



ĀṬĀR AL-BELĀD

ĀṬĀR AL-BELĀD, the title of a geographical work composed in Arabic during the 7th/13th century by the Persian scholar Abū Yaḥyā Zakarīyā' b. Moḥammad Qazvīnī (ca. 600-82/1203-83, q.v.). Qazvīnī's fame rests on two major works of his, both written in Arabic (in fact, a rather indifferent Arabic, indicating that it was clearly not his native tongue and perhaps, too, that he was quoting his sources somewhat carelessly), his cosmography, *'Ajā'eb al-maklūqāt wa ḡarā'eb al-mawjūdāt*, and his geography, the *Āṭār al-belād wa aḵbār al-'ebād* (Monuments of the lands and historical traditions about their peoples), the two being complementary in subject.

Qazvīnī apparently wrote his geography rather late in life and under the patronage of the great Persian statesman and historian 'Alā'-al-dīn 'Aṭā' Malek Jovaynī (q.v.), author of the *Tārīk-ejāhāngošāy*, who in 659/1259 became governor of 'Erāq-e 'Araband Kūzestān for the Mongol il-khan Hülegü (Hülāgū) and then for his successor **Abaqa**; the *'Ajā'eb al-maklūqāt* is specifically dedicated to Jovaynī, though the *Āṭār* bears no specific dedication to an individual.

The *Āṭār* exists in two different versions. The first was put together in 661/1262-63, and is represented by manuscripts in Berlin, Leipzig, and Paris; it bears the name *'Ajā'eb al-boldān* "Wonders of the lands," paralleling the name of Qazvīnī's cosmology, and this name is given by Ḥājjī Kalīfa (*Kašf al-ẓonūn* (Leipzig) IV, p. 186). This original was completely revised in 674/1275-76, being much enlarged and with some material completely altered; it was now called by the familiar name *Āṭāral-belād* (see *Kašf al-ẓonūn* I, p. 154). It was four



manuscripts of the second recension which served F. Wüstenfeld as the basis for his *editio princeps* (see below); see the Introduction to this edition, pp. viii-ix, for the relationship between the two recensions.

The *Āṭār* begins with three prologues or *moqaddemāt*. The first deals with the reasons behind the growth of towns and villages and the factors which impelled their original establishment. God created man as a social animal; unlike the rest of the animal creation, the members of which can subsist as isolated individuals, men are dependent upon each other and require social organization (*al-hay'a al-ejtemā'īya*) for the specialized production of their various needs—agriculture, clothing, foodstuffs, tools, etc. Moreover, the necessary corollary of this social life is the formation of defensible towns and villages, usually in the more salubrious parts of the lands; one may contrast the sound constitutions and the keen intelligences of these town and village dwellers with nomads and hillbillies like the Turkmen, the Kurds, and the Daylamis. The second *moqaddema* is about the special characteristics of individual settlements. Firstly, there are the effects of environment on the people. Only a small part of the earth forms the optimum section for human habitation, namely the central parts of the third, fourth, and fifth climates. People who live beyond this central area of equability, in the first, second, sixth, and seventh climates, live painful, difficult lives, battling against the extremes of cold and heat, wetness and dryness, which are found in the northerly and the equatorial climates and at the extreme ends of the climates, near the rising and setting of the sun. Secondly, the various types of habitat in the world are each suitable for the generation of different types of stones and minerals, of plants and crops, and of animals and other living beings, e.g., gold is only found in sandy deserts and loosely-compacted mountains; hazelnuts, almonds, and pistachios only grow in cooler terrains; the elephant only flourishes on the coastlands of hot, southerly regions; etc. The third *moqaddema* gives an exposition of the system of longitudinal climates (*aqālīm*, sing. *eqlīm* from Greek *klima*), derived ultimately from Ptolemy's *Geography* and forming the basis of much early Islamic geographical literature. Qazvīnī cites as his authority here “Abu'l-Rayḥān K̅v̅ārazmī” (*sic*); meant of course is Moḥammad b. Mūsā K̅v̅ārazmī (q.v.), whose *Ketāb šūrat al-arz* and accompanying maps of the heavens and the earth drew considerably on Ptolemy. Only about one-quarter of the whole world is habitable, namely the central parts of the seven climates of its northern half, the southern half being too hot for human habitation, and the polar region beyond the seventh climate being too cold; the western extreme of the seven habitable climates tails off



into the uncharted, raging encircling ocean, and the eastern extremity is bounded by the ocean again and by impassable mountain peaks. The people living in the restricted, habitable part of the world know nothing of these peripheral regions. Hence Qazvīnī proposes to deal in his geography with places, regions, and natural features climate by climate, starting with the first and ending with the seventh.

