TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

A. Kudelin

ARABIC LITERATURE: POETICS AND STYLISTICS. VI: FAMILY-MATRIMONIAL RELATIONS IN THE 5TH—7TH CENTURIES ARABIA AND THEIR REFLECTION IN THE EARLY ARABIC POETRY

Family and matrimonial relations on the Arabic Peninsula before and after the Islam expansion became subject for research as early as in the second half of the 19th century. Such famous foreign scholars as Wilken, Wettstein, Robert-son Smith, Nödeke, Wellhausen, Goldziher, etc. were interested in this theme, and later, in the 20th century — Stern, Vadet. Among Russian scholars who paid attention to this theme were A. I. Pershits, L. V. Negria, D. E. Eremeev.

According to one point of view, in the 5th—7th century Arabia there was a decay of the communal-clan system which was reflected, in particular, in the “tendency towards isolation of a consanguine group by regulating family and matrimonial relations” with the transformation of such group from an exogamic into an endogamous one. At that period the exogamic form of marriage was gradually loosing its “oneness and ubiquity” and endogamy was becoming firmly established [1]. Obviously, during some period of time both forms of marriage coexisted simultaneously.

The rich materials collected in the end of the century by Robertson Smith and other researchers allows to claim that the exogamic form of marriage was reflected in such characteristic remnants of the maternal-clan epoch as polyandry and unstable temporary marriages [2]. One of the variations of the latter is istibda’ marriage registered by an authorita-tive Sunni traditionalist al-Dukhārī (d. 870). The main point of such marriage lied in the right of a man who for different reasons could not have children (declining years, an illness, etc.) to send his wife to another man to continue their family. In a number of interpretations it says that this type of marriage could also have been practiced to improve the quality of posterity. According to the law, a child born as a result of such marriage belonged to the woman’s husband. Later, when actual maternity became important, such fiction when the husband was substituted was no longer acceptable [3].

The istibda’ marriage, which has analogues among other peoples [4], was viewed as a legal way for having children and was not associated with adultery.

Another variation was mut’a marriage which was a personal contract between a man and a woman which was made without any participation on the side of the woman’s relatives, witnesses, etc. It came into force immediately after the exchange of certain formalities. A woman who entered into such marriage continued living at home where her husband visited her regularly. A peculiar feature of this type of marriage was that it lasted as long as both parties desired. A woman herself, and not her relatives, decided whether to enter into such marriage or not, and that is why, for her consent, she received a wedding present from her husband. This type of marriage was practiced as early as in the time of Muhammad, but later was disapproved of by Islam as a form of prostitution [5]. European researchers believe that such marriages were determined by the law of maternal relations [6], and further disapproval and disappearance of them was connected with the introduction of paternal relations [7].

Another variation is sādiqa marriage also mentioned by Robertson Smith. In such marriage a man visited a woman, who was referred to as his friend and most likely was somebody else’s wife, from time to time. There were cases when a man was in sādiqa relationships with a mother and her daughter at the same time. After the distribution of Islam when the concept of fidelity appeared, a young woman visited by a sādiq husband was disapproved of. Here we must also mention the practice of zinā’-type relationships (in later understanding literary “adultery”, “prostitution”, etc.) which before the distribution of Islam had been simply a type of polyandry [8]. Here we can also add customs according to one of which a man and a woman who were not married to each other could meet at night and “have fun” [9]. According to another custom, a host’s wife was at disposal of his guest (hospitalize betraism). Robertson Smith sees features of polyandry in these customs [10].

A common feature of temporary marriages was that the main part in them was performed by the woman: she could separate from her husband when she wanted to, could receive only the men that she was attracted to, etc. Thus, in the conditions of remnants of the maternity-clan epoch, a woman, if she entered into a contract, did not have to be tied to one man for a long time, and the concept of a woman belonging to one man only was not a stable norm for fam-