

SOME ETYMOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC REMARKS ON THE LEXEME ZAGĀRĪ

Herbert Eisenstein

University of Vienna

This paper deals with one of the minor problems of Arabic lexicology concerning one certain Arabic lexeme only. The first occurrence of this item in Arabic sources dates back to the era of the Crusades. We will follow a new way in the discussion of its etymology and semantics, because former attempts to explain the origin of the word are not fully satisfactory when taking into consideration some new aspects.

The lexeme in question is the Arabic item *zaġārī*, which is used for a certain type of hunting dogs (in our paper subsequently referred to as hounds). For the first time and very frequently it is used by Usāma b. Munqid, who died in Damascus in 584/1188, in his well known memoirs entitled *Kitāb al-ītibār*. Still being a young boy, the author accompanied his father during the hunting trips, which he describes extensively in his *kitāb*. In these descriptions, he mentions apart from the commonly used hounds, the *kilāb salūqiyya*, another type of hunting dogs, the so-called *kilāb zaġāriyya* (Usāma *ītibār* 125, 201f, 212, 224f), excellent dogs (*kilāb ġiyād*) according to his opinion (*ibid.*, 212). After this first notation, the lexeme *zaġārī* occurs in the course of the following centuries once and again, that means, in each century of the Middle Ages we meet exactly one author referring to it. al-Asadī, probably a native of al-‘Irāq and a passionate traveller, gives the second evidence of the item in his treatise on huntsmen’s practice entitled *Kitāb al-ġambara fī ‘ulūm al-bayzara*, written between 635/1237 and 640/1242 (cf. Viré 1973:237). A hundred years later, in the 8/14th century, the Mamlūk officer Ibn Mankalī (the correct form of his name is rather Ibn Manglī) gives an account of this type of hounds in his *Uns al-malā bi-*waḥṣ* al-falā*, another treatise on hunting. Here, *zaġārī* is put in contrast to the *ṣaydī*-dogs and certain other breeds (Ibn Manglī, *Uns* 77). In this context, *ṣaydī* obviously means the *salūqī*, the typical Oriental hunting

dog. The last account is given by the Egyptian secretary al-Qalqašandī, who died in 821/1418, in his famous encyclopaedia *Kitāb ṣubḥ al-ašā fī šināʿat al-inšāʿ*, referring to the two types of hounds, namely *salūqiyya* and *zuḡāriyya* (al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ* II, 43). (According to this author, there is no doubt that the lexeme *zuḡārī* has to be pronounced with *damma*).

None of the Arabic sources really bother with the etymology of the word *zuḡārī*. According to al-Asadī, its origin is to be found in *Zaḡar* (*Zuḡar*, see below) and it is al-Qalqašandī who states, "I do not know anything about the origin of the word"¹. Henceforth, the European translations of the Arabic works quoted have to cope with the problem of definition. Florian Pharaon, the translator of Ibn Manglī's treatise uses the term *chien d'arrêt* for *zuḡārī* (Ibn Manglī, *Uns* 77), meaning a group of hounds which are usually referred to as pointers (Hühnerhunde or Vorstehhunde). Among the translators of Usāma b. Munqid's memoirs we find André Miquel, who translates *zuḡārī* by *braques* (bercelets / Bracken) (Usāma *ʿIṭibār*, transl. Miquel, 279, 395, 397, 409), referring to the origin of the Arabic word as to be found in the name of the region of *Zagora* (see above), situated in Dalmatia (in today's Republic of Croatia) (*ibid.*, Introduction 35, and 278, note 20). Also Philip Hitti, another translator, uses *braches* (meaning bercelets) (Usāma *ʿIṭibār*, transl. by Hitti, 154, 230f, 241) whereas the German translations of the *Kitāb al-ʿIṭibār* show more inconsistency in this respect: Holger Preissler translates *zuḡārī* by *Bracke* (bercelet) and *Jagdhund* (hound in general) (Usāma *ʿIṭibār*, transl. Preissler, 141, 219, 221, 231), and Gernot Rotter uses *Jagdhund* (hound) and *Hühnerhund* (Usāma *ʿIṭibār*, transl. Rotter, 144, 211f, 222), noting that this term is an equivalent to pointer, but at least in one special context it may mean hounds in general (*ibid.*, 240, note 36). And also G. Rex Smith decides that *zuḡārī* may mean a pointer of any type (Smith 1981: 250f).

