A handful of red earth: dreams of rulers in Tabari's history of prophets and kings

Weststeijn, J.K.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
# Table of Contents

List of Illustrations & Tables vi

1 Dreams, Historiography, and Narratology 1

Dreams in classical Islam 2
Tabari’s Tārīkh and the history of early Islam 3
Perceived qualities of the Tārīkh 5
The first problem: style 7
The second problem: editorial comment 8
The third problem: relation with reality 11
The fourth problem: authorship 12
A vicious circle 14
The way out provided by narratology 15
The distinction between author and primary narrator 16
Approaches of the Tārīkh as a literary text 19
Dreams, historiography, and narratology 21
Tabari’s Tārīkh and the Bible 27

2 Tabari’s Tārīkh: History, Chronology, or Catalogue? 31

The meaning of the term ‘tārīkh’ 34
De Goeje’s Leiden edition 37
Ibrāhīm’s Cairo edition 38
The English translation 38
The structure of the Tārīkh: A narratological analysis 39
The author and his narrators 40
Year chapters and their entries 42
Obituary entries and regnal chapters 43
The relation between key events and akhbār 46
The reticent style of Tabari’s primary narrator 48
Conventions of reticence 49
What constitutes a story? 55
Dreams and implicit storytelling 56

3 Tyrant Dreamer vs. Abrahamic Interpreter 63

The ‘tyrant vs. interpreter’ dream 65
Biblical material in the Tārīkh 71
The biblical models 73
Pharaoh and Joseph 73
Pharaoh and Moses 74
Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel 75
Herod and the wise men from the East 77
Reception in the Tārīkh 79
The king of Egypt and Joseph 79
4 THE CONFLICTING LEGACIES OF PROPHETS AND KINGS

‘Tyrant vs. Abrahamic’ motifs in the Islamic section 110
Abbasid revolutionaries as biblical redeemers 111
Abbasid caliphs as biblical tyrants 112
Burdened by two biblical legacies 114
Hārūn as Abrahamic redeemer 114
Hārūn as blind tyrant 116
Abbasid caliphs as tragic heroes 118
Mūsā and Hārūn 118
The struggle over the succession to al-Mahdī 119
al-Mahdī’s dream 121
The staff that grows leaves 122
Caliphs and prophets 123
A deceptive layer of objective reporting 126

5 A HANDBUF OF RED EARTH

Hārūn’s dream within the structure of the Tārīkh 130
The dismemberment of Bashīr 132
The Prophet, Gabriel and al-Ḥusayn 135
Hārūn and ʿAlī al-Riḍā 137
Patricide and civil war 138

6 THREE TRAGIC RULERS

Foreshadowing, dramatic irony and tragedy 142
al-Mahdī dreams of two staffs that grow leaves 144
al-Rashīd dreams of a handful of red earth 146
al-Ammān dreams his hat falls off 147
Three tragic rulers 149

7 THE TĀRĪKH AS HISTORY: DREAMS AND IMPLICIT STORYTELLING 153

BIBLIOGRAPHY 163

ENGLISH SUMMARY 179

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING 181