

Laqīt b. Ya'mur

Laqīt b. Ya'mur (or b. Ya'mar, Ma'bad, Ma'mar, or Bakr) b. Khārīja was a pre-Islamic Arab poet who lived in the sixth century C.E. He was a member of the Iyād, a tribe who were once settled in the Tihāma region, south of Mecca. Due to the barrenness of the soil they were forced to leave their territory and went to Iraq, where they settled in the Sawād, the region between Kūfa and Basra, mainly in the city of al-Ḥīra. Here Laqīt came into contact with urban Arab culture as well as the Persian language and culture of the Sāsānid empire. Some sources state that he was the secretary and interpreter of the Persian ruler Khusraw II Parvīz (r. 591–628 C.E.) and that he was literate and had mastered at least two languages. While in the Sāsānid chancery he learned that the ruler intended to raise a large number of soldiers in order to fight the Iyād, who were constantly pillaging the area. Laqīt remained loyal to his tribe and sent them a long written poem in which he warned them of their approaching enemies. The Iyād ignored his warnings, however, and did not prepare themselves for the imminent battle; they were consequently defeated by the Sāsānid army and scattered. Laqīt had to pay dearly for what he had done: when Khusraw discovered his treachery he ordered him to be killed.

This sketch of the events is principally based on the information provided by Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967) in his *Kitāb al-aghānī*; other sources differ from it in almost every regard, such as the many forms of his father's name. All essential facts about him—the dates of his birth and death, his family and environment, his education and profession—are lacking, and but for his long *qaṣīda* he would

have remained in obscurity. This poem—a masterpiece of poetical warning—was often quoted by later authors, at least in part. It remains an impressive monument to early Arabic poetical skill, although the original version is difficult to determine due to the varying number of verses (between forty-four and fifty-six), the differing order of verses within the poem, and the many variant readings.

Laqīt's poetical heritage—not more than four verses that serve as a form of preface to the *qaṣīda*, in addition to the poem itself—was transmitted in the recension of Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/819). Though very modest in size, this collection was called a "*dīwān*," a term usually referring to a more substantial collection.

Theodor Nöldeke was the first European scholar to translate the chapter about Laqīt that appears in the *Kitāb al-aghānī*. He edited the *qaṣīda* (fifty-five verses) on the basis of the Berlin manuscript (Sprenger 1123 = Ahlwardt 7479) and translated it in *Beiträge zur altarabischen Literatur und Geschichte, Orient und Okzident* 1 (Göttingen 1862), 689–718. This useful study is still very valuable today and hardly surpassed by the modern editions of the *Dīwān Laqīt b. Ya'mur al-Iyādī*, by Khalīl Ibrāhīm al-'Aṭīyya, Baghdad 1390/1970; by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān, Beirut 1391/1971; and ed. Muḥammad Altūnjī, Beirut 1998.

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