The problem of identifying *zuḡārī* seemed to have been solved by the well-known French scholar François Viré, famous for his numerous

¹ For al-Asadī cf. Viré 1973:237; al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ* II, 43.

works on Arabic and Islamic zoography. In his article he draws the conclusion that *zagārī* means *braque d'arrêt* (bercelet / Bracke), and he finds a new etymology (Viré 1973:237).

According to his opinion, there is no connection between the term *zagārī* and place-names like *Zagār* or *Zugar*, whereas there are some different places with similar names in the Near East (for example in the south of the Dead Sea or in the land of Moab) and also in Europe (for example *Zagora* in the Balkans or others in Poland and in Spain) (*ibid.*, 237f). Viré points out that *zagārī* means *Canis sagarius*, Greek *zagáron*, taken over by the Arabs from a terme *bas-grec* (*ibid.*, 238). And he assumes that *zagáron* is based on a German word, namely the Old High German *zeigāri*, meaning pointer (*ibid.*, 239). Viré draws this conclusion, because there are numerous terms defining hounds that are based on words with the meaning "to point".

One year after the publication of the article quoted, the editorial board of the Encyclopaedia of Islam published the lemma *kalb*, "dog", also written by François Viré, and referring once more to the Old High German *zeigāri*, "pointer" (Viré 1974:491). But here, *zagārī* is no longer an equivalent to bercelet (*braque / Bracke*), but to pointer in the modern sense of the word. Indeed, this explanation seems to be much better in semantic respect, because a pointer is a dog that points at something, and *zeigāri* would mean "pointer" again. Usāma b. Munqid notes that the game of this hound is wild fowl (Usāma, *I'tibār* 212) which is another good argument and this may have led Viré to the assumption that *zagārī* has to be defined as a bird-hound. And as a matter of fact, pointers – as well as setters – are hounds usually used to start birds, especially wild fowl. Furthermore, al-Asadī cites in his book on hunting practices that *zagārī* is a bush hound (*kalb al-banġ*) (cf. Viré 1973:237) and indeed, the pointer can be seen as such a kind of dog. Viré finally draws the conclusion that *zagārī* is a dog obviously corresponding to the modern Italian Pointer or Hungarian (Magyar) *vizsla* (Viré 1974:491).

The identification of the term *zagārī* now seems to be more difficult than at first sight. Considering the thesis postulated by Viré, there

is an essential problem: There is no proof that the Old High German term *zeigāri* was used for a certain type of dog (cf. Eisenstein 1991:218, note 89). Supposing that *zaġārī* is based on a Greek word, why should the Arabic item have just become common in the centuries of the Crusades? There are much earlier documents proving the contacts between Greeks and Muslims, contacts of different intensity, of course. So let us take into consideration that one might look for the roots of the item *zaġārī* directly in European areas, the home of the Crusaders. But one should not neglect the fact that Usāma b. Munqid writes that the *zaġārīya*-hounds originate from *bilād ar-Rūm* (Usāma, *I'tibār* 212), and besides there is another passage in his memoirs saying that the Armenians brought these hounds to the Muslim world (*ibid.*, 202). Maybe, informations like these led François Viré to his thesis about the Greek origin of the word *zaġārī*, or made him suppose at least the existence of a semi-Greek intermediate stage. But a little later, al-Asadī sees the origin of this kind of dogs not only in the Byzantine area, but also in all other countries of the Franks (cf. Viré 1973:237), meaning the whole of Europe. Therefore let us discuss the possibility that the hound and the term *zaġārī* may directly have been imported by European Crusaders.

Discussing the background of the term *zaġārī* one starts at the point that it denotes a dog, which was not known to the Muslims before the Crusaders' invasion. Otherwise there would be no reason to adopt a new word for a commonly known subject. So it is to suppose, that the hound and the term have been imported at the same time. Let us now draw a picture of the hunting dogs which were common in the Middle East, compare them with the ones used in Europe during the Middle Ages and which, maybe, accompanied the Crusaders. Only hunting dogs will be taken into consideration, excluding other kinds of dogs like yard dogs, trained to watch houses, sheep dogs, primarily trained

to protect flocks but sometimes also used to chase wolves, finally fighting dogs, trained to attack each other, as well as human beings².

