THE END OF THE NAQṬ AL-'ARŪS OF IBN ḤAZM

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The last section of Ibn Ḥazm's Naqṭ al-'Arūs consists of a sentence each of whose members begins with the words «the last caliph...» (āḥīr ḥalīfa ...). Of these the first is «the last caliph who performed the pilgrimage with the people (ḥaǧǧa bīl-nās) was Ḥārūn al-Rašīd». The next is «the last caliph who raided the unbelievers himself (gaza ahl al-kafara bīnafṣīh) was al-Muṭaṣim, and of the Banū Umayya Ḥābī al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir». The third item is: «the last caliph who preached on a pulpit (ḥaṭṭabāʾ ʿalā minbar) was al-Rāḍī, and of the Banū Umayya al-Mustaẓhir». The fourth and final item (in the received text) reads as follows: āḥīr ḥalīfa bani al-rāḍī wa-min bani ʾumayya al-ḥakam al-mustaṭṣīr.¹

The translator of the work into Spanish² realised that the text of the final member of the sentence made little and confused sense as it stood. He translated it as though it read āḥīr ḥalīfa bani ʾabbās, that is, with the word al-ʾabbās inserted immediately before al-rāḍī: «El último Califato de los ʾabbās, al-Rāḍī; y de los omeyas, al-Hakam al-Mustansir»³. From a grammatical point of view this is a neat solution to the difficulty in the text as it stands (The Arabic seems to present the first half of a construct formation, without completing it by the insertion of the necessary second member). From a historical point of view, however, this solution is, at best, inadequate.

What this member of the sentence now tells us is:

¹ The text is printed by C. F. Seybold, Revista del Centro de Estudios históricos de Granada y su reino, I, 1911, 160-180, 237-248. The passage discussed here is at the foot of page 247. (The text has been reprinted, together with a translation of the Naqṭ and two articles on the work, all three by Luis Seco de Lucena, as vol. 39 of the series Textos medievales, ed. A. Ubieta Arteta, Valencia, 1974.) References to the text are to the page numbers of the original edition, which are retained in the Textos medievales edition.

² Luis Seco de Lucena, in Boletín de la Universidad de Granada, 13, 1941, 387-440 (= Textos medievales, 39, 63-145). References to the translation are to the Textos medievales edition.

³ Translation, 144.

Arabica, Tome xxviii, Fascicule 1
i) that the last ‘Abbāsid caliph was al-Rādi
ii) that the last Umayyad caliph was al-Ḥakam al-Mustansir.

Unfortunately, neither of these statements is correct. Al-Rādi (regnavit 322/934-329/940) was very far from being the last ‘Abbāsid caliph. Furthermore, even when Ibn Ḥazm was writing this text, in the middle of the next century, that dynasty had in no sense come to an end: it had not yet reached its last caliph. The fact is that in Ibn Ḥazm’s lifetime (384/994-456/1064) an ‘Abbāsid caliph lived in Baghdad who was sixth in line of succession to al-Rādi as ‘Abbāsid caliph. Again, al-Ḥakam al-Mustansir (regnavit 350/961-366/976) was also very far from being the last of his house to be a caliph in Spain. To compound these difficulties, we may add that Ibn Ḥazm was himself quite certainly aware of the facts. Even in this short text he gives the throne-names both of the last Umayyad caliph in Spain and of all the successors of al-Rādi and of al-Ḥakam al-Mustansir in the two caliphates (up to his own day).

How then is this last member of the final sentence of Ibn Ḥazm’s text to be interpreted? One explanation may be that the text as it stands today is too hopelessly confused to allow of sensible interpretation. It is to be noted that al-Rādi’s name occurs in the immediately preceding clause of the sentence. Its incongruity in the present context may perhaps lie simply in a scribal error, of the type known as dittography: a copyist may have copied the name from a previous line in the text before him and omitted, or failed to notice, what his original text actually had (this part of the printed text rests on a single manuscript witness).

If this is the whole explanation of the difficulty, however, the text is scarcely helped towards sensible interpretation, for it still appears to name the last caliphs of the ‘Abbāsid and the Spanish Umayyad

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4 This was al-Qāʾīm (regnavit 422/1031-467/1075). Those between al-Rādi and al-Qāʾīm were al-Muttaqī (329/940-333/944), al-Mustakfī (333/944-334/946), al-Mutaʾ (334/946-363/974), al-Tāʾī (363/974-381/991) and al-Qādir (381/991-422/1031).

5 Text 150-51, translation 66, where Ibn Ḥazm names all the ‘Abbāsid caliphs up to his own day (text 151: “al-Qāʾīm billāh Abū Jaʿfar ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Qādir, who is caliph today”). See also the Indice de Personas under the names of these caliphs and those of the relevant Umayyads for further occurrences of their names in the text.

6 The version, rather different from this one, of the Naqṣ which was published by S. Dayf, ‘Naqṣ al-arūs fī tawāriḥ al-ḥulafāʾ Ibn Ḥazm, riwāyat al-humaydī’. Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Fouad I University, Cairo, XIII/2, December 1951, 41-89, ends earlier than this point in the text. The sentence does not occur in the version of the Naqṣ preserved in MS. Ar. 5374 of the collection of the Chester Beatty Library. Dublin.