

ABOUT IBN A‘SAM AL-KUFI AND HIS WORK “KETĀB AL-FOTUH”

Yuldashev Saidanvarbek Baxromjon og‘li

Doctor of Philosophy on historical sciences, Senior Lecturer of the Department of World History

Rahimov Mavlon

2nd year master's student, Fergana State University, Uzbekistan, Fergana

ARTICLE INFO.

Key words:

Research, Central Asian history, manuscript, «Kitab al-futuh», heritage, Arabic, value.

Annotation

Nowadays in our country it's being carrying out a lot of researches in learning the history of Central Asia. There are a lot of books that gives us valuable information related to the Asian history. Among them Arabic historical manuscripts and sources are in great interest about this. One of these books is «Kitab al-futuh» («The Book of Discoveries») by the Arabian historian Ibn ‘A‘tham al-Kufi of the ‘Abbasid caliphate. The book consists of 3 parts and includes historical events from the time of the caliph Abu Bakr till the reign of the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Musta‘in (866). There is some original information about the Central Asian history, which is not the same with the data of the historical works of Al-Baladhuri, Ibn al-Athir and At-Tabari. There can be met some background about the history of Fergana region, Arabs conquest and the people of this country as well. The situation in this country at that time also is mentioned.

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The importance of primary sources, especially manuscripts written in Arabic, is incomparable in the study of the history of our country in the early Middle Ages. Among them are "Futuh al-buldan" (Conquest of Countries) by al-Balazuri (9th century), "Tarikh al-Umam wa-l-muluk" (History of Nations and Rulers) by At-Tabari (10th century), Ibn al-Asir (13th century). In the works "Al-kamil fi-t-tarikh" (The most perfect history) there is a lot of information about the introduction of Islam to our country and its spread. Another such historical source is Ibn Assam al-Kufi's book "Ketāb al-fotuh", which contains important information about the military actions of the Arabs in Central Asia. Ibn Asam al-Kufi's work "Ketāb al-fotuh" has not yet been deeply researched by scholars in terms of source studies (13).

Ketāb al-fotuh (or *Ta'rikh al-fotuh*), an important early Arabic historical text by Ebn A‘tam Kufi (d. 314/926?), which was translated, at least in part, into Persian towards the end of the 6th/12th century. Though the Persian translation enjoyed considerable popularity and has long been well known to Western scholars, the original Arabic text fell into obscurity and has only recently been recovered and edited. Research on this work is thus still very limited, and much remains in question about its provenance and significance (14).

Virtually nothing is known for certain about the life of Ebn Aʿtam. Yāqut (*Odabāʿ*, I, p. 379) says his name was Abu Moḥammad Aḥmad b. Aʿtam Kufi Aḳbāri. Ḥāji Ḳalifa (II, col. 1239) referred to him as Moḥammad b. ʿAli, apparently mistaking the name of the copyist of a manuscript as that of the author. Modarres Tabrizi (VII, pp. 386-87) identified him as Aḥmad or Moḥammad b. ʿAli Aʿtam and suggests that Aʿtam may have been the honorific (*laqab*) of ʿAli. To add to the confusion, one of the Arabic manuscripts (Gotha 1592) gives the name as Luṭ (?) Aḥmad b. Moḥammad b. Aʿtam Kufi, while another (Aḥmad III 2956) has Abu Moḥammad Aḥmad b. Aʿtam Kufi. It is thus somewhat difficult to be sure whether Aʿtam is a proper name or title and whether it should be applied to Ebn Aʿtam's father or grandfather (or even to the author himself, as his work is sometimes referred to as *Tāriḳ-e Aʿtam Kufi*). According to Lawrence Conrad (1998), Aʿtam Kufi was the author's father and "one of the students or tradents of the sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Šādiq (d. 148/765)," but the documentation to support this claim has apparently not yet been published (see bibliography, below).

