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ḴAWARNAQ

ḴAWARNAQ, the name of a castle built by the Lakhmid kings of al-Ḥira (qq.v.). Arabic and Persian narrative sources mention, albeit in different contexts, an Arab castle in pre-Islamic times called Ḵawarnaq, but it seems quite impossible to distinguish clearly between historical facts and legendary accounts.

Together with another castle in its immediate vicinity, Sadir, Ḵawarnaq was regarded in medieval period as one of the "Thirty Wonders of the World" (Maqrizi, I, pp. 131-32, quoting Jāḥeẓ). Ḵawarnaq and Sadir are mentioned together in early Arab poetry as well, for example, by Monaḵḵal (Würsch, p. 261). According to most sources the castle was built by the Lakhmid king Noʿmān b. Emreʿelqays al-Aʿwar ("the one-eyed," d. after 418) for his Sasanid suzerain; Ṯaʿālebi attributes the building of Ḵawarnaq to Noʿmān's son Monḏer, while Masʿudi (III, p. 213) and the pseudo-Jāḥeẓian *Ketāb al-maḥāsen* (p. 41) mention Noʿmān b. Monḏer as client, most probably due to a confusion with the last Lakhmid king Noʿmān III b. Monḏer (d. 602). The heyday of Ḵawarnaq castle thus seems to have been in the pre-Islamic period, but the early Abbasid caliphs continued to use it as a hunting residence (Le Strange, pp. 75-76). Ebn Baṭṭuṭa, however, visiting the place in the 14th century found only "remains of colossal domes" there (II, p. 1). Ḵawarnaq therefore shared the fate of the Lakhmid capital al-Ḥira, which had already been deserted during the lifetime of Masʿudi (d. 956) and had become the abode of owls (Masʿudi, III, pp. 213-14). Yāqut (d. 1229) distinguishes two other localities called Ḵawarnaq apart from the Lakhmid castle: a "place in the West" not

more precisely defined, and a village near Balḵ, known also under the name *ḵabang* (Yāqut, 1867, II, p. 490; Idem, 1846, p. 163).

The etymology of the name remains unsolved in spite of many attempts to explain it (Pantke, pp. 53-54). The Arab philologists Aṣmaʿi and Ḵalil b. Aḥmad discussed the etymology: Aṣmaʿi considered *ḵawarnaq* as a Persian loanword in Arabic and traced it back to *ḵu(w)ran-qāh* "place of eating and drinking," while Ḵalil started out from the genuine Arabic *ḵerneq* "young hare," "leveret" (Yāqut, 1867, II, p. 490). Further attempts at delineating the etymology have been made by Western philologists. Theodor Nöldeke supported an Iranian origin for the word *ḵawarnaq* and linked it with Talmudic *aḵwarneqa* "pergola," "summerhouse" (Nöldeke, p. 79, n. 3; for the rabbinical definitions of the term *aḵwarneqa*, cf. Halévy, p. 106). F. C. Andreas reconstructed old Iranian *huvarna* or *χuvarna* and interpreted it as a compound in the literal sense of "giving good refuge" or "having a beautiful roof." Phonetically closest to *ḵawarnaq* is Avestan *xᵛarənah* "glory"; a connection with "sun" (cf. New Persian *ḵʷar*) has also been taken into consideration, which presents the difficulty, however, of explaining the second element of the term properly.

In present-day Iraq, Ḵawarnaq is a place in the district al-Qādisiyya near the archeological site of al-Ḥira (q.v.) and the city of Najaf (q.v.), lat 31°48′ N, long 44°44′ E (according to http://www.maplandia.com, s.v. Khawarnaq; cf. also Salmān, maps 89-90). In the 20th century, Bruno Meissner, Louis Massignon, and Alois Musil visited the place respectively in 1900, 1908, and 1915. A survey by Barbara Finster and Jürgen Schmidt (1973) in the region of western Euphrates did not involve Ḵawarnaq.

