The Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization: Qudama b. Ja`far and His *Kitab al-Kharaj wa-Sina`at al-Kitabah*

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Through the lens of genre, Heck examines *Kitab al-Kharaj wa Sina`at al-Kitabah* ("The Book of the Land-Tax and the Craft of Writing/ Secretaryship"), a work on Islamic administration composed in Baghdad in the early fourth/tenth century by the prominent secretary Qudamah ibn Ja`far (d. 337/948). His analysis of Qudamah's manual, which belongs to a body of texts that emerged in the late third/ninth century and focused primarily on the concerns of state officials, proceeds by breaking it into constituent parts and considering each one individually in relation to earlier and contemporary works in related genres. The result is a detailed appreciation for the work's characteristics and relative merits; showing how one author constructed human knowledge; how he articulated the relationship between knowledge, religion, and the `Abbasid state; and how this portrayal differed from other contemporary schemes.

The organization of the original work was as follows: 1. Introduction, 2. The Art of Writing, 3. Language and Rhetoric, 4. Bureaus of the Imperial Administration, 5. Bureaus of the Imperial Administration, 6. Geography, 7. Fiscal Law, and 8. Political Thought. Unfortunately, only chapters 5-8 survive. The unique manuscript at Istanbul's Köprulu Library was published in facsimile edition in 1968 and edited in 1981 (the 1981 edition, Heck reports, contains numerous errors). The author's discussion uses the rubrics of language in chapter 2 (parts 2-5), geography in chapter

3 (part 6), fiscal law in chapter 4 (part 7), and political thought in chapter 5 (part 8). Chapter 6, the conclusion, is followed by an appendix of the Arabic text of the passages quoted. Chapter 1 provides background information and a four-category typology of administrative manuals.

The grammatical category (1), including Ibn Qutaybah's (d. 276/889) Adab al-Katib ("The Discipline of the Secretary") and al-Nahhas' (d. 338/950) *Sina`at al-Kitabah* ("The Craft of Secretaryship"), provides grammatical, lexicographical, and stylistic guidance to the administrator. The bureaucratic category (2), including `Abd Allah al-Baghdadi's (fl. fourth/tenth century) *Kitab al-Kuttab* ("The Book of Secretaries") and al-Suli (d. 335/946) *Adab al-Kuttab* ("The Discipline of Secretaries"), describes the various departments that make up the state's administration and defines their functions.

The linguistic category (3) includes Ishaq ibn Ibrahim ibn Wahb's (fl. fourth/tenth century) *Al-Burhan fi Wujuh al-Bayan* ("The Proof on the Ways of Explication"), which is based on a theory of communication intended to explain the close association of writing with the state apparatus. The historical category (4) is represented by al-Jahshiyari's (d. 331/942) *Kitab al-Wuzara' wa al-Kuttab* ("The Book of Viziers and Secretaries"), which emphasizes the roles that viziers and secretaries have played in Islamic history.

In Heck's estimation, Qudamah's work belongs primarily to the bureaucratic category, while adopting the linguistic category's theoretical framework. In his view, the work demonstrates something like the Weberian concept of bureaucratic order, for it stresses the bureaucracy's impersonal order, its hierarchical structure, and its function according to abstract rules rather than to concepts of personal service to the ruler.

Overall, the work assembles results from several fields and traditions of knowledge that, together, provide a comprehensive background for the workings of the Islamic state. By examining Qudamah's unique collection and articulation of these results, Heck seeks to understand the impact of the state and its organs on the formation of Islamic civilization and its various branches of knowledge. Certainly, the Arabo-Islamic tradition is important for Qudamah's underlying theory of the state, but it is by no means the only contributor. For example, the `Abbasid administrative apparatus relied on the Arabic language and Islamic symbols in order to control the empire and to establish religious legitimacy.

Heck posits that the first half of Qudamah's work (sections 2-5) probably spelled out the state administration's close association with the

Arabic language more fully than other administrative works. Chapter 3 shows that section 4 of Qudamah's work (geography) draws heavily on the Ptolemaic tradition. Chapter 4 stresses the Sasanian contribution to Qudamah's section 7 (fiscal jurisprudence), while chapter 5 shows the influence of Greco-Hellenistic philosophy on Qudamah's section 8 (political theory). Thus, at least four major disparate traditions combine in Qudamah's guide to `Abbasid administration. This is not merely an indication of his eclectic nature, for his work was meant as a practical manual for managing contemporary realities; it also is an important reflection on the development of the `Abbasid state itself and on the administrative theories that were current in his day.

Heck concludes that "the knowledge harnessed for the goals of Islamic civilization was fashioned out of competing social interests, not merely religious, intellectual and cultural concerns" and that "the state played as decisive a role in that process as any social group in Islamic civilization." Scholars should keep this important point in mind when investigating many aspects of Islamic history: The Islamic state(s) exercised an enormous influence over Islamic civilization's formation and intellectual traditions.

Recognizing this fact has varied a great deal, depending on the particular field studied. In the field of Arabic literature, for example, the roles of rulers and states have been stressed perhaps too much. But with regard to the Islamic religious sciences, Heck's corrective view is crucial, because in them the state's formative role has often been deemphasized or entirely discounted. Islamic law, the Hadith literature, and legal theory have long been held to be primarily the creation of scholars who worked outside the states' purview and in opposition to its administrative apparatus. This view is likely due to an emphasis on the religious scholars' pious distance from power's corrupting influence, an idea that abounds in the hagiographical literature. A more judicious examination of the evidence may show that scholars in the state's service did more to shape the Islamic religious sciences than those who were not.

Heck's work on Qudamah ibn Ja`far's *Kitab al-Kharaj wa Sina`at al-Kitabah* thus provides not only a description and analysis of a fourth/tenth-century administrative manual, but also is an important contribution to our understanding of, and approach to, the history of knowledge in Islamic civilization.

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