



EUTYCHIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

EUTYCHIUS of Alexandria (Saʿīd b. Beṭrīq), Christian physician and historian whose *Annales* (written in Arabic and called *Ketāb al-tārīkh al-majmūʿ al-ʿalāʾi-taḥqīq waʾl-taṣdīq* or *Naẓm al-jawhar*) is a rich repository of much otherwise unobtainable information about the history of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, especially in the periods of Persian occupation in the seventh century and in Islamic times up to the early tenth century.

Saʿīd b. Beṭrīq was born in Fustāṭ on 27 Duʿl-Ḥejja 263/10 September 877 C. E., (Cheiko et al., eds, II, pp. 69-70; Ebn Abī Oṣaybeʿa, II, p. 86; but cf. Breydy, p. 5 who argues for 3 Duʿl-Ḥejja/17 August). According to the *Annales*, Saʿīd b. Beṭrīq was a practicing physician; when he was sixty years old he was made the Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt and given the name Abbā Euty chius (Cheiko et al., eds, II, pp. 69-70, 86-88). Since Ebn Beṭrīq was a physician, a notice of him also appears in the collection of biographies of famous physicians by Ebn Abī Oṣaybeʿa (d. 668/1270). There it is said that in addition to being a skilled physician Saʿīd b. Beṭrīq had a comprehensive knowledge of the sciences of the Christians and of their doctrinal systems. Ebn Abī Oṣaybeʿa goes on to mention Ebn Beṭrīq's elevation to the patriarchate, the dissension in the Christian community during his tenure in office, and his death on Monday, 30 Rajab 328/12 May 940 (II, pp. 86-87). All of this information was available to Ebn Abī Oṣaybeʿa from Euty chius' annals in the form in which they were circulating in the Arabic-speaking world of his day, and from the remarks of Yaḥyā Anṭāqī, who continued the historical narrative of the annals from Euty chius' day to the year 1028 C. E. In fact, Ebn Abī



Oṣaybeʿa even mistakenly reported that Yaḥyā was a relative of Eutychius, a misconception that continues to appear in print.

Ebn Abī Oṣaybīʿa (II, pp. 86-87) ascribes three major works to Ebn Beṭrīq: a book on medicine, *Konnāš fiʿl-ṭebb*; an apologetic work, *al-Jadal bayn al-mokālef waʿl-naṣrānī*; and the history, *Naẓm al-jawhar* (as Ebn Abī Oṣaybeʿa gives the title). A manuscript of the *Konnāš* has been identified in Aleppo (Sezgin, *GAS*, III, p. 297). As for the *Jadal*, there is a reference to it in the *Annales* (Cheiko et al., I, p. 176), but so far the work has not been identified independently among surviving Christian Arabic manuscripts. Another work, not mentioned by Ebn Abī Oṣaybeʿa, has been wrongly attributed to Eutychius of Alexandria: the *Ketāb al-borhān*, an apologetic tract of composite character that in its present form was actually put together in the tenth century by a monk of the Palestinian monastery of Saint Chariton.

The *Annales*, Eutychius' most enduring work, has survived in two recensions: the Alexandrian recension, which is in all probability Eutychius' own work, and the Antiochian recension, which is a considerably expanded work, composed by now unknown Melkite chroniclers and apologists between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries. While later hands have considerably enhanced it, the kernel of the *Annales* certainly belongs to Saʿīd b. Beṭrīq, who began work on it even before he became Eutychius, the patriarch of Alexandria. He dedicated it to his brother, ʿĪsā b. Beṭrīq, a fellow physician and member of the Arabophone Christian intelligentsia in Egypt. In conception, the *Annales* is a universal chronicle, written in Arabic, of the sort that Greek and Syriac Christian writers from well before Eutychius' day were wont to compose. It begins with an account of creation and continues with Biblical history, drawn from the Old and New Testaments, complemented by abstracts from other sources. The history of the Church then follows the Biblical history, and it marks the course of time with reference to the reigns of patriarchs, emperors, and caliphs. For the portion of the *Annales* that covers Islamic times it is clear that the compiler drew on Muslim sources. The compiler's confessional allegiance clearly emerges in the account he renders of the succession of bishops and patriarchs, and this confessional profile then serves to commend the orthodoxy of Eutychius' own Melkite Christian community in the Islamic milieu.

Eutychius, who may have used Ebn Moqaffa's lost *Koday-nāma* as a source, provides much useful information on the pre-Islamic history of Persia, especially during the Sasanian period from the reign of Bahrām V. Gōr to that



of Yazdegerd III (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. xix, xxi ff.; Breydy, pp. v-vi, 18-19

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