



## ABŪ ṬĀLEB ḤOSAYNĪ

---

**ABŪ ṬĀLEB ḤOSAYNĪ** 'ARĪZĪ, Mughal scholar chiefly famous for his alleged discovery of *Malfūzāt-e Tīmūrī* or *Wāqe'āt-e Tīmūrī*, an autobiographical account of Tīmūr from the 7th to the 74th year of his life. It also contains an appendix, called *Tūzok* or *Tūzokāt* ("Institutes"). But the veracity of both texts is in doubt, since the original Chaghatay Turkish document, supposedly discovered in the library of Ja'far Pāšā, ruler of Yemen, is no longer extant. Abu Ṭāleb presented a Persian translation of the work to Shah Jahān in 1047/1637-38. The Mughal emperor, on noting some discrepancies between his account and Yazdī's, *Ẓafar-nāma*, immediately asked another scholar, Moḥammad Afzal b. Tarbiyat Khan Boḳārī, to compare the two works, together with others from the same period, and make the necessary emendations and additions. Boḳārī's enlarged version, representing a collation of its predecessors and extending beyond them up to the death of Tīmūr, was entitled *Malfūzāt-e Šāhebqerān* (Ethé, *Cat. Ind. Off.*, p. 86).

Many historians of medieval India have been puzzled that Abū Ṭāleb could have found such a document in Yemen; his own silence regarding its authenticity and the non-availability of the original Turkish text have led several scholars to suspect that Abū Ṭāleb claimed to have used a (non-existent) Turkish document in order to promote his own Persian compilation of the life of Tīmūr. Davy, who translated the *Tūzokāt* into English, and Stewart, who made a similar rendition of the *Malfūzāt* into English, together with Dowson (Elliot, *History of India* III, pp. 389-477), have forcefully argued that Abū Ṭāleb's work was not his own independent production. Moreover, the



late Professor Moḥammad Ḥabīb of Aligarh “had no hesitation in using it” in his critical study of the life of Tīmūr (*History of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 102). Dowson also discounted the possibility that Abū Ṭāleb had based his work on Yazdī’s *Zafar-nāma*. Since the florid style of the latter contrasted with the plain and lucid style of the former, Dowson suggested a reversal of the pattern of literary dependency. But Dowson’s observation is untenable; it fails to take into account a still earlier work, the *Zafar-nāma* of Neẓām-al-dīn Šāmī, a biography of Tīmūr based on first-hand observation and written in an easy, straightforward manner. Not only Abū Ṭāleb, but also Mīrk<sup>v</sup>ānd, the author of *Rawzat al-ṣafā*, and ‘Abd-al-Razzāq, the author of *Maṭla‘ al-ṣa‘dayn*, appear to have drawn on the valuable historical testimony of Neẓām-al-dīn Šāmī.

Numerous Western scholars, including Sachau, Rieu, Ethé, Beveridge, Browne, and Houtsma, dismissed Abū Ṭāleb’s claims, viewing his translated autobiography of Tīmūr as apocryphal and probably a forged document. Yet the traditional popularity of his work is attested by the existence of numerous manuscript copies in European and Indian libraries, and there remains the distant possibility that Abū Ṭāleb will be vindicated by a discovery of the Turkish original on which his translation is said to have been based.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Neẓām-al-dīn Šāmī, *Zafar-nāma*, Beirut, 1937.

Šaraf- al-dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, *Zafar-nāma*, Calcutta, 1888; Tashkent, 1972.

Major Davy, *Institutes, Political and Military . . . .*, Oxford, 1783.

C. Stewart, *The Malfuzat Timury . . . .*, London, 1830.

L. Langles, *Instituts politiques et militaires de Tamerlan*, Paris, 1787.

M. Habib and K. A. Nizami, eds., *The History of the Delhi Sultanate*, Delhi, 1970, pp. 101-31.

Rieu, *Cat. Pers. Man.* I, pp. 177-79.



‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd, *Pādšāh-nāma* I, Calcutta, 1866.

Kaykāvūs ‘Onşor al-Ma‘ālī, *Ketāb-e qābūs-nāma va resāla-ye tozok-e Tīmūrī*, Tehran, 1285/1868.

Sobḥān Baḳş, *Tozok-e Tīmūrī* (Urdu), Delhi, 1845.

M. Fażl-al-Ḥaqq, *Tozok-e Tīmūrī* (Urdu), Bombay, 1908.