ORAL TRADITION

Arabic Oral Traditons

Volume 4, Number 1-2 January-May, 1989

Slavica

Volume 4 January-May 1989 Number 1-2

Slavica Publishers, Inc.

For a complete catalog of books from Slavica, with prices and ordering information, write to:

Slavica Publishers, Inc.
P.O. Box 14388
Columbus, Ohio 43214

ISSN: 0883-5365

Oral Tradition seeks to provide a comparative and interdisciplinary focus for studies in oral literature and related fields by publishing research and scholarship on the creation, transmission, and interpretation of all forms of oral traditional expression. As well as essays treating certifiably oral traditions, *OT* presents investigations of the relationships between oral and written traditions, as well as brief accounts of important fieldwork, a Symposium section (in which scholars may reply at some length to prior essays), review articles, occasional transcriptions and translations of oral texts, a digest of work in progress, and a regular column for notices of conferences and other matters of interest. In addition, occasional issues will include an ongoing annotated bibliography of relevant research and the annual Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lectures on Oral Tradition. *OT* welcomes contributions on all oral literatures, on all literatures directly influenced by oral traditions, and on non-literary oral traditions. Submissions must follow the list-of reference format (style sheet available on request) and must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return or for mailing of proofs; all quotations of primary materials must be made in the original language(s) with following English translations. Authors should submit two copies of all manuscripts. Most contributions will be reviewed by at least one specialist reader and one member of the editorial board before a final decision is reached. Review essays, announcements, and contributions to the Symposium section will be evaluated by the editor in consultation with the board.

Oral Tradition will appear three times per year, in January, May, and October. Annual subscription charges are $20 for individuals and $35 for libraries and other institutions.

All manuscripts, books for review, items for the annual bibliography, and editorial correspondence should be directed to the editor, John Miles Foley, Center for Studies in Oral Tradition, 301 Read Hall, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211.

Subscriptions and related inquiries should be sent to Slavica Publishers, P.O. Box 14388, Columbus, OH 43214.

Printed in the United States of America.

Arabic Oral Traditions

Guest Editor

Issa J. Boullata

EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITORIAL BOARD

Contents

Contents

Guest Editor's Column

The essays that make up this special issue of *Oral Tradition* deal with various aspects of oral tradition in Arab culture. Orality has always been an important mode of communication and of cultural transmission in the Arab tradition. Right from the earliest times in Arabia, long before the advent of Islam in the seventh century A.D., through the period after the promulgation of Islam and its dramatic geographical spread from the Arabian Peninsula to different parts of the world, and up to the present, orality has continued to be a well-known method of preserving Arab culture and transmitting it to succeeding generations. Even after writing had become common among Arabs, oral performance remained for a long time an acceptable way of passing on knowledge. This phenomenon might have been enhanced by the very nature of Arabic writing itself, which, though later perfected, was based on the consonantal representation of words, the short vowels not being written and remaining always in need of the oral sound of a performer or transmitter to specify them. Thus a word like *slm*, which could be pronounced in a variety of ways with different combinations of unwritten vowels, depending on the context, had to be orally heard to become authentically meaningful. This has been particularly significant in the oral transmission of the sacred text of the Qur'ān' and to a lesser extent in the transmission of Prophet Muḥammad's sayings in the *Ḥadīth*. A long chain of transmitters had to be authenticated before the correct text was established.

At a different level of meaning, orality among Arabs meant a heavy dependence on memory, whether in the recitation of poetry, epic narratives, romances, and proverbs or in the enumeration of genealogical data. Tribal lore, and historical or pseudo-historical events. Arab tradition abounds with stories of persons who had prodigious memories, equally amazing whether they specialized in religious knowledge or in secular matters.

At yet another level of meaning, orality among Arabs sometimes meant spontaneous extemporizing of verse in specific poetic duels or slanging-matches, and in social settings where improvising was required. The rich vocabulary of the Arabic language and its structural patterns helped to bring such impromptu oral composition within the reach of poets more readily than would have been possible otherwise, yet a long period of training was still necessary and the challenges of this orality delighted Arab audiences as they witnessed poets struggling to meet its demands.