Traditions on Ḵawarnaq castle can mostly found in Arab historical works, in cosmographies, where famous buildings are dealt with, and in geographical literature. There exist three legendary accounts that are closely related to it. The first is connected with the building of the castle. Noʿmān engaged the Greek architect Senemmār to construct it. After completion, the king and Senemmār climbed to the pinnacle of the castle. What followed is told in three versions. The king either asks Senemmār if he is able to construct an equal castle, and Senemmār answers in the affirmative; or Senemmār, delighted at his princely payment, confides to the king that he would have constructed a more splendid palace if he had been aware of the king's generosity before; or Senemmār reveals that he knows of a certain stone in the wall which, if removed, would let the whole building collapse. The king asks him if someone else knows this stone, which is not the case. The outcome is always the same:

Noʿmān crushes Senemmār by throwing him down from the battlements. This story prompted the proverbial saying “Senemmār’s repayment,” often quoted in the form *jazāhu jazāʾa Sinimmār* “he repaid him as they had repaid Senemmār,” that is, “he repaid him good with evil” (Maydāni, I, pp. 159-60, no. 828).

Senemmār’s name, like “Ḵawarnaq,” is unclear in its etymology. Apart from the assumption of its Persian origin (Jawāliqi, p. 87), it was suggested to be linked with “Simon” (Johann Jacob Reiske, quoted by Rothstein, p. 15), with the Babylonian “Sin-immar,” that is, “Sin (the Babylonian lunar God) is shining” (*Grundriss der iranischen Philologie* II, p. 527), or with the Egyptian “Senemur” (Halévy, pp. 104-5). The motif of Senemmār’s story, documented in various versions, is listed in Stith Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (W 181.2: “King kills architect after completion of great building”). There exist English and German versions as well as Spanish, Russian, and French parallels discussed by René Basset (pp. 22-30).

The second legendary account concerning Ḵawarnaq is connected with a poem by the Christian poet of Ḥira, ʿAdi b. Zayd (d. about 600). In this poem (cf. Würsch, p. 272 for references), ʿAdi mentions the “lord (*rabb*) of Ḵawarnaq,” who first enjoys his property but suddenly becomes aware of the shortness of human life and remembers famous kings of the past who were carried off. This poem seems to have been the starting point of a story told by Yāqut (1879, II, pp. 491-92) and in Ṭorṭuši’s mirror for princes (I, pp. 33-34), but also in Persian sources like Moḥammad Ṭusi (p. 212): the lord of Ḵawarnaq decides, after a dialogue with his minister (or a wise man), to renounce his power and to put on the woolen garment of the ascetics.

Most important for Persian literary tradition is the third legend of Ḵawarnaq, which is closely connected with the Sasanid king Bahrām V Gur (r. 420-38). King Yazdegerd I, instructs Noʿmān to host and educate his son, Bahrām, in Ḥira. Bahrām mainly distinguishes himself in hunting. Two of his hunting exploits are painted in the hall of Ḵawarnaq at the instigation of Noʿmān’s son, Monḏer (Ṯaʿālebi, pp. 543-44). Neẓāmi (d. 1209) who mentions Ḵawarnaq as being situated in Yemen, refers repeatedly to the castle in the story of *Haft paykar* (see HAFT PEYKAR). He also incorporated the legend of Senemmār (ed. Ritter-Rypka, pp. 43-47, chapter 10). The key scene, a poetic innovation of Neẓāmi’s, is the moment of Bahrām’s entering a hitherto locked room of the palace where he perceives the pictures of the Seven Princesses, his future wives. Later Bahrām has a palace for them constructed by a certain architect

named Šida. Unlike Noʿmān, who had killed Senemmār, Bahrām spares Šida, which could be one of the reasons why Neẓāmi worked on the story of Senemmār; Noʿmān's injustice shows Bahrām's justice, a main topic in the *Haft paykar*, in a most favorable light.

In the West, Ḵawarnaq, the story of Senemmār's repayment, and the connection of the castle with Bahrām's biography seem to have been related first in Barthélémy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale* (p. 172, s.v. Baharam, Gur or Guri, pp. 803-4, s.v. Sennamar, and p. 990, s.v. Khaouarnak). Friedrich Rückert (d. 1866) made use of all three versions of the Senemmār story in his poem "Chawarnak" (I, pp. 160-61).

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