

A UNIQUE MANUSCRIPT OF A BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY BY A KHOREZMIAN AUTHOR

The Russian Arabist V. I. Beliaev (1902—1976) was the first to mention the manuscript of an unknown biographical dictionary in the manuscript collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies. While working on the collection in 1953, he singled out this manuscript, acquired in 1939 from the Astrakhan book collector S. A. Alimov, as of “outstanding interest”. The scholar also determined its provenance as Khorezm and suggested that it is an autograph copy dating to the twelfth century [1]. The manuscript was later examined by A. I. Mikhaylova (in drawing up a catalogue of Arabic manuscripts in the collection) and B. Z. Khalidov, who drew from it a biography of the famous scholar al-Zamakhsharī [2]. But it is only two decades after V. I. Beliaev's first comments on the manuscript that his pupil, A. B. Khalidov, published a more detailed discussion of it in his two articles [3]. Apart from an analysis of the manuscript's contents and sources used, the author made the description of the manuscript. But what is more important, A. B. Khalidov was successful in attributing the work. However, at present, the results of his research need some corrections and additions inevitable after many years had elapsed from the appearance of his articles. The present article presents my own observations on the manuscript, which are basing certainly on the main results of Prof. Khalidov's work.*

The manuscript contains 193 large-format folios (18.7×29.7 cm); 29 lines per page, *naskh*. The text was copied in black ink in a single hand; headings and emphasised words are underlined. There are corrections and additions in the margins, as well as a number of notes made by a reader (two readers?) soon after the copying of the manuscript. Vowelling and diacritical marks are rare. The custodes belong partially to the copyist, partially to readers. Late Arabic pagination runs up to fol. 31b in black ink and is continued thereafter in blue pencil until the end of the manuscript. The paper is of Samarqand origin, thick, glossed, and browned with age. The folios are worm-eaten in places, ragged, and soiled. The manuscript is stitched together and held in a paste-board binding of later production. The order of folios has been disrupted.

The manuscript is defective: it lacks both a beginning and an end. The text starts with a continuation of the biography of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak al-Khurāsānī (d. 181/797) and continues with the biographies of individuals whose names begin with the letters ‘*ayn*, *ghayn*, etc.

in the order of the Arabic alphabet to the letter *ya*’. Then the biographies of people known only by *kunya* follow. The text breaks off on the biography of the traditionalist Abū Bakr b. ‘Ayyāsh (d. 173/789—90).

Thus, the dictionary is constructed in alphabetical order and most likely consisted originally of 28 chapters (*bābs*), one for each letter of the Arabic alphabet, and a concluding section (*dhikr*) listing those known only by *kunya*. The manuscript contains only 10 incomplete chapters (approximately one third of the work), presenting 277 biographies (some with *lacunae*) of considerably varying length. Nearly half of the manuscript is occupied by some fifteen extensive biographies, while the length of the others varies from 2 or 3 lines to half of a page.

Within chapters, the biographies are arranged in alphabetical-chronological order: the companions of Muḥammad (*ṣaḥāba*) come first, then the “followers” (*tābi‘ūn*), etc. Within the large chapter on ‘*ayn* we find subdivisions for the names ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, ‘Abd al-Mālik, etc. The names of those whose biography is presented are written in large letters and underlined, serving as the headings of the text's sections and sub-sections (see *figs. 1* and *2*).

After comparing materials found in the manuscript with data provided in K. Brockelman, A. B. Khalidov came to the conclusion that the author of the dictionary was the traditionalist Abū-l-Karam ‘Abd al-Salām b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥijjī al-Firdawsī al-Khwārizmī al-Andarasfānī. As the scholar points out, the author refers to one of his own works entitled *al-Mustaḡṣā* (“What Was Studied”) dealing with the early history of Islam (the history of Muḥammad, the early Arab conquests, the first four caliphs, etc.). A work of this title and content is listed by Brockelman, who gives the author's name as Abū-l-Karam al-Khwārizmī al-Andarasfānī [4]. Second, like Brockelman's Abū-l-Karam, the author of the dictionary lived in Khorezm (and must have also carried the *nisba* al-Khwārizmī); like him, he could have had another, specifically Khorezmian *nisba*, al-Ḥijjī, instead of al-Ḥājjī. The time of the active literary involvement of the dictionary's author is contemporary with the lifetime of Brockelman's Abū-l-Karam: his another extant work was written in 564/1169. Its content is connected with Muslim tradition, which also interested the author of the dictionary [5]. Finally, the decisive argument which permitted A. B. Khalidov to make his attribution is that the native village of the dictionary's author is shown in the

* At present, the author of this article is preparing the manuscript of the dictionary for publication.