

CITATION AND ABBREVIATION

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While looking for something else in *al-Bayān al-muǧrib fī aḥbār al-Maǧrib* of Ibn ʿIdārī al-Marrākūšī (fl. end of 7th/beginning of 14th century), I chanced upon a citation from the poetry of Ibn ʿAbdrabbih (246/860-328/940), eulogizing the greatest of the Umayyads of Córdoba, ʿAbdarrahmān (III) an-Nāṣir li-dīn Allāh (ruled 300/912-350/961). It occurs after the section devoted to his life, in a passage entitled *Baʿd aḥbār an-Nāṣir raḥimahu l-Lāh ʿalā l-ǧumla*, and it is immediately preceded by two paragraphs of highly encomiastic *saǧʿ* (II, 334-5), one unit of which seems to have its origin in the poem: *wa-dahala n-nāsu fī ṭāʿatihi afwāǧan * wa-stanfarū ilā daʿwatihi afrādan wa-azwāǧan*: ‘people entered into obedience to him in droves * and rushed to answer his call [to Islam] in ones and twos’ (cf. below line 1).

The citation comprises seven lines in the *basīṭ* metre, as follows:

1. *qad awḍaha l-Lāhu li-l-Islāmi minhāǧā*
wa-n-nāsu qad dahalū fī d-dīni afwāǧā
2. *wa-qad tazayyanati d-dunyā li-sākinihā*
ka-anna-mā labisat wašyan wa-dībāǧā
3. *yā-bna l-ḥalāʾifi inna l-muzna law ʿalimat*
nadāka mā kāna min-hā l-māʾu taǧǧāǧā
4. *wa-l-ḥarbu law ʿalimat ḥarban tašūlu bihi*
mā hayyaǧat min ḥumayyāka l-ladī htāǧā
5. *māta n-nifāqu wa-aʿtā l-kufru dimmatahu*
wa-dallati l-ḥaylu ilǧāman wa-isrāǧā
6. *wa-ašbaha n-nasru maʿqūdan bi-alwiyatin*
tatwī l-marāḥila tahǧīran wa-idlāǧā
7. *inna l-ḥilāfata lan tarda wa-lā radiyat*
ḥattā ʿaqadta lahā fī raʾsika t-tāǧā

1. Allah has made plain a path to Islam,
and people have come in to the religion in droves.
2. The world has decked itself out for its inhabitants,
just as though it had put on striped garments of brocade.
3. O son of the Caliphs, if the rain-clouds knew of
your generosity, they would not pour out their water so freely.
4. If war knew with what ferocity you attacked,
it would not stir up your anger as it does [lit.: would not stir up that which
is stirred up of your anger].

5. Mere lip-service to religion is dead, and unbelief has given up its protected status;
the horses submit to bridling and saddling.
6. Victory has become bound with banners
that fold up the way-stations in travelling at midday and setting out at dawn.
7. The Caliphate will not be content – and let it not be content! –
until you have bound on your head the crown for it.

This is a fairly routine piece of *madh*, but it may be desirable to attempt to interpret rather more clearly one or two points in it.

Line 1. 'Allah has made plain a path to Islam'. It would be possible to understand this as 'has made plain a path for Islam', *i.e.* 'has indicated a direction for Islam to take'; in view of what follows, however, *viz.* that 'Abdarrahmān has, by his deeds, encouraged a large number of people to embrace Islam, the sense that I have adopted seems preferable.

Line 2. Perhaps we are expected to see a true contrast (*tibāq*) between *dunyā* here and *dīn* in line 1; it is a very common conjunction, particularly in poetry, and a case could be made for the poet's expressing his satisfaction that all is well with both spiritual and worldly matters. However, one sometimes has the impression that the mention of one has sparked off an almost automatic mention of the other, without there being any intention of making a specific point.

