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AḴBĀR AL-ṬEWĀL, KETĀB AL-
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AḴBĀR AL-**ṬEWĀL,** KETĀB AL- (“The book of the long historical narratives”), title of a historical work by the Persian writer of ʿAbbasid times Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad b. Dāwūd b. Wanand Dīnavarī, d. ca. 282/894-95 or, at the latest, by 290/902-03. Although very few of his numerous works have survived (the best-known, apart from this, being his *Ketāb al-nabāt*, a philological treatment of the lore of plants and plant life), Dīnavarī was a scholar of wide interests, who had absorbed a perceptible amount of Hellenistic culture; he was trained in mathematics and astronomy and had acquired a knowledge of lexicography and philology from the Iraqi grammatical schools. His *Aḵbār al-ṭewāl* places him amongst the great historians of his age, together with Balāḏorī, Yaʿqūbī, and Ṭabarī.

The history was written at or after the death of the caliph Moʿṭasem (d. 227/842), the date when the narrative breaks off. It seems to have created little interest in his lifetime and in succeeding times, since very few later authors quote it. Damīrī (d. 808/1405) through his interests in zoology, botany, and science in general must have known Dīnavarī’s other works on plants and astronomy; he cites the *Aḵbār al-ṭewāl* twice, once on ʿAbd-al-Malek and once on Maʾmūn. Only three manuscripts were originally thought to have survived, one in Leningrad and two in Leiden; the oldest and best of these, one of the Leiden pair, is an autography of the Syrian historian Kamāl-al-dīn b. ʿAdīm (author of the *Bogyat al-ṭalab fī taʾrīḵ Ḥalab*) and dates from 655/1257. The book was thus clearly less well diffused than, e.g., Dīnavarī’s *Ketāb al-nabāt* and *Ketāb al-anwāʾ*. The Ebn al-ʿAdīm autograph and the (as it then was) St.

Petersburg manuscript formed the basis of the *editio princeps* by the Russian scholar Vladimir Guirgass (vol. I, Arabic text, Leiden, 1888), completed after the editor's death by a volume of indices, variants from the second, inferior Leiden manuscript, and a valuable critical introduction by Ignace Kratchkovsky (vol. II, Leiden, 1912). An oriental imitation (Cairo, n.d.) of Guirgass's text followed, but no advance was made until the publication at Cairo in 1960 of a new text by ʿAbd-al-Moṇʿem ʿĀmer in the *Torāṯonā* series. For this, the editor was able to utilize also a fourth, older manuscript discovered in 1957 in the former library of the Egyptian scholar, journalist, and pioneer traveler in Europe Refāʿa Rāfeʿ Ṭahṭāwī (d. 1290/1873), no. 73 *taʾrīḵ*, dating back to 579/1183-84.

The *Aḵbār al-ṭewāl* is correctly named a collection of long narratives. It is not arranged on the annalistic principle, year by year, nor does the author give parallel versions of events with attempts to harmonize discrepancies. He does not give *esnād*s for his pieces of historical information, and rarely quotes his sources; among the few named are Šaʿbī, Aṣmaʿī, Hešām al-Kalbī, and Hayṯam b. ʿAdī. He is also fairly sparing, compared with other historians, in the citation of poetry. Instead, we have a continuous narrative, without even headings to break the flow, giving the whole work a pronounced literary cast; certain events, such as the revolt of Moḵtār in Kūfa and the downfall of the Omayyads in Khorasan, seem to have stimulated his powers of dramatic description. Hence we have at the outset what seems to be a general history, beginning like many others with Adam and the patriarchs and taking some note of legendary and semi-legendary Arabian and South Arabian history, but thereafter the work begins to take on the tinge of history written from a specifically Persian standpoint. There are sections on the epic Persian emperors, Zoroaster and his movement, and Darius and a lengthy one, with valuable details, on Alexander the Great and his conquests. The Sasanians are treated at length, including their relations with Byzantium, South Arabia, and the Lakhmids, as is also the Mazdakite movement; this section is of particular importance as a supplement to the similar information in Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīḵ*. Yet Moḥammad and his mission are barely noted, and the Islamic period (comprising four-fifths of the whole book) really begins with the Arab invasions of Iraq and Persia, in which accounts of the battles of Qādesīya, Jalūlā, and Nehāvand loom large. Thereafter Dīnavarī's treatment of Islamic history is essentially concerned with events affecting, directly or indirectly, Persia: the murder of ʿOṯmān, the caliphate of ʿAlī and the battle of the Camel; the secession of the Kharijites and Ṣeffīn; the killing of Ḥosayn, ʿAlid revolts, and the uprising under Moḵtār.

These episodes are treated in considerable detail, making them most valuable for the historian, whereas the general history of the Omayyads is dealt with only sketchily. The beginnings of the ʿAbbasid *daʿwa*, the rise of Abū Moslem, and the successful revolution of the insurgents are covered at length in a section equally valuable. For the ninety years or so of ʿAbbasid rule up to the end of Moʿtaṣem's caliphate, selected topics only are dealt with, such as the death of Abū Moslem, the accession of Manṣūr, the construction of Baghdad, the episode of the Rāwandīya, the civil strife between Maʾmūn and Amīn, and the risings of Bābak the Ḵorramī and Afšīn Ḥaydar in Moʿtaṣem's reign.

Dīnavarī's approach to history is thus a distinctly original one for his day. He does not display sectarian bias, like the Shiʿite Yaʿqūbī; but he does show clearly that he was concerned with putting forward the Persian viewpoint. Fully at home in the Persian language, he inserts odd Persian phrases at times; and he was apparently able to exploit Persian sources, including the pre-Islamic epic romances, in addition to the standard early Arabic authorities.

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