

Kalb b. Wabara

Kalb b. Wabara was a major Arabian lineage group of the Quḏā'a. Predominantly camel-breeding pastoralists, the Kalb constituted powerful clans in the deserts between Syria and Iraq in pre-Islamic times, and were a key power-broking faction in the Umayyad era. Their lands were strategically significant: from their base in the ancient cult centre of Dūmat al-Jandal, the Kalb controlled the Wādī Sirḥān access route between Syria and central Arabia; they also occupied the Samāwa desert west of al-Ḥīra that connected Syria and Iraq, and further Kalb groups lived along the edges of the Byzantine frontier between Damascus, Salamiyya and Palmyra/Tadmur.

The early history of the Kalb is enigmatic. Muslim-era Arabic accounts report that the Quḏā'a, of which the Kalb were a sub-group, were the first Arabs to settle in Syria. The major Roman allies along the Syrian-Arabian frontiers in fourth and fifth centuries C.E., the Tanūkh and Salīḥ, are classified as Quḏā'a, but no express "Kalb" group is mentioned in any pre-Islamic writings or inscriptions. It has been proposed that a wave of unnamed "barbarians" reported as invading Byzantium's eastern provinces in 410 C.E. were members of the Kalb (Shahid, *BASIC*, 24), but firm evidence is lacking for the process by which Kalb formed into the groups attested at the dawn of Islam in Syria and Dūmat al-Jandal.

A sizeable quantity of pre-Islamic poetry is ascribed to Kalbī poets, and Muslim-era historians make scattered indications of the Kalb's friction with the Salīḥ and Ghassān client kings of the Byzantines. Shahid accordingly classifies the Kalb as a "federate tribe" employed as an

"outer shield" of the Byzantine empire in the Arabian desert (*BASIC*, 2.1:52-5, 224). Specific details are lacking, however, and the Kalb's pre-Islamic exploits are not very prominent in Muslim-era records of Arabian battle lore, hence the size and cohesiveness of the pre-Islamic Kalb is difficult to gauge. Individual clans, especially the Kināna b. Bakr led by Zuhayr b. Janāb (a sixth century C.E. noble who is remembered in Muslim sources as a warrior poet with a legendarily long life intersecting with numerous major political events across the century) do seem to have been effective militarised forces on the sixth century C.E. Syrian frontier. The Kalb's pre-Islamic faith is also debated: some claim their Christianity (Cheikho, 137-8; Shahid, *BASIC*, 1.2:948), while Kalbī poetry attests to the pagan deity Wadd as one of their "idols" (Zuhayr, 86). The groups classified as Kalbī in Muslim-era records were likely more divided in pre-Islamic times: those settled within Byzantine Syria may have been Christian whereas the Kalb of the Samāwa were likely pagan. A number of prominent Kalbīs are reported as Christians in the early Umayyad era.

The Kalb's influence in Syria made them vital allies of the Umayyad caliphate. The caliphs Mu'āwiya (r. 41-60/661-80) and Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya (r. 60-4/680-83) married Kalbī women, as did many Quraysh and other early Muslim elites (elite marriages to Kalbī women were even the subject of two (now lost) books ascribed to the Muslim historian al-Madā'inī, d. c.225/840; Ibn al-Nadīm, 1:318). In the Umayyad era, clans of the Kalb consolidated into a more corporate entity, and became the most powerful sub-group of the Quḏā'a. They initially aligned Quḏā'a lineage with