Arab audiences have been noted for their strong inclination to rejoice in listening to the cadences and rhythms of their language as it expressed ideas or emotions with which they identified. They would be thrilled at the apt use of a word or an image and would respond with unrehearsed, uninhibited collective acclaim as the inevitable word or image is eventually used by the poet, particularly in a rhyming position, with unexpected ramifications of meaning. Arab audiences listening to epics or romances have also been described as identifying with the heroes or heroines of their oral tradition, the narrators often moulding their material to suit local needs or timely necessities either consciously or unconsciously.

In the final analysis it is verbal art at its best, in the oral tradition of Arab culture, with which the essays in this special issue deal. Frederick M. Denny begins with a study of the art of oral recitation of the Qur'ān—because of which practice, he believes, "Islam has retained a high level of orality in its piety and in its way of understanding the nature of things." R. Marston Speight points to formulaic aspects of the Ḥadīth, orally handed down from the Prophet Muḥammad and the outstanding personalities of early Islamic history. James T. Monroe digs up some evidence for the oral origins of Hispano-Arabic strophic poetry, which, he concludes, "is learned development of the popular *zajal* in Arabic and Romance." In similarly fascinating detective work, Muhsin Mahdi compares a tale in the *Arabian Nights* with an account of it transmitted much earlier as history, showing how audiences respond variously to fact and fiction, not always based on rational grounds but often on their willingness to believe.

Dwight F. Reynolds writes an introduction to the oral epic of Banī Hilāl and the scholarship that studied it as history and as text, and calls for more studies on its live performance and its significance. Bridget Connelly and Henry Massie highlight the psychological and social needs of local audiences that dictate the choice of themes in the oral performance of the Banī Hilāl epic by narrators, repeatedly emphasizing in Tunisia those related to repressed anxieties of social rupture between Berber and Arab. H. T. Norris explores the common elements of Arabic epics and European *chansons de geste* and, in spite of differences, establishes the possibility of borrowed content relating to detail and fantasy.

Saad Abdullah Sowayan depends on field research in Arabia to describe oral poets performing poetic duels accompanied by a chorus. Translating his own article from French, Simon Jargy offers a study of certain living genres of sung poetry from the present-day oral tradition of the Gulf region and the Arabian Peninsula, reported earlier by Western travelers and ethnographers. Adnan Haydar studies another living oral tradition, the *zajal* of Lebanon, and examines its genres and meters, following up the developments in improvised oral duels between *zajal*

poets. Ḍirgham Ḥ. Sbait discusses the living oral tradition of Palestinian improvised-sung poetry, analyzing its genres and their social functions. Teirab AshShareef presents the results of his field research in the Sudan regarding the classification of sung poetic genres in the oral tradition of the Banī Halba; he shows that tunes are the basis of such classification and that, within it, there are men's genres and women's genres. Finally, to end this special issue, George D. Sawa gives an account of oral transmission in Arabic music as performed in Baghdad in the heyday of medieval Arab civilization as well as in modern times.

There are many other aspects of the Arabic oral tradition that have not been treated in this collection. It is hoped that future issues of *Oral Tradition* will deal with some of them. Readers of *Oral Tradition* whose specialization is in fields other than Arabic will find in this special issue many affinities with their fields. It is my hope that the collection will help to enlarge the purview of comparative studies in oral tradition as it helps to advance scholarship in the field of studies in Arabic oral tradition.

Issa J. Boullata
Institute of Islamic Studies
McGill University, Montreal

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 5-26

Qur'ān Recitation: A Tradition of Oral Performance and Transmission

Frederick Mathewson Denny

Oral performance by means of recitation of the Qur'ān is at the center of Islamic corporate and individual piety. The Qur'ān is recited during the daily *ṣalāt* prayer services; nightly during the Ramadan fasting month; in special recitation sessions frequently convened in mosques, schools, and other places; and on many special occasions, such as the openings of businesses, schools, legislative sessions, at weddings, circumcisions, funerals, and other times. Individual Muslims also recite the Qur'ān, for religious merit, for reflection on its meaning, and for spiritual refreshment. The Qur'ān is recited in competitions in some regions of the Muslim world and champions earn fame and, potentially, wealth, because professional reciters of high standing can command substantial fees for their performances and their followers eagerly buy tape cassettes.

