THE NAMES OF ESTATES IN STATE REGISTERS BEFORE AND AFTER THE ARABIZATION OF THE ‘DĪWĀNS’

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Some work has been done on the Arabization (ta’rīb) of the financial registers (diwāns) of the Umayyad government that started during the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân (reg. 65–86/685–705) and aimed at replacing the local language in which those registers were written (Persian, Greek, Coptic) with Arabic. Despite that, little is

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1 Until now the most detailed study on the Arabization of the diwāns is still M. Sprengling’s “From Persian to Arabic,” in the American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures 56 (1939), 175–230, 325–36. A. A. Duri’s article “Diwān” in EI2, II, 324, parag. 2, is quite useful, with important references to documentary evidence. Most, but not all, who wrote on the Umayyads mention the Arabization movement, as did J. Wellhausen in his The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall (reprint of the 1927 edition, Beirut, n.d.), 219–20, and G. R. Hawting, The First Dynasty of Islam: the Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750 (London and Sydney, 1986), 63–64. The same goes for those who wrote on ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwân, as in Chase F. Robinson’s ‘Abd al-Malik (Oxford, 2005), 72 (see also 124–26). Still, as is clear from the pages cited, the Arabization movement has not been studied extensively, and indeed one finds nothing at all on it where one expects (as in A. Ayalon’s article “ta’rīb,” in the EI2, X, 240–41) or hardly anything (as in Dimitri Gutas’ Greek Thought, Arabic Culture [London and New York, 1998], which concentrates on the later periods of translation from Greek into Arabic and thus glosses over the Arabization movement under the Umayyads; see pp. 17, 23). Recently, the topic was tackled from a new and highly promising perspective, that of the history of science, in which are articulated the importance and deep significance of the Umayyad Arabization movement and its relation to the more general translation movement later in Islamic civilization. On this, see George Saliba, al-Fikr al-ilmi al-arabī: nash’atuhu wa tatāwuruhu (Balamand [Lebanon], 1998), 53–68; idem, Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2007), chapter 2 (27–72).

known about how exactly this Arabization actually worked and how the records reflected the change in language. The bi-lingual (Arabic-Greek) protocols do allow us to have a glimpse at this change, but only in indicating how the basmala and associated formulas, caliphs’ and governors’ names and titles, and the formulaic statements connected with them were reproduced in Greek and Arabic; and the information we have in our sources about how some words could have been “translated” from the local languages into Arabic do not exceed three: two numbers/fractions of numbers and a conjunction of arithmetical value.

What I would like to do in this study is to shed light on how exactly the bureaucrats of the financial bureaus wrote down the names of the estates in the financial registers of the government before the Arabization of the diwâns and how they changed those names after this Arabization. The evidence comes mainly from the section on Baṣra in al-Balâdhuri’s (d. 279/892) invaluable Futūḥ al-buldān. This work is obviously a literary source; but an examination of the section in question of it allows us to practically lift its material to a documentary stratum. This is based on what we know about the early chronicler who transmitted almost all of its reports, al-Walîd ibn Hîshâm al-Qâḥdhami, and the context of his transmission of those reports. I shall begin by highlighting some characteristics of al-Balâdhuri’s Futūḥ which are relevant to our topic, then identifying the specific features of the section on Baṣra within the Futūḥ. I shall then identify al-Qâḥdhami, the chronicler who provided the information on Baṣra’s estates, as well as his sources. Finally, I shall analyze this information with a view at uncovering its potential for providing evidence for the

2 For several examples of these bilingual protocols, see P.Caire. Arab. (= Adolf Grohmann, Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library, Cairo, 1934–62), 1, nos. 1–30. Cf. nos. 31–32, which are written in Arabic only.

3 These words, clearly written in Persian characters and words, are “dāhūyeh” (→ dahōē, or dihōē) and “shāshūyeh” (→ bistūyāh, bistōē) for “ten” (→ one-tenth) and “twenty” (→ one-twentieth), respectively, and “wid” for “and also” (→ a little more).” See Ibn al-Nadîm, al-Fihrist, 303. In the Persian renderings I am following Sprengling, 196. The text states that Mardânsâhâh, Zâdhnâfarrûkh’s son, challenged Sâlîh ibn ’Abd al-Rahmân: “[If you were to translate the registers into Arabic,] what would you do with ‘dāhūyeh’ and ‘shāshūyeh’?” He answered: “I would write ‘tenths and half tenths’ (ashr wa nisf ‘ashr).” “How about ‘wid’?” Mardânsâhâh asked. Sâlîh said: “I would write ‘and also’ (wa aydān).” The challenge here clearly centers on fractions and how to express them in Arabic. I am grateful for Michael Cook for an attempt to solve the problem of “wid.”