These inconsistencies in naming, though minor, have some implications for establishing the dates of the author's life and his work. Although several of the early bio-bibliographical sources (e.g. Yāqut, *Odabāʿ* I, p. 379; Šafadi, VI, p. 256) have notices about the author, they provide no birth or death dates. According to Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, Ebn Aʿtam died in 1003/1504 (not 393/1003 as given in Conrad, 1992, n. 90), but this is totally implausible and based on the erroneous date found in Gustav Flügel's edition of Ḥāji Ḳalifa (*Kašf al-ẓonun* IV, p. 380). Christian Fraehn, without citing any evidence, proposed a death date of 314/926-27, and this has been followed by other scholars such as Charles Storey (I/1, p. 207), Fuat Sezgin (I, p. 329), and Modarres. Recent research by Ilkka Lindstedt has also supported Fraehn's dating for several reasons, most notably the presence in Sahmi's *Tāriḳ Jorjān* of a tradition attributed to "Abu Moḥammad Aḥmad b. Aʿtam b. Naḍir b. Ḥobāb b. Kaʿb b. Ḥabib Azdi Kufi, who was in Jorjān and related it," supposedly on the authority of Abu ʿOmar Emām Ḥarrāni (d. 266/880) to Ebn ʿAdi Ḥāfez (d. 365/976). On the assumption that this individual is the same as the author of the *Ketāb al-fotuḥ*, Lindstedt (p. 17) argues that the "information preserved in the isnād places, with high probability, Ebn Aʿtam's date of death to the first half of the fourth/tenth century. In any case, Fraehn's date can certainly be taken as a reasonable *terminus ante quem*, since Ebn Aʿtam's work was known to the mid-4th/10th century historian Abu ʿAli Sallāmi Bayhaqi (Yāqut, I, p. 379, says he quoted one of Ebn Aʿtam's verses), and his *Fotuḥ* is very likely the work by that title, which is cited in the *Tarjama-ye Tāriḳ-e Ṭabari* by Abu ʿAli "Amirak" Balʿami (d. ca. 363/974; e.g., Balʿami, tr. Zotenberg, IV, p. 150; mistakenly given in Balʿami, ed. Rowšan, II, p. 824, as *Tāriḳ-e Abu'l-Fotuḥ*).

However, there is reason to believe that Ebn Aʿtam was writing at an even earlier time. M. A. Shaban, for example, has argued in favor of a revised dating (*EI*² III, p. 723; idem, 1970, p. xviii). As he noted, Ebn Aʿtam's most important source is ʿAli b. Moḥammad Madāʿeni (d. 225/840), and in quoting him Ebn Aʿtam often uses the phrase *ḥaddatani*, implying that he heard accounts directly from him and not from intermediaries or written sources (Lindstedt, p. 15, questions whether Ebn Aʿtam really employs the term in so systematic a way). His list of other proximate authorities (Ebn Aʿtam, 1968-75, II, pp. 147-49) is consistent with that same time period, including such figures as the historian Moḥammad Wāqedi (d. 207/823), the genealogist Hešām b. Moḥammad Kalbi (d. 204/819 or 206/821), and (perhaps less plausibly) the traditionist and historian Abu Meḳnaf (d. 157/774) and the Shiʿite traditionist Naṣr b. Mozāḥem (d. 212/827). If Ebn Aʿtam did in fact study with all these authorities, he must have been writing at a time no later than the second quarter of the 3rd/9th century. Conrad (1998) has also dismissed the death date given by Fraehn as "an old Orientalist error." Assuming Conrad is correct about the identity of Aʿtam Kufi, it is indeed unlikely that the father of a 4th/10th-century author would have been a contemporary of Imam Jaʿfar al-Šādeq. Moreover, the Persian translation (p. 3) says specifically that "Ḳvāja Aḥmad b. Aʿtam wrote the *Ketāb-e fotuḥ* in the year 204/819." Conrad (1992, p. 349 n. 90) initially suggested that the translator may have misread 204 for 254/858, but this is unlikely since dates in manuscripts are usually spelled out instead of written using numerals; he later (Conrad, 1998) revised this view and accepted 204/819 as an accurate date for the first recension of the text.

Yāqut (I, p. 379) says that Ebn A‘tam was the author of a *Ketāb al-ma‘luf*, a *Ketāb al-fotuḥ* that went down to the time of Hārūn al-Rašid (r. 170-93/786-809), and a *Ketāb al-ta‘riḳ* that was “essentially an appendix” covering the period from al-Ma‘mun (r. 198-218/813-33) “to the last days of al-Moqtader” (r. 295-320/908-32). Yāqut notes that he had seen the “two books” himself, but he was likely misled by problems arising from the process of textual transmission. One of the two main surviving manuscripts, Gotha 1592, begins with an account of the deliberations at the *saqifa* of the Banu Sā‘eda leading to the accession of Abu Bakr as caliph and ends with an unusual account of the conquest of the island of Arwād and a brief note that the caliph ‘Oṭmān was killed “in this year.” A note at the end of the manuscript indicates that it was the first of two volumes, with the second being about the caliphate of ‘Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb. The Istanbul manuscript, Aḥmad III 2956, commences more or less where the Gotha manuscript ended, with accounts of the last years of ‘Oṭmān’s caliphate (r. 23-25/644-56). However, the introduction and listing of authorities in its first folios certainly give the impression of the beginning of a new work rather than a continuation of one. It also extends well beyond the caliphate of ‘Ali. After a very brief mention of Hārūn al-Rašid, there is a notation that “the *Ketāb al-fotuḥ* ends” (fol. 236a; VIII, p. 244 of the printed text). However, the manuscript continues with an account of an interview between Hārūn and Imam Šāfe‘i the jurist and brief notices of various events down to the caliphate of al-Mosta‘in (r. 248-52/862-66). This material is so out of character with the rest of the work that it must have been added in whole or in part by another author or authors. The three titles mentioned by Yāqut would thus seem to correspond to the three sections of these manuscripts, one on the early caliphate, one on the caliphate down to time of Hārūn al-Rašid, and the probably spurious appendix (of which yet another version may have extended to the caliphate of al-Moqtader as claimed by Yāqut).