The only hound of Oriental origin is the *salūqī*³, a type of greyhound, more exactly: a relative of the greyhounds, belonging to a group of dogs called gazeounds (cf. Smith 1978:188). Greyhound, in the strict sense of the word, denotes a fast running dog, while the characteristic feature of the *salūqī* is its persistence and not its speed. These Oriental hounds usually were used in combination with hawks and falcons (cf. Allen 1980:index, illustration p. 104). The hound chases the quarry, preventing it from taking cover, and this enables the hawk to gain it. Hawks in combination with hounds are trained especially to hunt hares, gazelles and also oryx antilopes. A characteristic feature of greyhounds as well as of *salūqīs* is hunting by sight and not by scent. This way of hunting is, of course, restricted to open grounds which can easily be overlooked.

One has to assume that this hunting character does not correspond to the characteristic features of the *zağārī*. Therefore, among the European hounds of the Middle Ages, an identification of the *zağārī* with greyhounds or other large dogs running down game like stag hounds and great danes (dogues / Doggen) might be excluded. Talking about typology, one must bear in mind that in the literature of the European Middle Ages dogs were grouped according to their function, while the modern classification depends on breed. So we have the situation that dogs of different breed are subsumed in one functional group, this being the base of typology in all European sources of the Middle Ages. After excluding greyhounds, sheep dogs and fighting dogs, so-

² The origin of the Oriental fighting dogs is to be found in the Caucasus, where these dogs were known many centuries ago, cf. Salmanov 1992. But indeed, fighting dogs were obviously not in use in the Arab countries.

³ On the *salūqī* see, e.g., Mercier 1927:68ff; Allen & Smith 1975:120ff (with illustrations); Ahsan 1979:211ff; Smith 1980. An illustration showing a *salūqī* and derived from a Classical Arabic manuscript see, e.g., in Ibn ad-Durayhim (d. 762/1361), *Manāfiʿ*: Pl. 12 after p. 48.

called "beaver-dogs", hounds only used for beaver-hunting, will be also excluded⁴. After all these exclusions, there are only two types of hounds left which one has to consider when trying to identify the *zagārī*: running-hounds and bird-hounds.

In historical ages, European, esp. German huntsmen used one typical running-hound: the bercelet (braque / Bracke), being the most important breed for, e.g., German huntsmen's practice⁵. But this is not the kind of dog called bercelet in the modern meaning of the word; in the Middle Ages, the term was used to define a group as just pointed out. These hounds had several functions; they were used as lymers that trail the quarry, tracking hounds that catch the scent, and driving hounds with another special function within the pack. The typical feature of the bercelet is to follow its nose in order to catch the scent, so that the hunter gets sight of the quarry. The persistence of the bercelet exhausts the game, and while chasing the quarry, the dog produces a special sound. This does not correspond to the greyhound's way of hunting silently and chasing the game at a very high speed. Bercelets were used in Northern Spain, in France, Switzerland, Northern Italy, England, in the whole German speaking area, in Lithuania and in Poland. The first documentation of the term bercelet (braque / Bracke) is to be found in France, used instead of an older Latin one, namely *Canis segusius* (Lindner, 1940:249ff; Paul 1981:27f). This *segusius* is also the base of older German terms - compare the Old High German word *siūso* and the Middle High German words *sūse*, *segūse* and similar ones (Dalby 1965:233, s.v. 'sūse'). The oldest Latin document quoting this Segusian hound seems to be the *Lex salica*, dating from the fifth century, that gathered the common law of the Salian Franks. The term *segusius* is not to be understood as a definition of one special breed, but, as pointed out above, one has to think of a functional group again. Usually it is supposed that the Segusian hound was wire-haired, but there must also have

⁴ These hounds probably were related to modern terriers, cf. Paul 1981:38.

⁵ For this hound in the European Middle Ages see, e.g., Lindner 1940:248ff; Dalby 1965:34ff (s.v. 'bracke'); Paul 1981:31ff.

been short-haired ones. The bercelets of the later centuries were short-legged, heavy, and flap-eared, as far as illustrations show⁶.

The second group of hounds possibly imported to the Middle East which one should keep in mind when trying to identify the *zaġārī* are the bird-hounds of the Middle Ages (*Canis acceptoricus*)⁷. These bird-hounds are, as far as we see, related to the *Canis segusius*, and the term bird-hound means a functional group again and must not be understood as a definition of a special breed. Like the Oriental *salūqīs*, these hounds were used in combination with hawks and falcons. The duty of the dog was to start the game, especially wild fowl but also hares, and to help the hunter to gain the quarry. These hounds are the ancestors of the modern pointers and setters.

