



Translator's Foreword



In this volume I have followed the transliteration system adopted by the Series, in deference to the judgement of the editor. My personal preference would always be to eliminate the Greek suffix *id* on Arabic and Persian names and nouns to obtain an adjectival form, e.g. °Abbāsīd, °Alīd, Umayyad, and to use the Islamic *nisba* form used in the Middle East ending in *-ī*, which has gained currency in modern English usage, e.g. Israeli, Pahlavi, Saudi. The terminal *h* for a *tā marbūṭa(h)* might also in my view be left to the general desuetude into which it is falling, e.g. in the new *Enclopaedia of Islam*.

I must express my deep gratitude to the Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University which kindly sustained me with a research fellowship for one year during which parts of this volume and of others were completed; to the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, which offered me and my family its hospitality during the year, and to the American University in Cairo which allowed me a year of leave. My colleagues Ahmed Sharkas at Harvard and Adel Sulaiman Gamal at American University in Cairo and University of Arizona helped me often with the poetry passages, and I would record my thanks to them here.

Professor George Makdisi of the University of Pennsylvania read the greater part of the translation against the originals and offered invaluable suggestions in the midst of trying circumstances: a most generous act. Professor Jacob Lassner made many thoughtful addi-

tions to the footnotes, and where this occurred I have indicated it in the notes. To Professor Ehsan Yar-Shater who has seen to the publication of this volume and others of al-Ṭabarī, very special thanks are due.

John Alden Williams
Center for Middle Eastern Studies
The University of Texas at Austin