of the existing chapters (*bāb*), the first contains 80 pages (pp. 20-100). It treats in eight sections (*faṣl*) the origin of the name Qom, the events surrounding the first capture of the city by [Abu Musā Aš'ari](#), the urban geography, the reasons for the administrative separation of Qom from Isfahan, villages and counties belonging to the region of Qom, the origins of the city's Friday mosque and administrative buildings, the irrigation system and questions concerning the distribution of water, floods, anecdotes concerning the spells exercised and talismans supposedly left in the Qom area by the wise Apollonius (Balinās-e ḥakim), fire temples, and stories praising the sanctity of the city of Qom among Muslims.

The second and longest chapter (pp. 101-90) treats at great length in five sections all aspects of taxation in Qom and its surrounding areas, yielding rich details on the crops grown and the system of land tenure. It also lists all tax measurements and a great number of diverse tax rates with their precise sums.

The last three chapters are each subdivided into two sections and contain materials of entirely different nature. Chapter 3 (pp. 191-239) is a rather traditional short account of the Twelver Shi'ite Imams, but it also contains precise information on the number and biographies of the 'Alids living in Qom. The next chapter (pp. 240-65) provides in great detail information about the reasons for the emigration of the Aš'ari Arabs from [Kufa](#) and the circumstances of their first settling in Qom. Assuming a eulogistic tone, the final existing chapter 5 (pp. 266-305) focuses on the Aš'aris, the history of their tribe in Yemen, and their involvement in the early history of Islam.

Based on what Ḥasan b. Moḥammad Qomi tells us in his description (pp. 15-19), the lost 15 chapters seem to have been equally diverse. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 again dealt with the Yemenite Aš'aris and their history in Yemen and Qom, while chapter 7 seems to have focused on events in Qom relating to them. Chapter 9 concerned the dignitaries of the city, and chapter 10 the coming of Islam to Qom and the virtues of Persians living there. Chapter 11



provided the names of the governors of Qom from the year 89 (this must be 189/804-05) to 378 /988-89. The next chapter dealt with the city's judges and the peculiarity of their being appointed by the city's Arab inhabitants, not by the caliph, up until the caliphate of al-Moktafi (r. 944-46). Chapter 13 seems to have been a general history about events in Qom and "other Islamic cities." The various state possessions in Qom and its surroundings were treated in chapter 14, while chapter 15 contained information about the pious endowments (*awqāf*) of Qom, its system of taxation, and its administrators. The next three chapters seem to have contained biographical notices of the city luminaries (scholars, philosophers, poets, astronomers, etc.) and their works. Chapter 19 dealt with the Jews and Zoroastrians of Qom, and, finally, chapter 20 seems to have been a general discourse, containing a variety of historical information.

*Sources.* According to the research of Modarresi Ṭabāṭabā'i, who lists all sources of *Tāriḳ-e Qom* according to their type (pp. 17-31), the author admittedly used a fair number of both early and contemporary historical works, including the *Ketāb al-boldān* of Ebn al-Faḳih and a local history of Isfahan by Ḥamza b. Ḥasan Eṣfahāni, which is now lost. The two sources that he often refers to are Aḥmad b. Moḥammad b. Ḳāled Barḳi's (d. 274/887) *Tebyān* and Abu Bakr Moḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ṣuli's (d. 335/947) *Adab al-kottāb*. The author also made use of well-known works of Arabic poetry such as those by Sayyed Ḥemyari (d. 173/789), Ḥassān b. Ṭābet (d. ca. 40/659), and De'bel b. 'Ali Ḳozā'i (d. 246/860). Another important source of his work were the archival materials of the city administration, which he had access to with the help of his brother and drew on for the chapters on taxation and the administrative structure of the city and region. The author quotes a great number of other personalities by name, most of which cannot be found in biographical sources. He often contents himself with vaguely formulated references, such as "some of the sheikhs" or "the traditionists."

*Distinctive features.* *Tāriḳ-e Qom* offers a good deal of interesting material that is not available in other medieval local histories from Persia, thus enhancing its significance as a distinctive source (Lambton, 1991, pp. 230-31; Meisami, pp. 9-10). In contrast to other local historians, he seems to have had unlimited access to local administrative archives, which gives his work a special significance and sets it apart from other local histories of Persia from this period (Lambton, 1991, p. 234). Thus the extensive treatment of the complex taxation system, the irrigation, and the cultivation is most probably based on



the state archive materials. One can only speculate where the particular interest of the author in these rather uncommon subjects came from, apart from the possibility that he assisted his brother in his function as *āmel*. His lengthy treatment of taxation matters in chapter 2 also affords us some insights into the social situation of the city. The information found throughout the book on the mosques, bridges, roads, and other buildings makes it possible to reconstruct a rough outline of the topography of Qom.

The numerous references to personalities from the pre-Islamic period are a special and sometimes peculiar aspect of *Tāriḳ-e Qom*. Although the author was firmly rooted in the Shi'ite milieu of his time, he often referred to real as well as mythical pre-Islamic persons (especially in the third, sixth, and seventh *faṣl* of chapter 1) and took over pre-Islamic myths without derogating them; instead he seems to have elevated the history of the region by incorporating these figures, thus establishing a historical continuity (Drechsler, p. 60; Shimamoto, pp. 98, 111 n. 5). Some of his remarks shed new light on the founding of towns by the Sasanian dynasty. *Tāriḳ-e Qom* names altogether eight Sasanian rulers associated with village foundations and the erection of fire temples: (1) Ardašir I (r. 224-39, d. 241/42 C.E.) as the founder of the villages of Rewqān/Maḥallāt, Jušaq, Kānšāh, and Sākān in about 224 (pp. 70-71); (2) Bahrām V (r. 421-39) as the founder of Mamajjān and, Kuzān, and the builder of a fire temple near Sāva (pp. 23, 63, 83, 90); (3) Pērōz b. Yazdgerd (r. 459-84) as the founder of Abruz (pp. 77-78); (4) Balāš b. Pērōz (r. 484-88) as the founder of Walāšgerd (p. 56); (5) Kavād I (r. 488-96 and 499-531) as a rebuilder of the area of Qom after the end of the [Hephtalite](#) wars (pp. 24, 91); (6) Kōsrow I Anōšervān (r. 531-79) as the founder of the village of Moqatta' (p. 66); (7) Kōsrow II (r. 590-628) as the founder of the village Kōsrowābād near Sāva (p. 84); (8) Queen Bōrān, daughter of Kōsrow II, as the founder of the village of Borqān (p. 78).

Besides these Sasanian rulers, also Arsacid princes seem to have been involved in the foundation of villages (Yarshater, p. 475): Kay b. Milād (Mehrdātes), Milād b. Jorjin (Gorgin/Vonones), Bahrām b. Gōdarz (Gōtarzes), Jorjin b. Milād (Gorgin/Vonones b. Mehrdātes). Adkā'i lists more persons of Parthian origin mentioned in *Tāriḳ-e Qom* as being connected with the foundation of villages and has named four families to whom some of these personalities belonged to (Adkā'i, pp. 17-18).

Another interesting feature of *Tāriḳ-e Qom* is the (sometimes bilingual) letters and official documents that are quoted in full (but see above, regarding the



older and younger manuscript types). In their original text, these rare documents elucidate certain fiscal practices of the time. The documents on the finance officer termed *jahbaḍ* (*Tāriḳ-e Qom*, pp. 149 ff.; for the office, see Fischell), who guaranteed the collection of the tax revenue, provides interesting insights into the administrative rule exercised from 'Abbasid Baghdad over a provincial city and the function of the local offices.

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