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MONIQUE BERNARDS

Ibn al-Mudabbir

The **Ibn al-Mudabbir** brothers, **Ibrāhīm** and **Aḥmad** b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh (or ʿUbaydallāh) b. al-Mudabbir, were courtiers and fiscal officials who worked for the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate in the mid-third/ninth century. Aḥmad was reportedly older than Ibrāhīm (al-Ṣafadī, 8:38).

1. IBRĀHĪM

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. al-Mudabbir (d. 279/892–3) was a bureaucrat for several ʿAbbāsīd caliphs, from al-Wāthiq (r.

227–32/842–7) to al-Muʿtamid (r. 256–79/870–92). He was a favourite of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–47/847–61) and helped him stage the downfall of the Turkish commander Ītākḫ in 235/849–50 (al-Ṭabarī, 3:1384). He also served as the finance minister of northern Mesopotamia, Basra, and al-Ahwāz. In 256–7/870–1, while acting as minister of al-Ahwāz, he was captured and briefly held under house arrest by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (d. 270/883–4), the leader of the nascent Zanj revolt (al-Ṭabarī, 3:1837–9). He became *wazīr* in 263/877 under Caliph al-Muʿtamid but soon resigned the post “due to the enormity of the duties involved” (al-Ṣafadī, 6:107).

A talented poet and man of letters, Ibrāhīm was a denizen of the literary scene in Baghdad and Sāmarrāʾ. He enjoyed friendships with notables such as the secretary Ismāʿīl b. Bulbul (d. 278/891–2) and the courtesan ʿArīb (d. 277/890–1). Modern scholars have often ascribed to Ibrāhīm b. al-Mudabbir the bureaucratic treatise *al-Risāla al-ʿadhrāʾ* (“The virgin letter”) (Gottschalk; Imhof; Kurd ʿAlī; Mubarak), but the bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (d. c.385/995) does not attribute this work to him, and Dominique Sourdel (d. 2014) has suggested instead that the *al-Risāla al-ʿadhrāʾ* was written by the prominent essayist Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 298/911) to his contemporary Ibn al-Mudabbir (Sourdel, *Livre de secretares*, 116, n. 2).

2. AḤMAD

Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. al-Mudabbir (d. 270/883 or 271/884) was also a capable poet, courtier, and bureaucrat for the ʿAbbāsīd caliphs from al-Wāthiq to al-Muʿtamid. For a time, al-Mutawakkil