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- ١ - فتوح الشام *
- نشره : وليم ناسو ليس W. N. Lees
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Al-Azdi's History of the Arab Conquests in Bilād al-Shām: Some Historiographical Observations

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The past decade has witnessed the development of a heated controversy concerning the early history of Islam, the character and value of the various sources available for its study, and ultimately, how early Islamic history can and should be studied. The issues under dispute are of the utmost importance; and regardless of the views one holds, the debate can hardly be ignored or underestimated.

The controversy has unfortunately tended to focus on very broad questions relating to entire historical traditions. It has only recently begun to move to the examination of individual texts, though it is reasonable to suspect that it is there that real progress will first have to be made. For the purposes of this scholarly meeting, then, it would seem particularly appropriate that attention be focused upon one of the most controversial Arabic sources for the history of the Arab/Islamic conquests in Bilād al-Shām, the *Futūh al-Shām* attributed to a certain Abū Ismā'il Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Azdi al-Baṣrī. Though not a long work (less than a third of the size of al-Balādhurī's *Futūh al-buldān*, it poses numerous historiographical problems of considerable importance and difficulty. A full discussion of these would require a separate monograph, and here it will be possible only to deal with a limited number of central issues.

The Problem of Authorship

The difficulties encountered in assigning a date or provenance to the *Futūh al-Shām* are in large part due to the fact that the author is unknown. William Nassau Lees, who prepared the first edition of the text in 1854, was able to locate no biographical information about al-Azdi in any of the sources available to him. Nevertheless, examination of the *isnāds* used in the text led him to conclude that this writer had probably died about A.H. 178, "which is perhaps somewhat later than the reality". Elsewhere, he

1. *The Fotooh al-Shām: Being an Account of the Moslim Conquests in Syria, by Aboo Ismā'ail Mohammad bin 'Abd Allah, al-Azdi al-Baṣrī, Who Flourished About the Middle of the Second Century of the Mohammadan Era*, edited with a few notes, by Ensign W.N. Lees, Forty-Second Regiment Bengal Light Infantry. Calcutta: Printed by J. Thomas, at the Baptist Mission Press, 1854. See p. v of Lees' Introduction. This edition will henceforth be referred to as "al-Azdi".

refers to al-Azdi as a contemporary of Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/761) and Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/774)².

Ten years later, however, Michael Jan de Goeje published a devastating critique of Lees' conclusions. The name of the work's author was not to be found in early biographical notices, he argued, because no such person had ever lived: Abū Ismā'il Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Azdi was just a fictitious name, probably invented simply by rearranging the name of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), the author of the renowned *Sahīh*. As for the *isnāds*, De Goeje found them highly defective and sometimes historically absurd. The text itself, he proposed, was a "pious fraud" that had gone through various stages of redaction and elaboration, primarily at the time of the Crusades, with the aim of encouraging the faithful in the *jihād* against the Franks³.

This assessment of the authorship of the *Futūh al-Shām* prevailed in Orientalist circles for more than a century. Among Arab historians, however, De Goeje's criticisms were to some unconvincing and to others unknown; in any case, al-Azdi was and continues to be cited in modern Arabic historical scholarship on the conquests in Bilād al-Shām. And a significant step toward restoration of the book's credibility was marked by the publication of a new edition by 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd Allāh 'Āmir in 1970. In his introduction, 'Āmir maintained that he had found references to al-Azdi in several *rijāl* works; and on the basis of these accounts he described him as a highly esteemed scholar who spent his career in Baghdad, transmitted Prophetic traditions to a number of eminent authorities on *hadīth*, and died in the 'Abbasid capital in 231/845-46⁴. The question of the text's authorship, and hence also its provenance and general date, therefore seemed to have been settled.

Unfortunately, this proves not to be the case. Consultation of 'Āmir's sources reveals that he is citing from the *tarjama* of a Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh whose *nisba* is al-Aruzzī, not al-Azdi. The written forms of these two names are of course quite similar; and although 'Āmir never states this, it could be argued that our al-Azdi is the person meant in these biographies, and that the form al-Aruzzī arises from copyist error. But in this instance

2. Cf. Lees' Preface to his edition of the pseudo-Wāqidī, *Futūh al-Shām* (Calcutta, 1854-60), I, v.
3. M.J. de Goeje, *Mémoire sur le Fotooh's-Scham attribué à Abou Ismail al-Baṣrī* (Leiden, 1864; *Mémoires d'histoire et de géographie orientales*, no. 2), pp. 3, 14-22, 24, 32, 33-34, 38-39.
4. Al-Azdi, *Ta'rikh futūh al-Shām*, edited by 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd Allāh 'Āmir (Cairo, 1970), pp. k-1 of the editor's *Muqaddima*. This edition will henceforth be referred to as "Āmir".



بحث في موارد كتاب "فتوح الشام"

لأبي عبد الله لأزدي

الدكتور محي الدين لافعة

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كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية بسوسة

بولاية التونسية

التوطئة:

لا مجال للشك في أن معرفة التاريخ العربي الإسلامي قد توسعت وتعمقت خلال القرنين الأخيرين مُستفيدة من الحراك العلمي والثقافي الذي ميز العالم المعاصر والذي تجلّى من خلال نشر المئات من أمهات الكتب ذات الصلة بالتاريخ الإسلامي الأول بالخصوص وتحقيقتها. ولأن ذلك تزامن مع توسع أفق فلسفة علم التاريخ فقد عنيت عديد الدراسات بالكتابة التاريخية عند العرب أسهم فيها باحثون غربيون ثم عرباً ومسلمون تمحورت حول تطور الكتابة التاريخية عند المسلمين كما سلطت الضوء على الإطار العام لنشأتها وسعت إلى تبين خصائصها. مع ذلك ما زالت قضايا كثيرة من المسألة لم تحل سواء منها ما يتعلق ببدايات علم التاريخ في الفضاء العربي الإسلامي وعلاقته بالمعارف الإسلامية الأخرى أو إسهامات الأقاليم المختلفة في ذلك. في هذا الإطار من البديهي أن يساعد الكشف عن مصادر جديدة، تأخر نشرها لسبب أو لآخر، على فهم أدق للقضايا المطروحة، ويمثل كتاب فتوح الشام لأبي إسماعيل

٤١١ - ٤٤٧

المؤتمر الدولي الثامن

لتاريخ بلاد الشام

المعارف والعلوم من القرن الأول إلى الخامس الهجري
السابع إلى الحادي عشر ميلادي

الجزء الأول

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