Within these seven climatic zones, the entries for towns, lands, rivers, lakes, mountains, islands, etc. are arranged alphabetically on the pattern of Yāqūt's *Moʿjam al-boldān*, but because of this seven-fold longitudinal division, it is more difficult to consult. The third, fourth, and fifth climates, forming the core of the *Dār al-Eslām*, naturally take up more space than the peripheral climates; Mecca and Medina come within the rather torrid second zone, but Baghdad falls within the most balanced climate of all, the fourth. The tropical first climate includes such places as the lands of the Bejā, the Ḥabaša and the Zanj, and Takrūr; the sub-arctic seventh one the Inner-Asian steppe and forest lands of Bolgār, the lands of the Ṣaqāleba (Slavs) and Varangians, and the home of Gog and Magog. The book ends with a consideration of the Yūrā, the Finno-Ugrian Yughra people of northeastern Russia, living on the shores of the “sea of darkness” or Arctic Ocean, the information here being quoted from the Spanish Muslim geographer Abū Ḥāmed Ġarnāṭī. Most of the material on natural phenomena, and topographical features like mountains and rivers, is duplicated, often almost word-for-word, in the *ʿAjāʿeb al-maḳlūqāt*.

As is the case with Yāqūt's *Moʿjam al-boldān*, purely geographical information: the situation of places, route distances, local products and specialties, etc., is mixed up with much non-geographical information, such as historical, folkloric, popular religious, and literary-biographical material. Thus the entry on Jovayn in Khorasan (in the fourth climate) is devoted mainly to biographical data on the Emām al-Ḥaramayn Abu'l-Maʿālī Jovaynī; that on the Belād al-Daylam (also in this climate) is mainly on the Ziyarid amir Šams al-Maʿālī Qābūs b. Vošmgīr, the famed literary stylist and poet; and that on Kūfa (in the third climate) has much material on the town's history in relation to the Omayyads, the ʿAlids, and the ʿAbbasids (including information on the popular saying *al-Kūfī lā yūfī* “a Kufan never fulfils his trust”) and on its famous scholars, lawyers, and traditionists. A fair amount of poetry is also cited. The manuscripts of the *Āṭār* contain various tables, diagrams and drawings, e.g., of the system of the seven climates, of the *ḥaram* of Mecca, of the Pharos at Alexandria, etc., though not with the richness and superlative quality of the



paintings found in many manuscripts of the *‘Aǧā’eb al-maklūqāt*.

The questions of Qazvīnī’s originality and the sources which he uses in both his works have attracted orientalist’s attention since the time of Wüstenfeld and his editions of the *Cosmography* and the *Geography*; many of his sources served him for both works. It is patently obvious that Yāqūt was Qazvīnī’s prime source, as appears immediately in the *Āṭār* in the information of the introduction to each climate, where Qazvīnī, giving the length of the meridian shadows at the beginning and end of each climate; the length of the longest day in various parts of each climate; and the dimensions of each climate, even copies Yāqūt’s errors and discrepancies (see Wadie Jwaideh, *The Introductory Chapters of Yāqūt’s Muǧam al-Buldān*, Leiden, 1959, p. 44 n. 1). The Polish scholar Maria Kowalska has recently researched intensively into these questions. She has found that out of about 600 articles making up the *Āṭār*, nearly 360 draw upon Yāqūt, many of them containing nothing else but material drawn from this author. When Qazvīnī cites earlier geographers like Ya’qūbī, Ebn al-Faqīh, Maqdesī (Moqaddasī), etc., and travelers like Ebn Fazlān and Abū Dolaf Ẓazarǧī, this is invariably via Yāqūt, and not from direct consultation. She has also tracked down the origins of other quotations from Arabic authors, and noted the cases where Qazvīnī does actually become an important first-hand source, namely when he cites works partly or wholly lost, such as Ebrāhīm b. Ya’qūb’s travels through Europe, or not yet fully published, such as Abū Ḥāmed Ġarnāṭī’s *al-Mo’reb ‘an ba’z ‘ajā’eb al-boldān*, and also when he gives material taken from personal informants, such as that on the western Sudan, Takrūr and Ghana, from the *faqīhs* ‘Alī Maǧrebī Janaḥānī and Solaymān Moltānī (Melyānī ?; see her studies, “Zwei wenig bekannte muslimische Reisende in West Sūdān im 13 Jh.,” *Folia Orientalia* 3, Cracow, 1961, pp. 231-41, and “The sources of al-Qazwīnī’s *Āthāral-Bilād*,” *ibid.*, 1967, pp. 41-88).