Line 3. There is no problem of interpretation here. Rain and generosity are frequently equated. If the clouds knew (which, incidentally, they must do) how generous 'Abdarrahmān was, they would hardly bother to add their comparatively niggardly contribution.

Line 4. This line gives one pause at once because of its repetition of *ḥarb*, once, quite regularly, in the feminine, and once in the masculine. One is so accustomed to the first, meaning 'war', that one does not immediately appreciate that there may be another meaning. There is, however: a somewhat unusual one, or, at least, one that I do not remember ever having encountered before, namely 'enemy'. This seems, at first sight, to make things somewhat easier. If, however, one is tempted to assume that the hemistich means 'If war knew an enemy whom you attacked', one is still left with a syntactical problem. *bibi* does not seem right with *taṣūlu* for 'to fight with/to attack'; you would expect *'alayhi*. There is, fortunately, another solution – one that one tends to overlook –, namely, that *ḥarban* is the *maṣdar*, the infinitive or verbal noun, of the verb *ḥaraba*, meaning 'to make war/war-making' – not, incidentally of *ḥariba* = 'to be angry', which is *ḥaraban* and does not scan here. This leaves us with 'If war knew a war-making with which you attacked', which solves most of the difficulties, except for that of how actually to produce a translation. Why, though, would war not stir up 'Abdarrahmān's anger if it knew how he dealt with his foes (which, again, it can hardly fail to do)? This time, I think, it is not so much because it would realise that its contribution would be negligible, although this thought may also be

present, as because it would be appalled by the ferocity (as I have rendered *ḥarban*) for which it was partially responsible. ‘Abdarrahmān is perfectly capable unaided of showing enough vindictiveness to satisfy the most exacting critic.

Line 5. Men can no longer claim to be Muslims and fail to perform the duties demanded of Muslims, in particular that of *ḡibād*. *Dimmīs* are spontaneously converting, in their anxiety to give their services to the cause. Even the beasts are tractable, so keen are they to take part in the fight.

Line 6. I find the imagery in the first hemistich somewhat confused. Clearly *an-naṣr* = ‘victory’ alludes to ‘Abdarrahmān’s *laqab*, an-Nāṣir li-dīn Allāh = ‘Helper/Bringer of Victory to Allah’s Religion’, and *aṣḥaba* *ma’qūdan bi-akwīya* = ‘has become bound with banners’ alludes to the phrase ‘*aqada labu liwā’an*’ = ‘he appointed him to a command [lit.: he bound a banner for him]’ that occurs frequently in accounts of the early Muslim expeditions. It is not easy, however, to bring these two allusions together into a coherent picture. I think that the image must be of Victory’s being given so many commanders – and, by extension, armies – by ‘Abdarrahmān that she cannot avoid triumphing. These armies, the second hemistich declares, bring about this triumph by ‘folding up the way-stations (*marāḥil*)’, i.e. by advancing so swiftly that they can cover more than one stage per day, being willing to march during the time of greatest heat.

Line 7. There is no difficulty in this line, once the emendation indicated in the editor’s foot-note of *lam tarda* to *lan tardā* has been made. ‘Abdarrahmān is being encouraged to assume, as he had no doubt indicated his intention of doing, the title of caliph, rather than that of *amīr*, to which his predecessors had adhered. He assumed it in 316/929, thus formally renouncing all fealty to the Baghdad Caliphate. The repetition of the ‘-q-d’ root from line 6 is particularly apt; Victory is bound with banners, ‘Abdarrahmān is to bind on the crown. The indication in Ibn ‘Idārī that his citation was not complete and the editor’s emendation from ‘*Iqd*’ prompted me to follow it up in the latter, in order to see what the complete poem was like. It was, I must say, indeed quite a hunt, since the only text of ‘*Iqd*’ available had no index. Still, I tracked it down (III, 208-9) and found that between lines 6 and 7 of our citation (line 7 is, indeed, the last line of the poem) there were a further nine lines. Reading through these, I was inclined to think that Ibn ‘Idārī had perhaps made a better poem by omitting them.

