



BALĀDORĪ

BALĀDORĪ, ABU'L-ḤASAN or ABŪ BAKR AḤMAD B. YAḤYĀ B. JĀBER, leading Arab historian of the 3rd/9th century, whose *Ketāb fotūḥ al-boldān*, in particular, contains much original and indispensable information on the Arab conquests of Iran.

Life. The exact details of Balādorī's life are shadowy, but he was probably born at, and spent most of his life in, Baghdad and Iraq, though his grandfather Jāber b. Dāwūd had been a secretary in the government administration in Egypt. He studied in Syria, including at Damascus, Antioch, and Ḥoms, and whilst in Iraq he derived knowledge, directly from lectures and also from their writings, from such historians as Moḥammad b. Sa'd (d. 230/845), Madā'enī (d. 235/850), and Moṣ'ab Zobayrī (d. 233/848), and from the grammarian and Koranic scholar Abū 'Obayd Qāsem b. Sallām (d. 224/838). His own birth date must, accordingly, have fallen at some point within the first three decades of the ninth century a.d. The unusual *nesba* of Balādorī apparently stems from his grandfather's inadvertent use of, and reported death from, the stimulant to the mind and memory made from the marking-nut tree, *Semecarpus anacardium* L. (Arabic *Balādor*, from Skr. *bhallātaka*; see B. Laufer, *Sino-Iranica, Chinese Contributions to the History of Civilization in Ancient Iran...*, Chicago, 1919, repr. Taipei, Taiwan, 1967, pp. 482, 582). Balādorī himself seems to have been closely connected with the 'Abbasid court, as a boon-companion (*nadīm*) of the caliph al-Motawakkel (r. 232-47/847-61), and enjoying close relations with subsequent rulers like al-Mosta'in (r. 248-52/862-66) and al-Mo'tazz (r. 252-55/866-69), deriving personal information from members of the



ruling family, including from Hebat-Allāh b. Ebrāhīm b. Mahdī (*Ansāb al-ašrāf*, fol. 355a-b) and from al-Motawakkel himself (*Fotūḥ al-boldān*, p. 146.6, on a point concerning the history of Aleppo); but the statement that he acted as tutor for al-Mo'tazz's son, the future poet Ebn al-Mo'tazz (Margoliouth, p. 116; Brockelmann, *GAL* I, p. 147) seems to be based on a misconception. Balādorī seems to have become less persona grata with al-Mo'tamed than with his predecessors, and he probably died at the end of the latter's caliphate or at the opening of al-Mo'tazed's one, in about 279/892.

Ebn al-Nadīm (*Fehrest*, p. 113; [Tehran], pp. 125-26), followed by Yāqūt (*Odabā'* II, p. 131), lists a metrical Arabic translation of a *Ketāb 'ahd Ardašīr*, not otherwise known, and further mentions that Balādorī was known as a translator from Persian to Arabic. He seems also to have had some reputation as a poet and satirist, verses of his being quoted by Yāqūt in his biography of Balādorī (*Odabā'* II, pp. 127-32).

Works. If the details of Balādorī's life are obscure, his two major works have an importance as sources for early Islamic history second only to the history of Ṭabarī. The lengthier one, his *Ansāb al-ašrāf*, is a history based on genealogical principles, clearly influenced by the *ṭabaqāt* method of arrangement adopted by his master Ebn Sa'd. His immediate models for the work were doubtless Hešām b. Moḥammad Kalbī's *Jamharat al-nasab* (extant) and Hayṭam b. 'Adī's *Ketāb ta'rik al-ašrāf* (lost). The *Ansāb al-ašrāf* (*ašrāf* here = "leading men in the state," those entitled to *šaraf al-'aṭā'*, stipends from the *Dīvān* at the highest rate) is conceived on a mammoth scale. The surviving complete manuscript, Istanbul Aşır Efendi (= Reis-ül-küttāb) 597-98, comprises 1,227 folios, and is thus almost as long as Ṭabarī's *Ta'rik* (table of contents by M. Hamidullah, "Le "Livre des généalogies" d'al-Balāḍurīy," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 14, Damascus, 1952-54, pp. 197-211, also prefixed by him to volume I of the edition, see below). It is primarily a biographical and genealogical record (but also provides, within the biography of a caliph, a continuous history of his times), beginning with the Prophet Moḥammad, his kinsmen of the Banū Hāšem, including the 'Abbasid and the 'Alids; continuing on to the Banū 'Abd Šams, with especial detail on the Omayyads, and the rest of the clans of Qorayš, including those of Abū Bakr and 'Omar, the latter's biography already distinctly hagiographical in character; and ending with the other tribes of Moẓar, including the whole of Qays, with Ṭaqīf at the very last. The other North Arab branch, Rabī'a, and the South Arabs, Yaman, are not treated; Ḥājī Ḳalifa, (*Kašf al-ẓonūn*, Leipzig, I, p. 274) states that Balādorī died before he