Qazvīnī was thus a compiler and plagiarist, in an old-established tradition of Islamic scholarship; he here goes so far that he does not even mention Yāqūt’s name in his *Āṭār*, and refers to his geographical dictionary only twice. Nevertheless, within these limits of the compiler, he had many good qualities, and M. Streck could state that “Of all the Arabic geographers, al-Ḳazwīnī best deserves the name of the mediaeval Herodotus or of the Arab Pliny” (*EI*^III, p. 841). His value is that of the synthesizer, who brings together only known facts, but arranges them methodically and clearly for the general reader, writing in a simple and unadorned style at a time when much scholarship



gloried in a complex and ornate style barely comprehensible to anyone outside a small coterie of scholars. He certainly chose to insert those items of information which would appeal to a credulous audience, such as accounts of natural marvels, strange creatures like fire-breathing dragons, minerals with remarkable properties, etc. (see M. C. Lyons, "Some aspects of al-Qazwīnī's *Āthār al-Bilād*," *Transactions Glasgow University Oriental Society* 20, 1963-64, pp. 63-76). And just as Qazvīnī had plagiarized Yāqūt, so did subsequent geographical writers like Šams-al-dīn Demašqī, Ḥamdallāh Mostawfī, and Ebn al-Wardī, likewise use his work. It seems probable that the *Ātār* was more popular than the much superior *Moġam al-boldān* of Yāqūt simply because of its compactness. Hence as a popularizer, Qazvīnī's skill merits some commendation, and the value of the service which he performed in both his works is shown by their fame, reflected in the considerable number of extant manuscripts.

A resume of the *Ātār* was compiled not much more than a century after his death, the *Talkīš al-Ātār* (in ca. 806/1403-04) by 'Abd-al-Rašīd b. Šāleḥ Bākovī, who added further information on the latitudes and longitudes of the places listed; its relationship to Qazvīnī's original was discussed by Th. Juynboll in the introduction to vol. IV of his edition of 'Abd-al-Mo'men b. 'Abd-al-Ḥaqq's *Marāšed al-eṭṭelā'*, Leiden, 1851-64, pp. lxxvii-xcii. Persian translations of the *Ātār* were also made, and exist in Istanbul, Leningrad, Gotha, and Oxford manuscripts.

The actual text of the *Ātār*, based, as noted above, on the second recension, was first printed by Wüstenfeld as part II of his combined edition of Qazvīnī's two works: *Zakarija Ben Mohammad Ben Mahmud el-Cazwini's Kosmographie. Zweiter Teil. Die Denkmäler der Länder*, Göttingen, 1848. The 1380/1960 edition from Dar Sader, Beirut, merely reproduces Wüstenfeld's text, so that a new, fully critical text, embracing the results of the last 130 years' researches, is a desideratum. Finally, it should be noted that Wüstenfeld's edition had no index (although the Beirut edition does have indices); indices have now been supplied to the Göttingen edition by Kowalska, "Namenregister zu Qazwīnī's *Ātār-al-bilād*," *RO* 29, 1965, pp. 99-115, 30, 1966, pp. 119-34.



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