

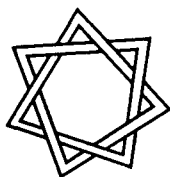
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A. B. Khalidov

## A KAZAN MANUSCRIPT OF SĪBWAYHI

In September, 1998, employees of the National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan (Kazan) presented to me for identification one of the Arabic manuscripts from their collection. It was on parchment, defective and fragmentary, and missing a beginning and end. Nevertheless, the satisfactory condition of a large part of the manuscript allowed me to read the text and chapter (*bāb*) titles without difficulty: it was a work on Arabic grammar. The thought struck me that the manuscript contained excerpts from Sībawayhi's famed "Book", but at that moment there was no material for comparison at hand. Someone had dated the manuscript to the eleventh century, and I was to confirm this date or propose another. The *Maghribī* writing with elements of archaic *naskhī* seemed to allow for a date in the eleventh — twelfth centuries, or even the tenth.

In December, 1998, Professor M. A. Usmanov of Kazan University and I happened to be in Cairo, where we visited the League of Arab States' Institute of Arabic Manuscripts. Consultations with the Institute's specialists on the basis of Xeroxed copies of several folios from the manuscript in question allowed us to confirm that it does in fact contain a work by Sībawayhi. A comparison with other ancient Arabic manuscripts leads to a date at the end of the sixth/twelfth century or the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth.

Abū Bishr 'Amr b. 'Uthmān b. Qanbar, known by the *laqab* Sībawayhi, lived in Basra in the second half of the eighth century; the most likely date of his death is cited as 180/796. He provided a detailed empirical description of the parts of speech (noun, verb, particle), syntax and morphology of the Arabic language, framing his material in 596 short chapters. Sībawayhi constantly cites his teacher, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, and other predecessors on occasion. His work is augmented by a significant number of quotations from Arabic poetry and the Qur'ān to illustrate rules, the usage of words and forms, as well as their spelling and meaning. At the same time, the author frequently relies on the spoken practice of native speakers of Arabic when he records and explains various linguistic phenomena and facts.

Sībawayhi's work is usually contained in large manuscripts, and the nineteenth-century edition of his work consists of two large volumes which run to over 900 pages. Some 50 manuscripts have come down to us with some or all of the work's text, as well as manuscripts of a number of

commentaries on it and various works by Sībawayhi, not to mention abridged and reworked versions [1]. For this reason, the authorial text has been relatively well preserved, although we do not have an autograph or copies executed close to the author's lifetime. The oldest copies of Sībawayhi's "Book" are dated to a time 320—350 years after the author's death; the Milan copy and a "very ancient" copy from the city of Ṣan'ā' may prove to be older, but they have not been dated directly. Eight manuscripts in all are dated to the sixth century A.H., and around 20 to the seventh century A.H. (twelfth — thirteenth century C.E.).

In preparing the full text of Sībawayhi's work for publication, A. Derenbourg relied on a solid manuscript base, including both St. Petersburg manuscripts: one from the Imperial Public Library (today the National Library of Russia) and another from the Asiatic Museum (today the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) [2]. In 1317—18/1899—1900, the Bulaq edition appeared. Finally, in the 1970s, 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Khārūn published the work in Cairo in five volumes on a broader manuscript base, equipping the edition with indispensable indices (unfortunately, I was not able to access this edition).

Against this backdrop, the discovery of a small, extremely fragmentary manuscript of Sībawayhi's work cannot be considered a significant event in Arabic studies. It is still noteworthy, however. It belongs to the above-mentioned group of manuscripts dated to the sixth — seventh century A.H. (twelfth—thirteenth century C.E.). It is interesting that it was written on parchment and in *Maghribī* script; moreover, it was discovered in a place where such ancient Arabic manuscripts are today exceptionally rare, especially those of North African origin.

The call number of this manuscript of Sībawayhi is *φ. 10, on. 5, D 822*. It contains 48 folios of 25.0×17.2 cm, and they are badly out of order. There are usually 18 lines per page, but the number varies from 17 to 21. The hand, a neat *Maghribī*, is professionally executed; the text is equipped with fairly regular diacritical marks and vowelings. There is virtually no information on the history of the manuscript. The first and last pages bear a rectangular seal with the legend in Russian: *Library of the Kazan Ecclesiastical Academy*. We know neither how the manuscript found its way to the library nor when it occurred. It contains excerpts from chapters 41—45 (vol. I, pp. 82—97

in the Derenbourg edition), 105, 151—153, 164, 449—456, 458—460, 475—476, 479—480, 483, and several others. When compared with the Derenbourg edition and the Bulaq edition, the manuscript displays variant readings.

Thus, the manuscript of Sībawayhi's "Book" from the Kazan collection is of interest not only because of its origin,

hand, and writing material, but also as the oldest Arabic manuscript in Kazan. It should certainly be taken into account in order to supplement data on copies of this invaluable work on Arabic philology. Its variant readings may also prove useful for studying the history of the text.

#### Notes

1. F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden, 1984), ix, pp. 51—63.

2. *Le livre de Sibawaihi, traité de grammaire arabe par Sibouya, dit, Sibawaihi*, texte arabe publié d'après les manuscrits du Caire, de l'Escorial, d'Oxford, de Paris, de St. Pétersbourg et de Vienne par Hartwig Derenbourg (Paris, 1881—1889), i—ii.

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