



DAYR AL-‘ĀQŪL

DAYRAL-‘ĀQŪL (lit., “the monastery at the bend in the river”; cf. Syriac *‘aqûlā* “bend”; Payne Smith, II, cols. 2963-65), a medieval town in Iraq situated on the Tigris 15 farsangs (= 80 km) southeast of Baghdad. It presumably grew up around a Christian monastery, but the latter had apparently disappeared by the time of Šāboštī (10th century), who did not mention its existence in his *Ketāb al-dīārāt*. The medieval geographers described Dayr al-‘Āqūl as the primary town of the fertile district (*ṭassūj*) in central Nahravān, with busy markets, prosperous agriculture and palm groves, and a Friday mosque; Maqdesī (Moqaddesī, p. 122) considered it the most important town on the Tigris between Baghdad and Wāseṭ, comparable in prosperity to the towns of his native Palestine. Because of its position on the river, it was a station for levying customs dues, with barriers (*ma’āšer*) laid across the river to halt traffic (Ebn Rosta, p. 186; tr. Wiet, p. 215). By the time of Yāqūt, in the 13th century, the town had declined somewhat; the course of the river had changed, and Dayr al-‘Āqūl was a mile from its banks, in the midst of a desert (*Boldān*, ed. Beirut, II, pp. 520-21); Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī described it a century later as only a small town (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, p. 41; tr. p. 48). It was subsequently completely deserted; its site is marked today by ruins known locally as al-Dayr situated to the north of modern ‘Azīziya (Hāšemī, p. 529; cf. Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 35-36).

The district of Dayr al-‘Āqūl was the site of the decisive battle between the Saffarid Ya‘qūb b. Layṭ’s invading forces and the defending caliphal army of al-Mo‘tamed (256-79/870-92) and his brother al-Mowaffaq, which took place on



Sunday, 9 Rajab 262/Palm Sunday, 8 April 876, at a village called Estarband (?) between Dayr al-Āqūl and Sīb Banī Kūmā (Ṭabarī, III, pp. 1892-94; Mas'ūdī, *Morūj* VIII, pp. 42-45; ed. Pellat, pars. 3159-61; Ebn al-Aṭīr, VII, pp. 290-92; Ebn Kallekān, ed. 'Abbās, VI, pp. 413-19; tr. de Slane, IV, pp. 312-19; cf. Nöldeke, pp. 190-91; Bāstānī Pārīzī; Bosworth, p. 113; Duri; *Tārīk-e Sīstān*, pp. 231-33.). The caliphal forces had numerical superiority, and al-Mowaffaq was able to impede deployment of the Saffarid troops by flooding the low-lying surrounding land.

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