As just pointed out, these bird-hounds were used similarly to the Oriental *salūqīs*. That is why it is to be supposed that the *zaġārī* might not be identified as a bird-hound, but as the bercelet or the Segusian hound of the Middle Ages. These hounds were highly esteemed in Europe and therefore one might take it for granted that the Crusaders took these animals along and imported a new term with a new hound. The characteristic features of this new hound obviously differed from those of the commonly used *salūqī*, especially in the respect of hunting by scent and not by sight. Although there are former passages in Classical Arabic literature referring to dogs hunting by scent, the term for these dogs was not of common use, it was rather forgotten. Actually, there is only one example available: In a poem written by ʿAlī b. al-Ġahm as-Sāmī (d. 249/863), the term *ḥilāsī* is used for such a dog (cf. Viré 1974:491).

As mentioned above, Usāma b. Munqid's description of the *zaġārī* tells us that the *zaġārī* hound chased birds. This might lead to the conclusion that the *zaġārī* was rather a bird-hound. But anyway, one might not exclude that the term was nevertheless used for a bercelet, a

⁶ A 14th century illustration of this kind of dogs see in Lindner 1940: Pl. 5 after p. 32.

⁷ Cf. Lindner 1940:259ff (16th century illustration Pl. 7 after p. 32); Paul 1981:34.

Segusian hound. Apparently, bird-hounds and bercelets were of similar type. In the European literature of the Middle Ages, typical bird-hounds like setters or spaniels are occasionally defined as bercelets, so that one cannot draw an exact line between the two types.

Up to now, only one etymology for *zaġārī* is to be found: François Viré went back to the Greek *zagáron* and to the Old High German *zeigâri*. But there is no source to document that *zeigâri* was used to define a dog. If indeed, as it is now to be supposed, the *zaġārī* corresponds with the bercelet, the Segusian hound, one is in need of an etymological connection. The problem of the etymology of *segusius* itself is yet unsolved; surely, this item is not of Latin origin, because, just in the writings of the second century Greek historiographer Flavius Arrianus, so-called *segousiai*-dogs do appear, related to the hunt of the Celts, the original inhabitants of many European countries. Maybe, there is indeed a Celtic base for *segusius*, denoting a certain Celtic tribe or place, or this word may depend on an Indo-European root **segh*, meaning "strong" (cf. Paul 1981:27).

There are several variations of the Latin term *Canis segusius*, like *segutius*. In the Old High German and Middle High German literature, different forms are used instead of *segusius*, like *siûso*, *sûse* or *segûse*, *seûsius*, *seûsis* or *sagax*, but also forms like *seûcer* and *saûser*⁸, ending with *r* like the Arabic *zaġārī*. Although this is not really a proof that the Arabic lexeme *zaġārī* is based on these forms with *r*, it should not lead to a complete refusal of this connection. Bearing in mind that there is no direct line to the Latin expression, there must have been another language to transport the term, a language used by the Crusaders, maybe French or German. And why not follow François Viré's thesis that the word is of German origin? Let us keep in mind that François Viré's mother-tongue is French, and he is the one to postulate a German origin, so we well might exclude a French base⁹.

⁸ Cf. Palander 1899:33ff; Lindner 1940:254; Dalby 1965:233 (s.v. *sûse*).

⁹ From dictionaries of Old French, no close connections between *zaġārī* and French words are obvious.

The connection *zagārī* – bercelet was postulated by François Viré in one of his publications. His aim was to prove the connection on the basis of lexical observations. These investigations led to the same conclusion, but going another way, the way of looking at the historical and cultural background. By drawing a picture of this background, a new aspect was to be added to the explanation of the Arabic lexeme *zagārī*, but one must be aware that there are still problems left for future discussion.

