

Battle of Karbalâ, is also a greatly truncated version of the Arabic text, omitting virtually all of its quite extensive and valuable treatment of Umayyad and Abbasid history. The translation thus seems to be an effort, probably completed at a much later date than the period covered in this chapter, to tailor the work to the interests of a specifically Shi'ite Persian audience.

3. Gardizi and the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*

About a century after the composition of Bal'ami's *Târikh*, original works of history in Persian began to appear, the earliest extant example being the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr* by Abd-al-Hayy Gardizi.⁴⁷ Nothing is known about Gardizi beyond what little can be deduced from incidental remarks in his work; no other sources mention him, and no subsequent writers seem to have made any use of his book. The text gives the full name of the author as Abu-Sa'id Abd-al-Hayy b. al-Zahhâk b. Mahmud Gardizi,⁴⁸ and he was presumably a native or inhabitant of the city of Gardiz. He had obviously served as an official under the command of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (reg. 998–1030), since he states that he was an eyewitness to many of the outstanding events of the reign of that ruler.⁴⁹ He was also still active as late as the time of Sultan Abd-al-Rashid b. Mahmud (1049–52?), who was certainly the ruler at the time Gardizi was writing as he invokes praises and blessings upon him.⁵⁰ In addition to his involvement in governmental affairs, Gardizi also seems to have been at least slightly acquainted with the celebrated scholar Abu-Reyhân Biruni (ca. 973–1050); he states that he "heard" certain information from Biruni,⁵¹ and the influence of Biruni's work on his own is indeed quite apparent.

47 Gardizi, *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*, ed. Abd-al-Hayy Habibi (Tehran, 1984).

48 Ibid., p. 173.

49 Ibid., p. 174.

50 Ibid., p. 174.

51 Ibid., p. 210.

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The text of the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*, at least in the form of the two late and defective manuscripts of it that have come down to us, is divided into nineteen sections. The first five are called *tabaqes*, 'groups' (or, perhaps better, 'cycles'); the remaining fourteen are called *bâbs*, 'chapters.' Whether this system is the author's own or are merely additions by a later copyist is uncertain. They correspond only awkwardly to the actual divisions of the text. The five *tabaqes* are devoted to the corresponding five cycles of the ancient Iranian kings, which Gardizi refers to as the *akhbâr-e ajam*. For the most part, his treatment of this pre-Islamic history of Iran is a concise and unremarkable summary of the 'Iranian national history' found in the more extensive works of other authors such as Bal'ami, Ferdowsi, or Tha'âlebi. He gives a prosaic sketch of the Pishdadian and Kayanian kings (beginning with Tahmurath; part of the text is obviously missing at the beginning). His account of the 'regional kings' (*moluk-e tavâ'ef*) is even more terse; only Alexander is discussed at any length (a subject to which he returns in even more detail later in the text). Interestingly, he does not regard the Sasanid period as a unity but divides its rulers into two *tabaqes*, the Sasanid and the Akâsere (beginning with Khosrow Anushirvân), a division often found in manuscripts of the *Shahname*. His conception of history is thus clearly cyclical but not purely dynastic; the pattern seems rather to be periods of strong rule interrupted by phases of weakness and disintegration. Unlike Bal'ami, Gardizi makes no effort to integrate the history of the ancient Iranian kings with that of the Biblical and Qor'anic prophets.

Gardizi then turns to the "history of the caliphs and kings of Islam," beginning with a chapter containing charts (*jadval*), one of information about Mohammad (his uncles, aunts, wives, in-laws, mounts, battles, etc.) and one on rulers from Abu-Bakr to Marwân b. Mohammad (names and honorifics, their officials, dates, etc.). These tabular charts are a recurrent feature of the text and might be ascribed to the bureaucratic and utilitarian mindset of the author (or perhaps to the example set by his mentor Biruni, who was also quite fond of such devices). His subsequent account of Islamic history is lumped together in one 'chapter' but actually consists of several different sections set off by summary charts: the