



ADAB AL-ŞAĠĪR

ADAB AL-ŞAĠĪR, AL-, an Arabic book of wisdom and advice, based on Middle Persian works. Recent discoveries tend to confirm the opinion of scholars such as G. Richter, F. Gabrieli (see bibliography of *al-Adab al-kabīr*) and 'A. Eqbāl (cf. M. Ġafrānī, *'Abdallāh Ebn al-Moqaffa'*, Cairo, n.d., p. 127). They held that the book of this name is not by Ebn al-Moqaffa' or, at least, that the extant form of it might not be the same book mentioned by Ebn al-Nadīm, because there are no citations in the sources to prove this attribution. Now it has been fully ascertained that the book we have is not an anthology of wise sayings selected at random by a certain compiler, as the introduction of the book tries to suggest, but is mainly based on the translation of two Persian texts, the arrangement of which is carefully preserved.

The first of these two texts is ascribed to a Persian sage (Ebn Meskawayh, *al-Ḥekmat al-kāleda*, Cairo, 1952, pp. 68-74), and the second is a Persian testament (*ibid.*, pp. 74-78). It is important to note that Ebn Meskawayh, who knew *al-Adab al-kabīr* well, does not attribute these two texts to Ebn al-Moqaffa'. In comparing what is called *al-Adab al-şagīr* with them, one finds that the differences in wording are not sufficient to suggest that the translation was done by more than one hand. A third component of *al-Adab al-şagīr*, about twenty-seven sayings, is in fact extracted from *Kalīla wa Demna*. This must have been added to justify attribution of the book to Ebn al-Moqaffa'. One difficulty remains unexplained. There are eight pages of maxims which fall between the first and the second translated texts, the source (or sources) of which (except for one long maxim which goes back to *Kalīla wa Demna*) is still



unknown. The introduction poses another problem, since it has the same tone as that of *al-Ādāb al-kabīr*; but except for one sentence, it is not found in Ebn Meskawayh's book. To discover Ebn al-Moqaffa's fingerprints in this work seems no longer possible. Ebn al-Moqaffa's indirect contribution here is limited to what the book has in common with *Kalīla wa Demna* (see Gabrieli, *L'Opere*, p. 229, n. 4).

Much is said in the work about the ruler, the mind, and the wise man; but in general, the maxims are not related. For example, the maxim, "learning is the adornment of him who possesses it," is followed by "hearts thrive with morals," then by "a natural mind is like an uncultivated fertile land," and so on. Maxims based on numbers (e.g., five persons are negligent in five things . . . ; each man is one of four: generous, stingy, spendthrift, or economizing . . .) add to the fragmentary nature of the book. A sort of closely governed association sometimes organizes the maxims (e.g., "He who loses shyness loses mirth, he who loses mirth resorts to hatred, he who resorts to hatred exposes himself to mischief and he who does so loses his mind"), but this type belongs to *Kalīla wa Demna* (Beirut, 1973, p. 140). After coming to know that the book is a direct translation from Persian, one hesitates to accept that "its tenor is Islamic, and so its tendency, with its stress on religious concepts and duties and its negative attitude to worldly politics" (E. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge, 1962, p. 69).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Text: Beirut, 1380/1960.

See also: G. Richter, "Über das Kleine Adabbuch des Ibn al-Muqaffa'," *Der Islam* 19, 1931, pp. 278-81. O.

Rescher, *Das Kleine Adab-Buch des Ibn al-Muqaffa'*, Stuttgart, 1915.

A. Amīn, *Żoḥā al-eslām*, Cairo, 1946, I, pp. 210-11.