The first thing to do was to compare the two versions, in order to see if they differed from one another in any important respect. The only significant variation – *ulbisat* = ‘had had put on it’ for *labisat* = ‘had put on’ in line 2 is of no consequence – is in line 4, which in ‘*Iqd*’ reads:

wa-l-ḥarbu law ‘alimat ba’san taṣūlu bihi
mā hayyaḡat min ḡibāli d-dīni ahyāḡā

If war knew with what force you attacked,

it would not stir up disturbances from the mountains of faith.

The reading *ba'san* certainly resolves all the difficulties attendant upon *ḥarban*, and one could argue that a scribe had inadvertently repeated *ḥarban* from *al-ḥarbi*. Unfortunately the remainder of the line, in this version, destroys one's confidence in the correctness of the first part. It is only too easy to see how the ductus of *ḥumayyā-ka l-ladī htāḡā* could be distorted into *ḡibāli d-dīni abyāḡā*; the first yields good sense, the second yields very little. One might, then, suggest that *ba'san* derives from a note explaining *ḥarban*.

For the sake of completeness, I suppose that one should run through the additional lines in *ʿIqd*, without perhaps dealing with them in such detail.

7. *adhalta fī qubbati l-Islāmi māriqatan*
ahraḡtabā min diyāri š-širki iḥrāḡā
 8. *bi-ḡahfalin tušriqu l-arḡu l-faḡā'u bihi*
ka-l-baḥri yaqḡifu bi-l-amwāḡi amwāḡā
 9. *yaqūduhu l-baḡru yasri fī kawākibihi*
ʿaramraman ka-sawādi l-layli raḡrāḡā
 10. *tarūqu fīhi burūqu l-marwi lāmiʿatan*
wa-yasmaʿūna bihi li-r-raʿdi ahzāḡā
 11. *ḡādarta fī ʿufratay ḡayyān malḡamatan*
abkayta minhā bi-ardi š-širki aʿlāḡā
 12. *fī nisfi šaḡrin tarakta l-arda sākinatan*
min baʿdi mā kāna fihā t-tayru qad māḡā
 13. *wuḡidta fī l-ḡabari l-maʿtūri munḡalitan*
mina l-ḡalāʿifi ḡarrāḡan wa-wallāḡā
 14. *tamlā bika l-arḡu ʿadlan miṡla mā maliʿat*
ḡawran wa-tūḡihu li-l-maʿrūfi minhāḡā
 15. *yā baḡra zulmatihā yā šamsa šubḡatihā*
yā layta ḡawmatihā in ḡāʿiḡun ḡāḡā
7. You have brought into the dome of Islam heretics
whom you have driven out of the lands of polytheism,
 8. With a mighty army with which the vast earth shines,
just as the sea hurls waves after waves,
 9. Led by the moon proceeding by night among its stars,
a great pulsating army, like the blackness of the night,
 10. In which the lightning-flashes of death are clear and bright,
and men hear claps of thunder.
 11. You have left in the two dusty conflicts [?] of Jaén a slaughter
at which you have made infidels weep in the land of polytheism.
 12. In half a month you have left the land quiet,
after the birds had been flocking there.

13. You have been found, in recorded history,
to have surpassed all other caliphs in cunning and acuity.
14. The earth is filled by you with justice, just as it was filled
with tyranny, and you clearly indicate a path to [divine] favour.
15. O moon of its darkness! O sun of its morning!
O lion of its fray, if anyone disturbs it!
- 16 (as 7. above). The Caliphate will not be content – and let it not be content! –
until you have bound on your head the crown for it.

