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UBEYDULLAN b. HURR

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Ubayd Allāh b. al-Hurr

The Umayyad Poet-Rebel ʿUbaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr al-Juʿfī
(Codices arabici antiqui 6).
GEORGE J. KANAZI
Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000
240 pp. (82 pp. Introduction in Arabic; 53 pp. Introduction in English, 56 pp. Dīwān, indices in Arabic)

This is the sixth volume in Professor Khoury's series of *Codices arabici antiqui*, of which earlier volumes include editions of important texts by Wahb Ibn Munabbih, Asad Ibn Mūsā and al-Fārisī and others.

It is difficult to decide which field in Arabic studies the edition of this Dīwān by Prof. Kanazi is more important: history or literature. In his foreword the editor mentions literary and historical sources separately, but in the same line he stresses the importance of both kinds of sources for our understanding of 'political, social and economic circumstances' and 'the life, activity, and contribution of a certain personality'. The life and work of the poet himself are not conclusive; ʿUbaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr was not a leading statesman but he nevertheless had some power to control the fates of others. His merits as a poet may have been limited, but in this field he at least received some recognition from later critics. The case of this poet may illustrate the subtle interconnection between both disciplines: important personalities often composed poetry, their poetry is often a public statement and hardly ever limited to their own personal feelings and their poetry is often the only (reliable) source—or perhaps witness report—that we actually posses of a certain historical event. Of course, Kanazi is aware of this twofold importance of the poet-rebel ʿUbaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr; therefore, after discussing his biography and his character in the first chapter, he turns to his religio-political relations and activities in the second. Both parts of his study are extensive and they look complete, although sometimes repetitive. Our hero (d. 68/690) lived to witness one of the most interesting eras of Islamic history, characterized by the formation of the Umayyad caliphate as a stable political factor on one hand and the necessity to generate financial income through conquest on the other. Moreover, the central power was more than once under tremendous internal strain, for instance because of Muʿāwiya's ambition to establish a hereditary caliphate. The Shiʿite opposition in southern Iraq became a major force to threaten the central government. Meanwhile, internal strife among Arab tribes, each with their own shifting ambitions, aggravated the situation even more: the old affiliational bonds and hostilities were far from being a thing of the heathen past. A historian may well call such a period 'interesting' but for the individuals living it, it must have been chaotic and harsh. The poet ʿUbaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr al-Juʿfī was such an individual, but he was able to adapt to the circumstances.

For these two chapters the author extracts most of his information about this poet from historical and geographical sources and he offers a general description of the historical circumstances in which ʿUbaydullāh lived, his genealogy, his *kunya* and his early youth in Kūfa. In a final paragraph Kanazi discusses ʿUbaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr's personality, mainly circling around the question whether or not he was a 'thief' (*'liṣṣ'*) as al-Sukkarī considers him by including him in the *Kitāb al-Luṣūṣ*. This attribution is not free from debate, as appears from Ibn al-Mubārak's *Muntahā al-Ṭalab*, where we find a significant sentence which Kanazi translates: 'he was not a thief, but rather he did not yield to governors, and used to gather around him a group of fighters with whom he would attack'. It seems that 'Ubaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr's personality bore some resemblance to that of a brigand (*ṣuʿlūk*) who felt uneasy recognizing central rule and

was more than avid to pick a grain of wealth for himself, his warriors and his next of kin. The author more than once mentions 'objectives' Ibn al-Ḥurr had in life, but he never succeeds in being explicit about them, so that we must assume that Ibn al-Ḥurr's objectives shifted with circumstances and opportunities.

It seems that Ibn al-Ḥurr was a man of some importance; he was in contact with Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī, but took pains not to take sides in their conflict. Kanazi deduces from circumstances like these that Ibn al-Ḥurr was an influential man and a leader of a considerable group of warriors. Although by nature inclined to the ʿAlid side, Ibn al-Ḥurr never became a fanatic Shiʿite, probably because he felt that they were losing their advantage in the controversy. Even when Mukhtār al-Thaqafī joined in an uprising against the Umayyads under ʿAbdullāh Ibn al-Zubayr (64/686), Ibn al-Ḥurr declined to take the side of the revolutionaries. Rather, he seized the opportunity of this rivalry between the two groups and the ensuing lack of central control to raid major parts of southern Iraq, kill governors, take massive booty and free prisoners (among them his wife). Ibn al-Ḥurr could be a noble and a brave man, as a story illustrates in which he frees a tribesman of his, another Juʿfite, who became indebted to Muṣʿab Ibn al-Zubayr, the then governor of the Sawād. On another occasion he rid the population of al-Anbār of a bandit by killing him. Ibn al-Ḥurr's relationship with Muṣʿab remained one of mutual suspicion and finally Muṣʿab attacked Ibn al-Ḥurr and his men. While fleeing Ibn al-Ḥurr drowned in the Euphrates. Although Ibn al-Ḥurr occurs in Shiʿite literature, Kanazi does not regard him as a Shiʿite: rather, he considers him as a rebel without a religio-political cause and motivated by feelings of disappointment and bitterness.

