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01 Haziran 2022
MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTA
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

Cesurki Abdurrahman
030179

‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥasan al-Jabartī

DATE OF BIRTH 1754
PLACE OF BIRTH Cairo
DATE OF DEATH 1825
PLACE OF DEATH Cairo

by Ibrahim Gomeah

BIOGRAPHY

‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī holds a privileged place in the historiography of modern Egypt and the Middle East in general. He is considered one of the greatest historians of the Islamic and the Arab world, but despite his fame very little is known about his personal life. He was born in Cairo in 1754 into a wealthy and educated family that had migrated from the Ethiopian city of Jabart to Egypt around 1600. His father, Ḥasan al-Jabartī (1698-1774), was one of the greatest scholars of his time, not only a learned theologian and prominent Ḥanafī religious scholar, but also a highly respected scientist who taught mathematics and astronomy.

Following his father, al-Jabartī graduated from al-Azhar University in 1776. Through family ties, he came to know the country’s religious and political elites. In addition to his access to the ruling Mamlūks and the Ottoman administration, he became influenced by the ‘ulamā’ of al-Azhar, who kindled in him a desire to write and become a chronicler. While studying at al-Azhar, he became a disciple of the Yemeni scholar Muḥammad Murtaḍa l-Zabīdī (1732-91) and assisted him in writing a biography of famous scholars, which was commissioned by the Mufti of Damascus.

It was this experience that made al-Jabartī strongly interested in writing about the history of Egypt and becoming a chronicler. He embarked on writing this history by recording reports of local events and biographies, finally producing his three most famous works: *Tārīkh mud-dat al-Farānsīs bi-Miṣr* (‘History of the period of the French occupation in Egypt’), which he published in 1798; *Mazḥar al-taqdīs bi-zawāl daw-lat al-Farānsīs* (‘Demonstration of piety in the demise of the state of the French’), which he published in 1801; and *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār fi l-tarājim wa-l-akhbār* (‘The marvellous chronicles. Biographies and events’), which

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EASTWARD HO!

*Diplomats, Travellers and Interpreters
of the Middle East and Beyond, 1600-1940*

CLIFFORD EDMUND BOSWORTH

01 Haziran 2022

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
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AL-JABARTĪ AND THE FRANKISH ARCHAEOLOGISTS

1. INTRODUCTION

For the Muslims, ancient Egypt was a land of mystery and magic. The monuments of Pharaonic Egypt attested a once-flourishing civilisation, and the sheer scale of so many of these remains seemed to point either to a despotic monarchy which could command the services of multitudes of slaves to build the pyramids or to carve the rock temples of Upper Egypt (this being the rationalistic explanation put forward by, e.g., Ibn Khaldūn¹), or else to the existence of a priestly tradition of esoteric wisdom and the ability to command supernatural powers (which Ibn Khaldūn fully admitted elsewhere in his *Prolegomena*²). This last view had behind it the sanction of the Qur'an, above all, in regard to the story of Moses' throwing down his staff before Pharaoh and its metamorphosis into a serpent, and his subsequent contest in magic with the Egyptian sorcerers (Qur'an, VII, 103-26); these events naturally lent themselves to much fascinating embellishment by the *quşşâş* or popular storytellers.³

- 1 See *al-Muqaddima*, ed. E. Quatremère (Paris, 1858), vol. II, pp. 205-7; F. Rosenthal, tr., *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History* (New York, 1958), vol. II, pp. 238-41, where Ibn Khaldūn stresses how the marshalling of hordes of slave workers, plus the use of levers and mechanical devices, techniques that only strong central authorities can bring to bear, amply explain the great monuments scattered across the face of the Middle East and popularly attributed to the people of 'Ād.
- 2 *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 113, 156; ed. Quatremère, *al-Muqaddima*, vol. III, pp. 89, 124.
- 3 E.g. on the prodigious size of the serpent, which so frightened Pharaoh that he befouled himself in his flight, see Abū Ishāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Tha'labī, *Arā'is al-majālis fi qisṣat al-anbiyā'* (Cairo, 1306/1888-9), pp. 245-8, and the commentators in George Sale and E. M. Wherry, *A Comprehensive Commentary on the Qur'an* (Boston, 1882-6), vol. II, pp. 225-9. The information in al-Suyūṭī's *Ḥusn al-muḥādara fi akbbār Miṣr wa l-Qāhira* on the magicians of Egypt is conveniently reproduced and translated by the Abbé Bargès, "Tradition musulmane sur les magiciens de Pharaon," *JA*, 4^{ème} série, 2 (July-December 1843), pp. 73-84.