In lines 6-10 there are three grandiloquent words meaning, or connected with, 'a large army'; these are more or less obligatory in *madh* of a ruler. There are also the two very common, apparently contradictory, images whereby the army appears as both bright and dark. In fact, the brightness, with which the darkness is intermittently relieved, comes from two sources: the splendour of the leader and his acolytes here the moon and the stars and the flashing of the lance-points and the helmets here 'the lightning-flashes of death'. I did briefly wonder if line 9 was a reference to 'Abdarraḥmān's freedman, Badr, whom he appointed to high office, as recorded in Ibn 'Idārī's passage of *sag*^c: *wa-kāna ṣtafā mawlāhu Badran * wa-ḡā'alahu šamsan li-mulkibi wa-badran* = 'He had chosen his freedman Badr * and had made him a sun to his kingdom and a moon'. However, in view of line 15, I decided that 'the moon' here was 'Abdarraḥmān himself.

The word that I have tentatively translated as 'the two dusty conflicts' in line 11, 'ufratay, appears to be the dual of 'ufra, which is given, only by Dozy (1927), as 'poussière'; other dictionaries give it only as 'grey colour of dust' or, less helpfully, as 'mane of a lion', 'neck feathers of a cock' or 'forelock of a horse'. I have no idea if 'Abdarraḥmān fought two engagements at Jaén or if the word 'ufra can be thus used, as we might speak (more colloquially) of 'two dust-ups'. I am inclined to think that the reading may be wrong, or, if right, that it alludes to some topographical feature, or features, in or near Jaén, unknown to me.

The birds, in line 12, I take to be crows and vultures, or other carrion fowls, that infested the fields of the battles to which 'Abdarraḥmān has now put a stop.

If *fī l-ḥabari l-ma'tūri*, in line 13, means 'in recorded history', it appears to be somewhat misplaced in the line.

In line 14, I should have preferred to read *tūdahū* (3 p. f. passive), in order to keep 'the earth' as the subject. This, however, does not appear to be syntactically possible. Only the thing shown can be the direct object of the active verb and hence the subject of the passive.

As I have said, I feel that Ibn 'Idārī may, by his cutting, have produced a better poem than Ibn 'Abdrabbih's original, particularly in view of the use of the 'q-d root in lines 6 and 7. The excised lines are both bombastic and repetitive. Whether, however, Ibn 'Idārī was influenced here more by aesthetic considerations than by practic-

al ones those of length it is hardly possible to determine. He is not generally given to lengthy poetic citations; on the other hand, his retention of the final line of the original perhaps suggests that he was aware of the appropriateness of its contrived juxtaposition with line 6. Ibn ʿAbdrabbih, for his part, could scarcely have presented ʿAbdarrahmān with a laudatory ode of fewer than sixteen lines. His repetition of the ʿ-q-d root in what he, quite properly, determined on as the culminating line of his poem is, no doubt, a conscious reference back to line 6, designed to reinforce the otherwise rather loose structure; he was, however, inhibited by the constraints of his genre the necessity, we might unkindly say, of providing ‘padding’ from achieving the striking effect permitted by Ibn ʿIdārī’s judicious pruning.

There remains one essential feature of the poem, in both versions, that I find somewhat odd: the very reference to the crown in the last line. There appears to have been a so-called *tāğ al-hilāfa*, adopted by the ʿAbbāsids, which may have been some kind of large and elaborate turban. Otherwise, crowns to the Muslims were associated only with foreign, non-Muslim, monarchs the word *tāğ* itself is apparently of Persian origin. In exhorting ʿAbdarrahmān to assume the crown of the caliphate, Ibn ʿAbdrabbih may be using the word metaphorically. He is unlikely to be suggesting that the Umayyad ruler of al-Andalus should adopt a form of headdress introduced by the usurping dynasty, if, indeed, they had actually done so by this date. What is odder is Ibn ʿIdārī’s citing of this exhortation, without comment, in view of an anecdote that he himself relates concerning an earlier ruler of only two centuries earlier (II, 30):

wa-stahlafa Mūsā ʿalā l-Andalus ibnahu ʿAbdalʿazīz wa-taraka maʿahu Ḥabīb b. Abī ʿAbda b. ʿUqba b. Nāfiʿ waz iran lahu wa-muʿīnan, wa-aqāma maʿahumā bi-l-Andalus man arāda suknahā, fa-lammā waṣala Mūsā ilā Šbīliyya aqarra fihā waladahu fa-rtadā-hā qāʿidata mulkihi. wa-tazawwaḡa baʿda ḥurūg abīhi Umm ʿĀsim imraʿata Ludrīq wa-smuhā Ayyila wa-sakana maʿahā bi-Šbīliyya.