could finish the work. Notable in Balāḍorī's general approach is the fact that, although a courtier of the 'Abbasids, he devoted over one-third of his book to the Omayyads, treating them objectively and even sympathetically; Goitein has suggested (introd. to vol. V, pp. 15-16) that the 'Abbasid caliphs viewed the history of their predecessors not invariably as that of enemies but also as valuable precedents for statecraft and sound administration. Whilst mainly focused on events in the Syria-Iraq-Arabia heartland, the *Ansāb al-ašrāf* also provides information on events which affected Iran such as the activities of governors of the East like Zīād b. Abīhi, the ravages of the Kharijites in Iran, and the factional strife of the Arab tribes there; the present writer has used it for the events in Sīstān and Zābolestān which preceded the great revolt of the so-called Peacock Army (*Jayš al-Ṭawāwīs*) under 'Abd-al-Raḥmān b. al-Aš'at which nearly toppled the caliphate of 'Abd-al-Malek (see Bosworth, "Ubaidallāh b. Abī Bakra and the "Army of Destruction" in Zābulistān (79/698)," *Der Islam* 50, 1973, pp. 268-83, repr. in *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia*, London, 1977, art. XIX).

The following sections of the *Ansāb al-ašrāf* have been published: I, ed. M. Ḥamīd-Allāh, Cairo, 1959; II, ed. Moḥammad Bāqer Maḥmūdī, Beirut, 1394/1974; III, ed. 'Abd-al-'Azīz Dūrī, Beirut, 1398/1978; IV-V: *The Ansāb al-Ashrāf of al-Balādhurī*: IVa, ed. M. Schloessinger and M. J. Kister, Jerusalem, 1971; IVb, ed. Schloessinger, Jerusalem, 1938 (the two preceding volumes, plus the early part of V, also ed. Eḥsān 'Abbās, Beirut and Wiesbaden, 1979); V, ed. S. D. F. Goitein, Jerusalem, 1936; XI, ed. W. Ahlwardt as *Anonyme arabische Chronik*, Greifswald, 1883.

Balāḍorī's other major work, the *Ketāb fotūḥ al-boldān [al-ṣaḡīr]*, survives as the shorter version of what was apparently a larger and fuller work on the same subject. In it, Balāḍorī gives a continuous narrative of the Arab conquest for each province of the Islamic empire, deriving his material from works of the historians of these various regions, supplemented by his own personal travels, as far as possible, and enquiries on the spot for material. He then sifted the accounts and produced a balanced narrative, usually (though not invariably) refraining from citing parallel, or contradictory, accounts of the same events. The editio princeps of this work was made by M. J. de Goeje, as *Liber expugnationis regionum auctore . . . el-Beládsorí*, Leiden, 1866 (repr. Leiden, 1968), with numerous subsequent Middle Eastern prints, e.g., ed. Ṣalāḥ-al-Dīn Monajjed, Cairo, 1956-60. O. Rescher published a German translation of as far as p. 239 of de Goeje's edition, Leipzig, 1917-23, and a



complete English translation was made by P. K. Hitti and F. C. Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, Columbia Studies in History, Economics and Public Law 68/1-2, New York, 1916-24 (pt. 1 repr. Beirut, 1966); sections dealing with the conquest of Iran have been translated into Persian by Ā. Āḍarnūš (Tehran, 1346 Š./1967).

The *Fotūḥ al-boldān* is of the highest importance for the Islamic conquest of Iran and the adjacent parts of the Caucasus, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, supplementing, but often adding fresh material, the annalistically-arranged information of Ṭabarī. Separate sections are devoted to the Arabs' overrunning of Iraq, Jebāl, Ray and Qūmes, Azarbaijan, Gorgān and Ṭabarestān, Ahvāz, Fārs, Kermān, Sīstān and Kabul, Khorasan and Transoxania (especially detailed), and Makrān and Sind. One of his prime sources was the philologist **Abū 'Obayda Ma'mar b. Moṭannā**, who provided information not found in other sources, e.g., that the Arabs first crossed the Oxus as early as 'Oṭmān's caliphate during the governorship in Khorasan of 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Āmer b. Korayz (q.v.) (p. 408). But interspersed with the accounts of military raids and battles is much material on social and cultural affairs, e.g., on the change from Persian to Arabic (*naql al-dīwān*) in the government departments under the Omayyads; the colonization of Azarbaijan by the Arabs; the rallying of the Persian cavalry of the Sasanians, the *asāwera*, to the Arabs; etc.

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Given in the text. See also Barthold, *Turkestan*³, p. 6.

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