

Nabigha es-Seybani (140006)

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al-Nābigha al-Shaybānī

Al-Nābigha al-Shaybānī or Nābighat Banī Shaybān (lit., the poetic genius of the Banū Shaybān) was the honorific name of 'Abdallāh b. al-Mukhāriq b. Sulaym (d. c.126/744), a Bedouin poet who belonged to the Banū Dhuhl b. Shaybān, a subtribe of the Bakr b. Wā'il (for his complete genealogy, see his *Dīwān*, ed. Ya'qūb, 51, and Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, 7:106). He lived in what is today lower Iraq and travelled frequently to Damascus, where he met Umayyad caliphs, such as 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705), al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 86–96/705–15), Yazīd II b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 101–5/720–4), al-Walīd b. Yazīd (r. 125–6/743), and famous Umayyad leaders, such as 'Abd al-'Azīz b. al-Walīd (d. 110/728–9) and Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik (d. 121/738), and praised them in long panegyric poems. This evidence suggests that al-Nābigha was born in the second half of the first/seventh century and lived at least until 125–6/743.

Most Arab biographers provide us with no substantial information about the poet's family, his social environment, or

remarkable events in his life. Even in the earliest and most copious source, *al-Aghānī* by Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967), facts about him are scarce or dubious, as in 7:108, where the author calls him "the son of a Christian woman," or where he writes, "He was a Christian, as far as I can see. I found that he swore in his poetry by the Gospel, the monks, and the creed by which the Christians swear" (7:106). This statement seems unfounded, however, as Ḥasan al-Sandūbī has shown convincingly (410), from al-Nābigha's *Dīwān*, that he was a Muslim. A hitherto unknown corroboration of this is found in two anecdotes in Ibn 'Asākir (38:414), in which al-Nābigha al-Shaybānī utters the Islamic profession of faith (*shahāda*) and other typical Islamic sayings.

The sources agree that he was a good poet (*shā'ir muḥsin*), who composed numerous poems, mainly panegyric odes. In his *Dīwān*—which is extant in an old manuscript preserved in Istanbul and not lost, as al-Ṭayālīsī (mid-fourth/tenth century) (22) claims—the quality of his descriptions (*wasf*), self-praise (*mufākharā*), and gnomic verses (*ḥikām*), amongst other characteristics, and his use of rare words make him

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