fa-lammā dahala bihā qālat lahu: “inna l-mulūk idā lam yatūgū fa-lā mulk lahum, fa-law ʿamiltu laka mim mā baqiya ʿindī min al-ḡawhar wa-d-dahab tāḡan”. fa-qāla lahā: “laysa dālīka fī dīninā”. fa-qālat lahu: “wa-min ayn yaʿrif ahl dīnika mā anta fīhi fī halwatika?” fa-lam tazal bihā ḥattā faʿala.

fa-baynamā huwa dāta yawm ḡālis maʿahā wa-t-tāḡ ʿalā raʿsihi, id dahalat ʿalayhi mraʿa kāna qad tazawwaḡahā Ziyād b. Nābiḡa at-Tamīmī min banāt mulūkihim fa-ʿāyanathu wa-t-tāḡ ʿalā raʿsihi fa-qālat li-Ziyād: “a-lā ʿmal la-ka tāḡan?” fa-qāla lahā: “laysa fī dīninā stiḥlāl libāsīhi”. fa-qālat lahu: “wa-dīn al-Masīḥ, innahu ʿalā raʿs mali-kikum wa-imāmikum”. fa-ʿlama bi-dālīka Ziyād Ḥabīb b. Abī ʿAbda, tumma taḥaddata bi-dālīka ḥattā ʿalimahu ḥiyār al-ḡund, fa-lam yakun lahu hamm illā kašf dālīka ḥattā raʿawhu ʿiyānan, fa-qālū: “qad tanassara”. tumma haḡamū ʿalayhi fa-qatalūhu.

Mūsā [i.e. Abū ʿAbdarrahmān Mūsā b. Naṣr, the superior of Ṭāriq b. Ziyād, the conqueror of al-Andalus] appointed as his deputy over al-Andalus his son ʿAbdalʿazīz

and left with him Ḥabīb b. Abī ʿAbda b. ʿUqba b. Nāfiʿ as a *wazīr* and assistant to him. Those who wished to live there remained with them in al-Andalus. When Mūsā reached Iṣbīliyya [Seville], he settled his son there and approved it as the capital of his kingdom. After his father's departure, ʿAbdalʿazīz married Umm ʿĀṣim, the wife of Ludrīq [Roderick, the last Visigothic king], whose name was Ayyla [Aella ?], and he lived with her in Iṣbīliyya.

When he went in to her [into the bridal chamber], she said to him: 'If kings are not crowned, they have no kingdoms. How would it be if I made you a crown from the jewels and gold that I have left?' He said: 'That is not part of our religion.' She said: 'How could the people of your religion know what you got up to in private?' She nagged him until he did what she wanted.

While he was sitting with her one day, with the crown on his head, there entered to him a woman, one of the daughters of the Vizigothic kings, whom Ziyād b. Nābiḡa at-Tamīmī had married. She saw him, with the crown on his head, and she said to Ziyād: 'Shall I make you a crown?' Ziyād said: 'In our religion we are not permitted to wear them.' She said: 'By the religion of the Messiah, your king and imam has one on his head.' Ziyād informed Ḥabīb b. Abī ʿAbda of this and then talked about it until the leaders of the army learned of it; his sole concern was to publish this fact. Eventually they saw it for themselves and said: 'He has become a Christian.' Then they set upon him and killed him.

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