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BRILL

‘Umar II and the Prohibition of *Ṭilā*’ and *Nabīdh*

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## Abstract

Following a brief introduction, this article has two parts and an appendix. In the first part, I examine the passage prohibiting intoxicating *ṭilā* (cooked grape juice) in the “fiscal rescript” attributed to ‘Umar II (d. 101/720) by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 214/829). I argue that this passage’s core goes back to an edict of ‘Umar II that is no longer extant. I suggest that ‘Umar II issued the prohibition following an earthquake that devastated Syria because he feared that the drinkers of intoxicants would cause a similar catastrophe to befall all Muslims. I situate ‘Umar II’s prohibition within the early legal discussions about *ṭilā*. In the second part, I analyze a group of edicts prohibiting *nabīdh* (date wine) that are attributed to ‘Umar II. I conclude that the edicts are pseudepigraphical. In the appendix, I trace the transmission history of a tradition attributed to al-Sha‘bī about a missive of Umar I concerning *ṭilā*.

## Keywords

‘Umar I – ‘Umar II – *ṭilā* – *nabīdh* – alcohol – Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam – fiscal rescript – *riḥā* – earthquake – Christian chroniclers – *isnād* analysis

## 1 Introduction

In a recent article in *ILS*, Matthieu Tillier and Naïm Vanthieghem call attention to the pivotal role of the Umayyad Caliph ‘Umar II in promoting an Islamic prohibition of intoxicants other than *khamr* (grape wine). In their article, they examine a wide range of literary, documentary, and archeological data, including both Muslim and Christian primary sources, many of which have not