VI. Codicologie, édition et traduction de textes

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bahkalī, *Ḥulāṣat al-ʿasǧad min ḥawādiṯ dawlat al-Šarīf Muḥammad b. Aḥmad*. Michel Tuchscherer, ʿAdnān Darwīš (ed.)

Al-Markaz al-Faransī li-l-Dirāsāt al-Yamaniyyah bi-Ṣanʿā' and al-Maʿhad al-Faransī li-l-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyyah bi-Dimašq, Damascus, 2000. 420 pp.

The book under review is in essence the critical edition al-Bahkalī's *Ḥulāṣah*, a work already studied and translated by Tuchscherer as *Imams, notables et bédouins du Yémen au xviii^e siècle* (Institut Francais d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1992). It is of some interest to note in this context also that the Saudi scholar, Hānī Z. Muhannā, wrote a PhD thesis in 1985 in the University of Durham under my supervision entitled "A Critical Study of *Khulāṣat al-ʿasjad* by ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Ḥasan al-Bahkali (B) (d. 1224/1809), with introduction to the author and his works and the historical background". Alas, as often happens with good doctoral theses, Muhannā's work remains unpublished – at least as far as I am aware !

This book is clearly divided into two parts : a wide-ranging introduction to B's text, a 12th-13th/18th-19th century history of the Sulaymānī province (al-Miḫlāf al-Sulaymānī [al-M al-S]), an area of Tihāmah squeezed between Tihāmat al-Ḥiǧāz in the north and Tihāmat al-Yaman in the south, and the text itself. The former begins with the geography of the area (p. 11) ; the climate follows, society, the tribes, notables, country and town dwellers, the economy and agriculture. P. 23 sees the beginning of the historical introduction, returning to the 2nd/8th century and covering the three relevant areas, the Yemen, al-M al-S and the Hejaz, down to the events of B's text, 1182-1248/1768-1832. All this and some truly excellent genealogical trees of the main families concerned also.

This introduction is an exceedingly useful survey. It has not taken the story much further than Tuchscherer's introduction to *Imams*, published in 1992, but it can nevertheless, with some reservations, be recommended to the reader. These reservations are of both omission and commission. Firstly, references can be scarce and one really has to use *Imams* in tandem, where they are more clearly indicated. Secondly, there is a reliance on sources such as Stookey's *Yemen* (i.e. on modern Yemen) in a medieval context and even on my own contribution in Serjeant (this name is spelt consistently wrongly throughout the book incidentally !), *Ṣanʿā',* now superseded to a very large extent by my contribution to Daum's *Yemen : 3000 Years of Art and Civilisation* (Frankfurt, 1988) which is in any case a more general account and not one primarily concerned with Ṣanʿā'. Reference to Muḥammad al-ʿAqilī's works is to be commended, but the exclusive concentration on Ibn al-Dayba' (for such was his name, not simply al-Dayba' – see my « The Ṭāhirid sultans of the Yemen (858-923/1454-1517) and their historian Ibn al-Dayba' », *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29 [1984]) as a 'primary' Yemeni source, when so many such sources exist, including Zaydi and even Ismāʿili, is strange. Perhaps the note on p. 39 will suffice as an example of the criticism I am trying to make : speaking of 11th/7th-18th century Yemen, the note names Serjeant, *Ṣanʿā'*, i.e. Serjeant's own post-medieval history chapter, and that is fine, but then adds Playfair, *History* (1859), Niebuhr, *Description* (1779) and, yet again, Stookey, *Yemen* (1978) !

What is lacking in this introduction is any word at all concerning B's and Āl Ḫayrāt's religious background, the latter being the ruling family of al-M al-S whose history B is writing in his text. Whatever the reasons for the departure of Āl Ḫayrāt from Mecca and their arrival in al-M al-S at the close of the 12th/17th century and whatever the details of their history there, it is clear they were staunch Zaydis. B had travelled widely in the Yemen and had surely been much influenced by Zaydī thinking ; also, as *qāḍī* of Abū ʿArīš, he was close to the ruling family. It is true we cannot say for sure that he was himself a Zaydi, but his educational and religious background, and indeed his occasional partiality towards his subject, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, ought to find a place in any introduction to this text.

To turn now to the edited text of the *Ḫulāṣah*. The book is very handsomely produced and beautifully finished. For the working historian of the period, the clear, punctuated text, also provided with headings by the editors, is a splendid tool. Two MSS are used in the production of the text : one from the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the second from the Library of the Great Mosque in Āl Ṣanʿā'. These are well described on p. 65-77 with excellent photographs of sample folios. The editors' inability to secure a copy of the MS of the text preserved in the ʿAqilī library in Ǧizān is perhaps not greatly to be regretted, for it is very late, dated 1361 (1942), and, it would seem from Muḥannā's description (p. 10 of his thesis quoted above), it has been subjected to a certain amount of 'correction'.

Looking beyond the practical use of the text by the historian, however, the more conservative textual critic, who holds the view (perhaps unrealistically !) that the notes of an edited text should provide an *apparatus criticus* and that alone, and that, with little effort on the reader's part, a vision of each MS employed in the production of the text should appear before him, may be somewhat less enthusiastic. A section in the introduction on methodology, it seems to me, would have been much preferable to the prolix and cumbersome footnotes like note 2, p. 84, for example, to all intents and purposes a complete linguistic introduction to the text (a subject to which I return below), and to the distracting explanations of the symbols and sigla

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employed (e.g. note one, p. 84). As each linguistic idiosyncrasy occurs and is noted incidentally, the notice *wa-sawfa lā nušīru ilā mā yaqa'u min miṭli-hā fī-mā ya'tī* appears ! Other matters, important to be sure, are introduced into the footnotes : personalities, places, tribes etc. Again could these not have been dealt with elsewhere ? Incidentally, a detailed bibliography is also lacking and this is only partially compensated for by reference to that in Tuchscherer's *Imams* (p. IX-XII).

On the question of the language of the text, it should be admitted that it cannot always be described as a pure *fuṣḥā*. There is, it seems to me, an undue haste on the part of the editors to cry *'ḫaṭa''* in the footnotes ! And there is no attempt to distinguish between a genuine *lapsus calami* and the consistent use of a form which deviates from the classical norm, but which, we must presume, the scribe does not himself consider an error !

The text of the *Ḫulāṣah* is of tremendous importance for an understanding of the 12th-13th/ 18th-19th century history of al-M al-S, with its capital in Abū 'Ariš, and in particular the reign of Šarīf Muḥammad b. Aḥmad of the Āl Ḫayrāt. Sandwiched as the region was between the Hejaz and the Yemen, the history is of vital importance to the historian of these latter two areas also. B was a well-travelled intellectual, undoubtedly close to the ruling family of al-M al-S, who has here written the only history solely devoted to the reign of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. The editors have provided a tremendous service to the 12th-13th/18th-19th century history of the region in particular and to that of the Peninsula in general by bringing out this edited text in such a neat and handsome package.

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