This paper builds on earlier research that authenticated a report in Abū Zurʿa’s Tārīkh suggesting that death dates were recorded on stipends registers in mid-Umayyad times. It examines, first, the secretarial practices of the bureaucrats in charge of writing Umayyad stipends registers, to see how this recording could have fitted into them. It then looks at some papyri that have been connected to these registers and tries to explore how and where those dates could have been physically recorded on a register—a sheet of papyrus.

Introduction

In a previous study, I analyzed two forms of what I believed to be an extremely important report that occurs in Abū Zurʿa’s Tārīkh. The study showed that the original form of the report was:

حذفنا أبو زرعة قال—حذفني يزيد بن عبد ربه قال:
قرأت في ديوان العطاء: مات خالد بن معدان سنة اربع ومانة و مات عبد االعالي بن عدي 
سنة اربع ومانة

Abū Zurʿa informed us; he said—Yazīd b. ʿAbd Rabbihi informed us; he said: “I read in the stipends register: ‘Khālid ibn Maʿdān died in the year 104’ and ‘ʿAbd al-Aʿlā ibn ʿAdī died in the year 104’ [= 722–723].”

1 Al-Qāḍī 2009.
The importance of the report lies not only in the fact that it is the only report in Abū Zurʿa’s *Tārīkh* that claims to come from a documentary source—the stipends register—but also, and more significantly, that it claims that death dates of stipendiaries were (or sometimes were) written on Umayyad stipends registers in the early second/eighth century. This previous study focused on the historiographical aspect of the report, authenticating it from two perspectives: (1) prosopography, and (2) context. The prosopography perspective showed that the persons named in the report could be placed plausibly where the report placed them, and could have related to each other in a manner that allows for the claims made in the report about them. Khālid b. Maʿdān and ʿAbd al-Alā b. ʿAdī were well known Arab ḥadīth scholars from Ḥimṣ, the second having been the judge of Ḥimṣ, while the first served as a police chief under Yazīd b. Muʿawiyah (Yazīd i; reg. 60–64/681–684) and spent much of his career participating in the campaigns against Byzantium. Yazīd b. ʿAbd Rabbihi (164–224/780–838) was also a ḥadīth scholar from the city of Ḥimṣ who had a special interest and expertise in transmitting death dates, and to a lesser extent birth dates, of Syrian, especially Ḥimṣī, ḥadīth scholars and public figures; and Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī (before 200–281/815–894) made a trip to Ḥimṣ in 214/829, where he met many scholars, among them Yazīd b. ʿAbd Rabbihi. The “stipends register” mentioned in the report must be that of mid-Umayyad Ḥimṣ.

The context perspective also showed that the report was plausible. It had to do with a new policy that ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (ʿUmar ii; reg. 99–101/717–719) instituted in 100/718 concerning the heritability of stipends of dead stipendiaries, probably as a result of widespread fraud and abuse of the stipends, ʿaṭāʾ, system. ʿUmar forbade heritability and replaced it with an order that people report to the government the death of their stipendiaries, so that their stipends would be discontinued, and that they also report to the government their newborns, so that stipends would be assigned to them. This, I believe, is how death dates of stipendiaries came to be written in Umayyad stipends registers, and is what explains how the death dates of Khālid b. Maʿdān and ʿAbd al-Alā b. ʿAdī came to be recorded on the stipends register of Ḥimṣ in 104 a.h.

My previous study also discussed briefly the plausibility of the implicit claim of the report that Yazīd b. ʿAbd Rabbihi saw the register in question about a century after it was written. In that respect, it put to rest whatever doubts may have arisen about that, by comparing Abū Zurʿa’s report to three parallel and credible claims made by two later historians, Ibn Yūnus (d. 347/958) and al-Kindī (d. 350/961), in which there is a difference of two centuries between the writing of the documents and their being seen by the