AN EARLY MUSLIM DANIEL APOCALYPSE

BY

DAVID COOK
University of Chicago

1. Introduction to the Daniel genre of apocalypses

The genre of Daniel apocalypses is one which is well-known to Judaism, Christianity as well as to Islam.\(^1\) Frequently the name of Daniel appears in Muslim apocalyptic literature,\(^2\) although Daniel is not one of the


prophets featured extensively in the Muslim stories of the prophets. According to the early accounts Daniel’s tomb was an attraction from the dawn of the conquests:

[Muṭrīf b. Mālik] said: ‘I participated in the conquest of Tustar together with [Abū Mūsā] al-Āṣîrī, and we found Daniel in Sūs [Shushan]. The people of Sūs when they gave a splendid funeral (anwa‘) they brought him out and prayed for rain with him. We found 60 sealed earthen jars with him. We opened a jar close to them [the jars], in their middle and furthest away from them, and in every jar we found 10,000 [what?]’. Hammām said: ‘I think that he said 10,000’ and we found together with them two bands (raḥbatayn) of linen, and also found four four-sided vessels, in each of them a book. The first man to come across this was [a man] from Bal‘angār called Ḥarqūṣ. He gave al-Āṣîrī the two bands, and he gave him 200 dinars. Then he demanded the two bands from him after that, and refused to return the two of them, and instead divided them into turbans among his followers. We had a Christian workman with us called Nu‘aym and he said: ‘Sell me this four-sided vessel for whatever is in it.’ They said: ‘Even if there is no gold, silver or the Book of God in it?’ He said: ‘Even if the Book of God is in it’ and they did not want to sell him the Book, so they sold him the four-sided vessel for two dirhems, and they gave him the Book.

Although the chances are that this mysterious ‘book of God’ is not something which existed historically and is merely a literary fiction, its ‘discovery’ in this tradition paved the way for the acceptance of various Daniel apocalypses which were to find their way into Muslim literature.

Daniel apocalypses are well known from Jewish and Christian sources. In general, they take two distinct forms. One involves a close literary


5 On him, see Ibn Ḥaḡār al-‘Aṣqalānī, al-Isāhā fī tāmīyīz al-ṣahāba (Beirut: Dār li-l-Iḥyā‘ al-Turā‘ al-‘Arabī, 1328 h), III, pp. 496-97 (where this account appears).