REFERENCES

A. Primary sources

- Ibn ad-Durayhim, *Manāfiʿ* = Ibn ad-Durayhim, *Kitāb manāfiʿ al-ḥaya-wān*. = *Libro de las utilidades de los animales*. Prólogo, trad. y notas de Carmen Ruiz Bravo-Villasante, (= *Publicaciones de la Fundacion Universitaria Española*, Facs. 6.) Madrid, 1980.
- Ibn Manglī, *Uns* = Muḥammad Ibn Manglī, *Uns al-malā bi-waḥṣ al-falā*. = Sid Mohamed El-Mangali, *Traité de venerie*, trad. et éd. par Florian Pharaon, avec une introduction par M. le Marquis G. de Cherville, Paris 1880.
- al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ* = Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Qalqašandī, *Kitāb ṣubḥ al-aʿsā*, 14 vols., Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥidīwiyya /as-Sultāniyya, 1331-1340/1913-1922.
- Usāma, *ʿItibār* = Usāma b. Munqid, *Kitāb al-ʿitibār* = *Usāmah's Memoirs, entitled Kitāb al-ʿitibār*, ed. by Philip K. Hitti, (= *Princeton Oriental Texts* 1), Princeton 1930.
- Usāma, *ʿItibār*, transl. Hitti = *Memoirs of an Arab Syrian Gentleman or An Arab Knight in the Crusades. Memoirs of Usāmah Ibn-Munqidh (Kitāb al-ʿitibār)* (= *Khayats Oriental Reprints* 7), transl. by Philip K. Hitti, Beirut: Khayats, 1964 (reprint of the 1927 ed.).

- Usâma, *Ftibâr*, transl. Miquel = Usâma Ibn Munqidh, *Des enseignements de la Vie, Kitâb al-Ftibâr, souvenirs d'un gentilhomme syrien du temps des Croisades*, prés., trad. et ann. par André Miquel, Paris 1983.
- Usâma, *Ftibâr*, transl. Preissler = *Die Erlebnisse des syrischen Ritters Usâma ibn Munqidh. Unterhaltsames und Belehrendes aus der Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, übs. u. hrsg. von Holger Preissler, Leipzig & Weimar 1981.
- Usâma, *Ftibâr*, transl. Rotter = Usâma ibn Munqidh, *Ein Leben im Kampf gegen Kreuzritterheere* (= *Bibliothek Arabischer Klassiker* 4), übertr. u. bearb. von Gernot Rotter, Tübingen & Basel 1978.

B. Secondary sources

- Ahsan, Muhammad Manazir. 1979. *Social Life Under the Abbasids 170-289 AH, 786-902 AD*. London & New York.
- Allen, Mark J. S. 1980. *Falconry in Arabia*, Foreword by Wilfred Thesiger, Illustrated by Mary-Clare Critchley-Salmonson, London.
- Allen, Mark J. S. and G. Rex Smith. 1975. "Some notes on hunting techniques and practices in the Arabian Peninsula", *Arabian Studies* 2.108-147.
- Dalby, David. 1965. *Lexicon of the Mediaeval German Hunt, A Lexicon of Middle High German terms (1050-1500)*, Berlin.
- EP² = *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 1960-. Edited by H. A. R. Gibb et al. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Eisenstein, Herbert. 1991. *Einführung in die arabische Zoographie, Das tierkundliche Wissen in der arabisch-islamischen Literatur*. Berlin.
- Lindner, Kurt. 1940. *Geschichte des deutschen Weidwerkes, II. Die Jagd im frühen Mittelalter*. Berlin.
- Mercier, Louis. 1927. *La chasse et les sports chez les Arabes*. (= *La Vie Musulmane et Orientale, Collection Sociologique*). Paris.
- Palander, Hugo. 1899. *Die althochdeutschen Tiernamen*. Darmstadt.
- Paul, Martha. 1981. *Wolf, Fuchs und Hund bei den Germanen*. Wien.
- Salmanov, Émile Ardebili. 1992. "A propos des chiens de combat en Orient". *Turcica* 24.297-308.

- Smith, G. Rex. 1978. "Observations on hunting in the Arabian Peninsula" *Asian Affairs* (Old ser. vol. 45) 9.186-190.
- . 1980. "The Arabian hound, the *salūqī* further considerations of the word and other observations on the breed", *BSOAS* 43. 459-465.
- . 1981. "A new translation of certain passages of the hunting section of Usāma ibn Munqidh's *I'tibār*". *JSS* 26.235-255.
- Viré, François. 1973. "À propos des chiens de chasse *salūqī* et *zagāri*". *REI* 41.231-240.
- . 1974. "*Kalb*". *EF* IV, 489-492.