



EŞŤAKRĪ, ABŪ EŞĤĀQ EBRĀHĪM

EŞŤAKRĪ, ABŪ EŞĤĀQ EBRĀHĪM b. Moḥammad Fāresī Karkī, 10th century Muslim traveler and geographer and founder of the genre of *masālek* (lit. “itineraries”) literature. Biographical data are very meager. From his *nesbas* (attributive names) he appears to have been a native of Eştaqr in Fārs, but it is not known whether he was Persian; he must also have lived for some time in the Kark quarter of western Baghdad. His description of the impressive troops led by Bāres, a former retainer of the Samanid Esmā‘īl b. Aḥmad (q.v.), in Baghdad soon after the mutiny of Ebn al-Mo‘tazz (20 Rabī I 296/17 December 908) is evidence that he was in the city at that time (Eştaqrī, pp. 292-93). Earlier he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, passing through Yanbo‘, Wādī al-Qorā, ‘Aydāb, and Zoḡar near the Dead Sea; he also mentioned stays in Kūfa, Başra, Kūzestān, Ray, Bukhara, and Samarqand (probably in 317/930). The latest event mentioned is his meeting with Ebn Ḥawqal (q.v.) in about 340/951-52 (Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 329-30, tr. Kramers, p. 322).

Eştaqrī’s only surviving work, *Ketāb al-masālek wa’l-mamālek*, is also the earliest surviving descriptive geography in Arabic, accompanied by twenty-one maps (usually called, after Miller, “The Atlas of Islam”), one round map of the world and one each for the twenty climes (used in the sense of “country,” “land”) into which the author divided the Islamic world. Although Eştaqrī did not mention his sources, it is obvious that much of his information was borrowed from earlier works. In particular he is known to have incorporated



the maps and much of the text of a lost geographical work by Abū Zayd Balkī (q.v.); but Maqdesī (Moqaddasī, p. 6), in the last quarter of the 10th century preferred the maps of Eşṭakrī. It shows unquestionable traits of the pre-Islamic Persian geographical tradition: particularly the division of the Islamic world into twenty parts and the designation of Persia as the most prosperous part of that world and Babylonia as its heart; the descriptions of Persia and Transoxania occupy two-thirds of the volume. Unlike all later geographical works it was translated into Persian at an early date. The first modern publication of the Arabic text appeared in 1839 (J. H. Moeller, ed., *Ketāb al-aqālīm / Liber Climatum auctore Abu ishaq el-faresi vulgo El-Issthachri*, Gotha). A critical edition, based on three manuscripts in European libraries, was published by M. J. de Goeje (q.v.) in 1870 (Eşṭakrī). In 1961 a new version, taking into account de Goeje's edition but based on three manuscripts in Cairo, appeared (M. J. 'Abd-'Āl Ḥīnī, ed., Cairo, 1381). Critical editions of two early Persian translations have been published by Īraj Afšār (*Masālek wa mamālek*, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968; *Mamālek wa masālek*, tr. Moḥammad b. As'ad b 'Abd-Allāh Tostarī, Tehran, 1373 Š./1994). De Goeje (1932) distinguished two recensions of the text, ascribing the earlier one to Balkī and the second, enlarged version to Eşṭakrī. He considered the first recension to have been written before 309/921-22 because it includes accounts of earlier events in the Maḡreb, accompanied by the words "in our time" (Miquel, 1973). More probably it was compiled between 308/920-21 and 317/929, as the pillaging of Mecca by Qarmatians in January 930 is not mentioned. The nucleus (maps, commentaries on them, and perhaps itineraries) was probably the work of Balkī, but considerable information came from the author's own observations or from other sources. The second recension was made between 324/935-36, the date of the latest mentioned event (ed. Ḥīnī, p. 84, n. 1), and the death of the Samanid Naşr II in 331/943 (p. 291). This scheme has been generally accepted, though there is no known manuscript of the first recension and no fragment that can unequivocally be attributed to Balkī has yet been identified. J. H. Kramers (1932, p. 15) proposed a two-part classification of the known manuscripts according to the degree of schematization of the maps. The first group included four examples, among them the two oldest, in Gotha and Leiden (to which MS Cario, Dār-al-Kotob, no. Jōḡrāfiā 199 should be added); the second included five. This classification does not coincide with the recensions distinguished by de Goeje, however; manuscripts in both groups contain information later than 317/929. Eşṭakrī provided a varied picture of the Islamic world in the first half of the 10th century: information on cities, routes, commerce, currency, metrology, clothing, customs, and languages. Especially



rich are the chapters on Fārs, which constitute 20 percent of the work, and Transoxania, which account for 16 percent. Some information given from firsthand observation in *Ketāb al-masālek* was attributed by Ebn Ḥawqal to Abū 'Oṭmān and Abū Bakr Demašq'ī (Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 473, 494).

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