



'ALĪ AKBAR ḲEṬĀ'Ī

'ALĪ AKBAR ḲEṬĀ'Ī (9th-10th/15th-16th Cent.), author of the Persian *Ḳeṭāy-nāma* or "Book of Cathay," i.e., of China. Although his surname suggests that he was a native of China, he writes as if it were a foreign land, so it is likely that the name was given to him after the appearance of his book. Also incorrect is the description of him (*ĪA* I, p. 318) as an Ottoman explorer. In his preface to the *Ḳeṭāy-nāma* (Süleymaniye Library, Eşir Paşa, 249, fol. 3B) he mentions the names of Ottoman authorities in the manner of a visitor, thus showing that he had not been sent by the Ottoman government; nor is the book a travel report (*sīāḥat-nāma*), since it gives no indications of the author's routes. Also uncertain is the date of 'Alī Akbar's arrival at Istanbul. The fact that the book is dated 922/1515 suggests that he arrived and finished it during the reign of Sultan Salīm I, but he dedicated it to the latter's son Sultan Solaymān Qānūnī.

In compiling the *Ḳeṭāy-nāma* the author probably had recourse to Islamic works or to a book or travel report written in the Mongol period, and also to the books of Ġiāṭ-al-dīn Naqqāš and the merchant Solaymān, who had been sent to China by the Timurid Uluġ Beg (d. 850/1447) long before 'Alī Akbar's association with the Ottoman court. The author mingles his data on China with verses from the works of 'Aṭṭār, the *Kanz al-ḥaqā'eq* of Pahlavān Maḥmūd Pūrīā-ye Walī, the *Golestān* of Sa'dī, and the *Golšan-e rāz* of Maḥmūd Šabestari. The book's twenty chapters include sections on Chinese roads, religions, cities, armies, treasuries, throne and kingship, prisons, festivals, curious arts and strange remedies, calligraphers, immigrant peoples from the west, agriculture, currency, and laws and customs. Most of the information is objective, but the



statements about the Chinese imperial court are dubious. On the subject of Chinese laws, the author often exaggerates (see Lin Yih-Min, *Ali Ekber in Hītāynāme adlı eserinin Çin kaynakları ile mukayese ve tenkidi*, Taipei, 1967, pp. 11, 14).

The *Keṭāy-nāma* was first examined, in its Turkish translation, by H. L. Fleischer (*Kleine Schriften* III, Leipzig, 1888, pp. 214-25), and in its Persian original, by Ch. Schefer (*Mélanges Orientaux*, Paris, 1883, pp. 31-84) and P. Kahle ("Eine islamische Quelle über China um 1500," *Acta Orientalia*, Leiden, 1934, pp. 91-110). Lin Yih-Min (above) has examined the Persian text and Turkish translation, compared it with Chinese data and sources and with travel reports such as the *Safar-nāma-ye Keṭāy* of Ġiāt-al-dīn Naqqāš, and provided a detailed analysis and critical assessment. The Persian text was prepared for the press by P. Kahle in or around 1948 but has not yet been printed. The Persian mss. so far discovered are: (1) Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Eşir Efendi, 249; (2) and (3) Süleymaniye Library, Reisülküttab Mahmud, 609, 610; (4) Cairo, Dār al-Kotob, 17; Ṭal'at Persian collections 1273. A Turkish translation was made by an unknown translator in the reign of Sultan Morād II (982-1003/1574-95) and printed under the title *Qānūn-nāma-ye Ćīn va Keṭāy* (Istanbul, 1270/1853). Turkish mss. are found in the Süleymaniye Library, Aya Sofya, 3188; Esad Efendi, 2107; and Velieddin Efendi, 1963.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.