NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS

A WORK OF IBN AL-KALBĪ ON THE ARAB PENINSULA

The list of the works of Ibn al-Kalbī recorded by Ḥāmid Zakī Pasha (Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-aṣnām, Cairo, 1924, p. 73, no. 57) contains a work Kitāb Ghuzayya (correctly: Kitāb Ghaziyya; see Yaqūt, Mu‘jam al-udabā’, ed. Ḥāmid Farīd Rifā‘ī, Cairo, n.d., xix, 290, l. 1); Ḥāmid Zakī remarks that Ghuzayya is a well-known tribe. The title of the work seems to indicate that it deals with the tradition and stories about the tribe.

The name of the book was, however, transmitted erroneously and it seems that the error crept very early into the copied book of Ibn Nadīm’s Fihrist. The correct name of the book is recorded in the MS of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-Kāṭib, known as al-Wazīr al-Maghribī (see GAL, Suppl., i, 600–1), Adab al-khawāṣṣ (MS Brussa, Ḥusayn Çelebi, 85b) in a significant passage in which one of the meanings of the root ‘arb’ is discussed (fols. 38b–39b).

Al-Wazīr al-Maghribī quotes an opinion that ‘arbā denotes the Arab peninsula and records a passage from Ibn al-Kalbī’s book ‘Arba (so vowelled) confirming this opinion:


wa-ʿarbātu ardān lā ʿyuḥūbī ʿharāmahā: min al-nāsī ghayru ‘l-shautariyyī ‘l-qunābīl.2

Al-Wazīr al-Maghribī gives the explanation of the meanings of shautarī and qunābīl 3 and differs with the opinion of Ibn al-Kalbī that ‘arba—according to the quoted verse—denotes the Arab peninsula. In his opinion ‘arba in the verse quoted by Ibn al-Kalbī denotes Mecca. ‘But Hiṣhām (i.e. Ibn al-Kalbī) knows better’ 4 remarks al-Wazīr al-Maghribī respectfully at the end of the passage.

Al-Wazīr al-Maghribī may indeed be trusted in his information about genealogy and about the works of Ibn al-Kalbī. He had a profound knowledge of nasab which is attested by his book al-‘Inās bi-ʾilmī ‘l-ansāb (British Museum,


2 See the verse in Yāqūt’s Mu’jam al-buldān, s.v. ‘arba with the hemistic: min al-nāsī illā ‘l-awādhiyyīn ‘l-hulābīlūn and see L’A, s.v. ‘arb with the hemistic as in Yāqūt’s Mu’jam; but L’A, s.v. qubl, the hemistic is recorded as in Adab al-khawāṣṣ.

3 A rajaz verse of Abū Ghālib al-ʾṬalī is quoted:

Banī Kulaḥaynīn sidqakum jaddun shaqiyyy : Ḥattā ramākum ʿinda ʾṣāli ʿl-ʾaṣhiyy : Bi-muṭṭahammīn fī ‘l-shabābī shautariyyī.

His quotations, glosses, and remarks prove that he had a vast erudition in Jāhiliyya tradition and that he was a connoisseur of Jāhili poetry. His immense knowledge of nasab is evident in his detailed pedigrees given in the recorded stories of *Adab al-khawāṣṣ*. His esteem for Ibn al-Kalbī and his keen interest in his works is attested by the comments and notes recorded on his authority in the margin of the MS of *Kitāb al-aṣnām*.

It is evident that the work of Ibn al-Kalbī referred to by Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist* is *Kitāb 'Arba* not *Kitāb Ghaziyya*. The cause of the error is obvious: the slight graphical difference between عربية and غزية which led to the clerical error. The quotations recorded on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī in Yāqūt's *Mu'jam al-buldān* are with all probability derived from his *Kitāb 'Arba*, a book obviously dealing with the Arab peninsula.

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5 The note of the editor Ahmad Farīd Rifāʾī in Ibn Khallikan’s *Wafayāt* (v, 39, n. 3): *huwa kitābun fī l-mubādarat wa l-adab* is erroneous.