Kanazi assumes that most poetry by ʿUbaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr has been lost. What he is able to present are 340 lines in 57 poems and fragments, taken from a variety of sources. The main themes of his poetry are his relationships with Muṣʿab Ibn al-Zubayr and al-Mukhtār, references to battle fields, laments on Ḥusayn, *fakhr* and *ḥikam*. Much of his poetry has already been published in modern editions (such as the 50 passages containing 248 lines in Qaysī's *Shuʿarāʾ Umawīyūn*, Mosul, 1976), but Kanazi made fruitful use of al-Mubārak's *Muntahā al-Ṭalab* among other texts to offer this complete edition.

For scholarly purposes it is extremely useful to possess complete dīwāns, even by *poetae minores* such as Ibn al-Ḥurr. ʿUbaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr is a special case because as a poet he witnessed one of the most interesting periods in the early history of Islamic civilization. This part of Professor Kanazi's work and his lengthy, scholarly and well-informed introduction to the poet's world, his life and his poetry are a major achievement on which further study into this part of history can build fruitfully.

It should be stressed that this Dīwān also forms an important contribution to the study of early Arabic literature. The poetical works of ʿUbaydullāh Ibn al-Ḥurr as well as his behaviour suggest strongly a pre-Islamic state of mind: in his non-allegiance to the major political parties, in the solidarity with his men and his tribe, his care for their material well-being, his independency and personal courage we can see as many reminiscences of the qualities of a pre-Islamic *sayyid*, commonly known as *murūwa*. This strong commitment to the virtues of the *ʿArab* may also be deduced from an incident in which the poet vents his deeply felt distrust of *mawālī*: he recommends killing the *mawālī* prisoners after the battle in which al-Mukhtār was killed 'for their infidelity became evident and their self-pride grew and their thankfulness became meagre, and I do not trust them with the faith' (p. 31). The discussion whether or not

ihm nur zwei Schriften, *Bahǧat aṭ-ṭā'ifa bi-llāh al-'ārifa* und *Ṣawm al-qalb* überliefert sind, die EDWARD BADEEN im Rahmen der Beiruter Texte und Studien herausgegeben und mit Indizes sowie einer zusammenfassenden und erläuternden Einführung versehen hat.

Bei den Texten handelt es sich um Schülermitschriften. Dass sie im sufischen Unterricht Verwendung fanden, ergibt sich auch aus dem Kolophon der einzigen Handschrift, aus dem wir erfahren, dass beide Texte noch zu Beginn des 19. Jh. in Damaskus bei der Novizenausbildung genutzt wurden. Wenn wir es hier mit Lehrbüchern zu tun haben, so lässt dies allerdings nicht den Schluss zu, die Texte stellten eine einfache Lektüre dar. Insbesondere die Terminologie der Sufik ist trotz aller Fortschritte in den letzten Jahrzehnten noch immer unzureichend erschlossen, so dass man, was die genaue Bedeutung eines Begriffs angeht, noch immer zuweilen auf Mutmaßungen angewiesen ist, wie zum Beispiel im Falle des *ḏikr al-ma'ṣiya* (Ṣaum, S. 36 und BADEENS Erläuterungen dazu auf S. 33f. seiner Einführung). Nicht nur wegen solcher Schwierigkeiten ist der Leser dankbar, die Gedanken 'Ammārs vom Herausgeber in der Einleitung systematisch zusammengefasst zu finden.