There is nothing to suggest that Ebn A‘tam’s work was ever of much influence in the western parts of the Muslim world; it was unknown to bibliographers such as Ebn al-Nadim and not mentioned by Ṭabari or other classical Arabic historians, but it must have been more popular in the Islamic East to have been used by Sallāmi and probably Bal‘ami, as well as being mentioned in Abu Naṣr Aḥmad Boḳāri’s *Tāj al-gešaṣ* (Kurat, p. 275). Its prestige was such that it was eventually translated into Persian. The preface to the translation indicates that it was begun by Moḥammad b. Aḥmad Mostawfi Heravi as commissioned in 596/1199-1200 by a dignitary on whom he lavishes honorifics and styles “the glory of the grandees of Chorasmia and Khorasan” (*efteḳār-e akāber-e Ḳvārazm wa Ḳorāsān*). According to Mirza Kazem-Beg (p. xx), this was none other than ‘Alā‘-al-Din Moḥammad Ḳvārazmšāh, but the evidence for this is doubtful. (It may have been suggested only by the date or by indications in the manuscript he used; the honorifics in the lithograph text, for instance *ṣadr al-ṣodur*, seem to suggest a minister.) Whether the patron was the Ḳvārazmšāh himself or a lesser official, the main themes of the translation, namely its interest in the wars against the “infidels” (*koffār*) and its sympathies for the Shi‘ite Imams ‘Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb and Ḥosayn b. ‘Ali, would seem to parallel the anti-caliphal and militaristic policies of the late Chorasmian period. Mostawfi Heravi died shortly after beginning work on the translation, which was then finished by another Moḥammad b. Aḥmad, whose *nesba* is garbled in the manuscripts but seems to be Mābiżanābādi (see Kazem-Beg, p. xx; Storey, I/2, p. 1260).

The Persian translation is clearly based on the Arabic text as it has now been recovered, but there are important differences between the two. The most obvious is that, whereas the Arabic text covers the period from the death of Prophet Moḥammad down to at least the early years of the reign of Hārūn al-Rašid, the translation ends with a long account of the martyrdom of Imam Ḥosaynat Karbalā‘. The translator gives no indication that the text was to continue beyond that point, so it is impossible to know whether the translation was not finished, part of it has been lost, the translator was working from an incomplete manuscript, or, as Conrad has suggested, he was using a copy of the first recension of the text that had ended at that point. The Persian text is also by no means a literal translation of the corresponding parts of the Arabic text, and there are quite a few places where it includes material either lost from or have not ever been part of the Arabic original, especially in the case of the sections dependent on the highly defective Gotha manuscript: They include accounts of the campaigns of ‘Eyāż

b. Ġanem; Mo'āwia's campaigns in Syria; the conquests of Nubia, Eṣṭaqr, Nišāpur, Ṭus, Marv, Herat, Bušanj, Saraqs, Nasā, Fāryāb, Ṭālaqān, Sistān, Marv al-Ruḍ, and Balk; and some correspondence between 'Otmān and his commanders (passages from the Persian translation which can fill in such lacunae have been included in the notes to the edition of the Arabic text).

Perhaps the chief interest of the *Fotuḥ* to modern researchers is the antiquity of the text. There is, as noted above, a distinct possibility that Ebn A'ṭam was a historian of the early 3rd/9th century, not the 4th/10 century as often thought, and the *Ketāb al-fotuḥ* should accordingly be ranked as one of the oldest Arabic historical texts to have survived more or less intact. This would mean that the author should be seen as a precursor, rather than a contemporary, of the major classical Arabic historians, not only Ṭabari but also Balāḍori and Ya'qubi; and his work thus provides an important means of assessing the later generation's use of the sources common to both them and Ebn A'ṭam. Moreover, if Ebn A'ṭam was indeed writing in 204/858, it would mean that he was active at an exceptionally important moment in the history of the caliphate, the very year that al-Ma'mun entered Baghdad and abandoned his philo-'Alid policies, a circumstance which, as Conrad suggested, may explain the apparent revision of the text as well as some of its other characteristics.