Während FRITZ MEIER in: *Die Fawā'iḥ des Naǧm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā* (Wiesbaden 1957, S. 62 der Einleitung) schiitische Neigungen 'Ammārs unterstellt, erweist er sich, wie BADEEN zeigt, bei näherem Hinsehen als durchaus sunnitisch gesonnen. Die sufischen Ansichten, die 'Ammār vorträgt, liegen dabei insgesamt nicht weit vom *mainstream* mystischen Gedankenguts seit den Tagen des Ǧunayd entfernt, wie man es bei einem Schüler des doch eher braven Abū n-Naǧīb as-Suhrawardī ja auch erwarten kann. 'Ammār zeigt sich als typischer *šayḫ at-tarbiya*. Er vermittelt sufische Lebensführung, kein metaphysisches Lehrgebäude. Von der komplexen Lichtmetaphorik seines Schülers etwa findet sich nichts. Ob man mit einem solchen Urteil dem Autor Unrecht tut, lässt sich angesichts der Überlieferungslage nicht letztgültig entscheiden. Sollten nicht noch weitere Handschriften auftauchen, sieht es ganz danach aus, als müsse sich die Forschung mit dem bescheiden, was sich aus den hier solide edierten und erklärten Handschriften herauslesen lässt.

LUTZ BERGER, Tübingen

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GEORGE J. KANAZI: *The Umayyad Poet-Rebel. 'Ubaydullāh ibn al-Ḥurr al-Ju'fī*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2000. 68, 175 S. (Codices Arabici Antiqui. 6.) ISBN 3-447-04251-6. € 49,–.

GEORGE KANAZI's book is an edition of the fragments of 'Ubaydallāh ibn al-Ḥurr's poetry, together with a study of his life and career.

Ibn al-Ḥurr (d. 68/689) is one of the fascinating characters who were influential enough to leave some traces in history, yet never attracted much attention to themselves, which is why their life and works are in a twilight zone: almost forgotten, yet to some extent reconstructable. He wrote a small amount of poetry (KANAZI's collection contains some 340 verses in 57 fragments) but was better known as a non-partisan leader who took part in the conflict between Umayyads and Zubayrids, trying to carve himself an independent position between the major powers.

KANAZI has carefully collected most of the information concerning Ibn al-Ḥurr that we can glean from the primary sources, and there is little to add. KANAZI's historiographical approach, or the lack of it, is, however, a major problem in the study, as KANAZI reads his sources without questioning their reliability, an attitude which can hardly be defended any more in the studies of early Islamic history.

This is disturbing especially in the events connected with al-Ḥusayn (whose name, for some reason, is given throughout the study as Ḥussein, a curious compromise between popular and scholarly writing).[1] Thus, KANAZI expresses no doubts concerning the alleged agreement between Mu'āwiya and al-Ḥasan (pp. 15–16) and he is able to quote speeches held at Kerbela verbatim (p. 27), even though the legend has it that almost all supporters of al-Ḥusayn were massacred. As Kerbela later became a momentuous event in the Shiite *Heilsgeschichte* and it was exploited at will by Abbasid (anti-Umayyad) historians, it is obvious that the reports, recorded a century after the events, hardly coincide too closely with what actually happened.

The same indifference towards source criticism is also seen in other events of Ibn al-Ḥurr's life. KANAZI analyses (pp. 43–44) an alleged speech by Ibn al-Ḥurr, reported by aṭ-Ṭabarī, without paying any attention to the fact that the contents of the speech mirror an understanding of history as it developed in the early Abbasid period (an initial golden age under the first four right-guided – "orthodox" – Caliphs, as opposed to the "Arabian Kingship" and tyranny of the Umayyads) but hardly with what would have been thought in the late seventh century.

Despite this major historiographical problem, KANAZI's study is exhaustive and he has collected much material for future studies of Ibn al-Ḥurr and also contributed to our understanding of the early Umayyad period and its vicissitudes. Concentrating on a semi-independent character in the margins of the conflict between the Umayyad and the Zubayrid empires considerably deepens our understanding of the events.