Yāqut (I, p. 379) says explicitly that Ebn A'ṭam was "a Shi'ite and a poor authority" (*kāna šī'ian wa howa 'enda aṣḥāb al-ḥadiṯ za'if*). At least in terms of the author's Shi'ism, this perception has certainly been reinforced by the peculiarities of the Persian translation (because of its apparently exaggerated interest in the events leading to the Battle of Karbalā'), and it has to some extent been reinforced with the availability of the full Arabic text. Both the translation and the Arabic text can certainly be characterized as pro-'Alid and critical of the Omayyads. Virtually all of the proximate sources named by Ebn A'ṭam, with the notable exception of Madā'eni, were regarded as sympathetic to the Shi'ite cause, and he occasionally cites a source that he identifies as the *ḥājeb* of Ja'far al-Šādeq, lending some credence to Conrad's assertion of a connection between A'ṭam and that Imam. If, however, Ebn A'ṭam was writing as early as 204/819, there remains some question about exactly what kind of "Shi'ism" he was reflecting. It should be noted that even the Persian translation speaks respectfully about Abu Bakr, 'Omar, and 'Otmān, and it preserves a surprising amount of information about the military exploits of Mo'āwia. The Arabic text goes on to display a definite interest in the revolt of Moḳtār Ṭaqafi, the activities of Moḥammad b. Ḥanafiya, and the life of the poet Komayt b. Zayd Asadi (e. g., Ebn A'ṭam, 1968-75, VI, pp. 73-288 passim; VIII, pp. 82-107), all of which arouse suspicions of an affiliation with the Kaysāniya or Hāšemiya and distinctly militant varieties of Shi'ism. At the same time, it gives a unique and rather positive account of al-Saffāḥ's assumption of the caliphate and has virtually nothing to say about any of the anti-'Abbasid Shi'ite movements. It might also be noted that Ebn A'ṭam's primary sources, again excepting Madā'eni, were not only Shi'ite but Kufan, and Ebn A'ṭam reflects both perspectives: He is clearly philo-'Alid, but he is also interested in anything having to do with Kufa. Of course, the two often overlap, as in his account of 'Ali lavishing praise on the virtues of the congregational mosque in Kufa (Ebn A'ṭam, 1968-75, I, pp. 286-87). Further research is really needed to clarify the author's sectarian orientation and the light his work may shed on the formation of Shi'ite historiography.

In the work of Ibn Assam al-Kufi, we can have the following information from the chapter "The Viceroyalty of Yazid bin Abu Kabsha in Iraq and Qutayba's March to Farghana": He appointed him as the ruler of Iraq and ordered Qutayba to stay in Khorasan. Yazid ibn Abu Kabsha arrived in Iraq and wrote a letter to Qutayba ibn Muslim inviting him to march on Ferghana as his deputy in Iraq. When the letter of Yazid ibn Abu Kabsha reached Qutaybah, he called his followers and read the letter to them when they gathered. Then he ordered them to arm themselves to fight the people of Ferghana. The population agreed. Qutayba went with a large army to the land of Ferghana, where they completely destroyed the inhabitants and took prisoners. The Muslims captured a lot of booty. Then Qutayba went to Boshak, the ruler of Fergana, who had a strong fortress called Kazok. Boshak gathered those who wanted to be protected from the siege in that castle. Qutayba besieged him for 7 months, and as if he

had turned back, using a trick on them, he looted the castle without mercy and beheaded him. Having acquired all the wealth, he divided 1/5 of it and sent it to Yazid bin Abu Kabsha, the emir of the Iraqis. He distributed the rest of it among the Muslims. Al-Walid ibn Abdulmalik wrote a letter to Qutayba ibn Muslim after learning that he had conquered Farghana, defeated its inhabitants and killed its ruler. The Commander of the Faithful received information about your steadfastness against the enemies of the Muslims and your revenge on the polytheists, the Commander of the Faithful appreciates and appreciates your services. I wish you all the best in your religious war.

Finally, the *Ketāb al-fotuḥ*, true to its title, is a work of considerable importance for the history of the Muslim conquests, especially in the east and when they involved Kufan forces. The most important of these accounts, as has been noted by several scholars (e.g., Kazem-Beg; Kurat), are those that deal with the wars in Armenia and the Caucasus and against the Khazars. These can now be identified with some confidence as the ultimate source of similar information found in the histories of Bal'ami and Ebn al-Aṭir.

Ibn Asam al-Kufi's work "Kitab al-futuh" is full of new information about the history of the peoples of Central Asia in the early Islamic period, especially the history of Ferghana. These data have not yet been thoroughly studied and presented to the attention of the general scientific community. Studying these data, comparing them with data from other historical sources is one of the current issues facing history and oriental studies. From this point of view, it is appropriate to carry out research by studying its part related to Central Asia.

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