The following marginal notes may be added to the study of Ibn al-Ḥurr's life:

p. 26, note 35: In the variant version of the story in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (ed. M. AL-FIRDAWS AL-'AẒM. Dimashq 1996) II:488, the name of the horse is given as *Lāḥiq*.

p. 32: Another version of the killing of 'Abdallāh ibn Bashshār is given in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* II: 469. Here the story is related by 'Urwa ibn 'Abdallāh al-Ju'fī; knowing that 'Ubaydallāh is very often read 'Abdallāh in the sources, one wonders whether we have here yet another son of Ibn al-Ḥurr. – The variant 'Abdallāh is once, p. 61, mentioned in passing by KANAZI, but he does not give any attention to the form. As Ibn al-Ḥurr's own verses show, he was 'Ubaydallāh, yet, e.g., aṣ-Ṣafadī gives his biography under 'Abdallāh in *al-Wāfī bi'l-wafayāt* XVII (ed. DOROTHEA KRAWULSKY. Bibliotheca Islamica 6q. 1982), p. 127 (from adh-Dhahabī's *Ta'rīkh al-islām*), a passage which is ignored by KANAZI. Likewise, in Ibn Aydamur's *ad-Durra al-farīd* he is consistently called 'Abdallāh (see Index).

p. 48: The story concerning Ibn al-Ḥurr's release from prison, obviously a variant of the story related on pp. 33–34, is also found in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* VII/1 (ed. RAMZI BAALBAKI. Bibliotheca Islamica 28i. 1997), p. 133, where we have Ibn Ziyād (inferior variant) for Muṣ'ab ibn az-Zubayr. Although al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays was a friend of Muṣ'ab – see aṣ-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī* XVI (ed. WADĀD AL-QĀḍĪ. Bibliotheca Islamica 6p. 1982), p. 356 – the variant where Ibn al-Ḥurr is freed thanks to the intercession of Ibrāhīm ibn Mālik al-Ashtar (see pp. 33–34) is probably to be preferred, as stories originally told of other, less famous characters later tend to cluster around al-Aḥnaf.

Thus far, we have been discussing 'Ubaydallāh the Rebel, which is the focus of KANAZI's initial study. Yet there is also 'Ubaydallāh the Poet, and his place in literary

[1] Incidentally, the transliterations, which are usually correct, suffer from some inaccuracies. E.g., one finds ẓ usually transliterated as such, but sometimes as *dh* (e.g. p. 44 *dhahra*; p. 47 Dhuhayr). Likewise, there are more misprints in the text than one would like to see: the worst cluster seems to come on p. 47 where in a few lines we have *al-mathāla* (for *al-mathala*); 'Ubadullāh; and (in the notes) twice *wal-Tabyyīn*.

(al. Cu'fi)

'UBAYDULLĀH IBN AL-ḤURR AL-JU'FĪ
His Life and Poetry

George Kanazi

'Ubaydullāh ibn al-Ḥurr al-Ju'fī was a warrior, a rebel and a poet, who lived during the first century of the Muslim era. He took part in political events, having ties with the political leaders of Iraq and Syria of his time. He was involved in many activities against the authority of certain caliphs and local governors, till he was finally killed in 68 A.H.

The first century was a critical period in Muslim history. The newly born state had to establish an internal political order on the one hand, and to carry on the wars of conquest in order to spread the new faith to the people of the world (as well as to enjoy more financial gains), on the other. The dispute over the caliphate during that period was the major factor in the formation of the various political parties and the continuous struggle between them.

After the four Orthodox Caliphs, Mu'āwiya became the caliph, and prior to his death designated his son Yazīd as his successor. In so doing, he aroused the anger of the other political parties who considered the Umayyads as usurpers. They opposed the continuous Umayyad rule by propagandizing against it, or resorting to force and revolt. The Umayyad rule had to cope with these revolts which, in some cases, were of great magnitude. The years that immediately followed the death of Mu'āwiya until the extermination of the Zubayrid revolt were very critical.

Unlike his father, Yazīd was generally considered to be unqualified, and his nomination, secured by various "unfair procedures," contributed to the deepening of the struggle against the Umayyads.

Kūfa, the center of the Shi'ite opposition in south Iraq, was treated ruthlessly by the Umayyad governors. The Ḥijāzites were angered by the transfer of the capital from Medīna to south Iraq and then to Syria, and tried to regain the political status they had enjoyed during the reign of the orthodox caliphs. The people of Medīna dismissed 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Sufyān, the governor of Medīna appointed by Yazīd, thereby showing their discontent with the Umayyad rule and with the loss of their status as the political and cultural center of the Muslim state.

When Yazīd died in 64 A.H., he was succeeded by his son, Mu'āwiya II, who remained in power for a very short period (some historians do not even mention him among the Umayyad caliphs). Yet it was during this period that