The academic study of Qur'ān recitation has been a very minor aspect of Arabic and Islamic studies in the West. Only a few treatises have been produced over the years,[1] and they have been devoted only to selected aspects of the art and based on data drawn from limited sample. Happily, there has recently been published a book-length study (Nelson 1985) which

[1]Representative published works include: Bergsträsser 1932-33 (includes musical notation realized by K. Huber); Cantineau and Barbès 1942-47 (includes extensive musical notation); and ben Cheneb 1953. A relevant Ph.D. dissertation is Pacholczyk 1970. Of course, there is a vast bibliography of Qur'ān recitation in Arabic and other languages by Muslim scholars.

promises to be the standard work of the foreseeable future.[2]

Probably a major reason for the relative neglect of scholarship on recitation by Western scholars has been a biblical bias in scripture studies that places major emphasis on the meaning of the text as a written text. Although Jews have recited their Torah in a ritualized manner, and Eastern Christians also have maintained to this day a rich tradition of the melodious chanting of portions of the Bible in their services, Western Christians, in modern times especially, have not chanted the scriptures, except for those in traditional religious orders who include biblical passages in the observance of the daily offices.

To observe that Christian, and also Jewish as well as secular students of the Qur'ān have been influenced by a Western exegetical bias in their study of Islamic scripture is not to imply that Muslims, on the other hand, do not cultivate Qur'ānic scholarship focused on the *meaning* of the text as text. Rather, Muslims have a balanced consideration both for the Qur'ān's exegesis—which is necessary for legal as well as theological, ethical, and personal religious reasons—as well as its proper ritual recitation.[3] Typical Western disregard for the latter is simply a product of blindness both to Muslim practices and the Qur'ān's special nature, which emphasizes orality. In other words, the Qur'ān resembles the Bible only superficially, and its uses within the Muslim community are quite different from the place of the Bible within either Judaism or Christianity, even though the two scriptures share centrally important convictions concerning ethical monotheism and the meaning of history.

The Oral Origin of the Qur'ān

Muḥammad experienced his first revelatory encounter while observing a spiritual retreat in a cave in Mt. Ḥirā', outside his native Mecca. The Prophet was about forty years old and for some time had taken to solitary meditation during the hot season. There are various hagiographical details, but at the core is the constant datum that Muḥammad was convinced that a voice spoke to him, commanding him to "Recite: in

[2] This work is based on extensive field research in Egypt, and combines the methodologies of Arabic language studies and ethnomusicology, which are essential for this topic. The layperson will gain much from reading certain sections of this book, but full comprehension requires a knowledge of Arabic. Dr. Nelson exhibits a sensitive regard for the religious context of Qur'ān recitation and does not limit her focus to technical matters. This balanced regard for the whole phenomenon of recitation makes her book an important contribution to the study of ritual performance.

[3] For a comparative survey of exegesis and recitation, see Denny 1980a. An excellent study of orality, which appeared after this article had gone to press, is Graham 1987.

the name of your Lord, who created, created humankind from a blood clot; recite: and your Lord is the most noble, who taught by [the use of] the pen, taught humankind what he does not know" (96:1-5). Although the canonical position of this Sura of the Bloodclot is 96, Muslims have usually regarded its first five verses as the first revelation to Muḥammad. The opening word is *iqra'*, which in this context probably means "recite," or "speak out," but the root can also mean "read." In any case, Muḥammad's probable inability to read did not deter him from becoming the bearer of the new revelation, which did not require literacy, but was mastered by strenuous memorization and practice in oral performance. It is fitting, then, that the scripture called the *qur'ān* ("recitation") should have been revealed with the opening command, "recite."

There are very few details within the Qur'ānic text concerning how to recite, but the few there are have been sufficient to launch a full-fledged science of *tajwīd*, "the art of reciting the Qur'ān."[4] Sura 72:4 contains one of the principle specifications in the phrase, "wa rattil il-qur'āna tartīlan," whose full sense is most likely "and repeat the recitation in an unhurried, distinct manner."[5] *Tartīl* has remained one of the fundamental elements of Qur'ān recitation, where it denotes a specific style, characterized by slow, rhythmic, non-melodic recitation, emphasizing clear and distinct enunciation according to the phonetic rules of *tajwīd*. *Tartīl* is often said to enable the reciter, and the hearers of recitation, to concentrate on the *meaning* of the text for spiritual edification.

Another Qur'ān root which has provided guidance for recitation is *t-l-w*, which occurs rather frequently in a variety of verbal forms, most of which mean to recite or read the Qur'ān or the scriptures of the Jews and Christians.[6] *Talā /yatlū* does not in itself specify a style of recitation, at least in its Qur'ānic meaning; but the form *tilāwa*, which occurs only once in the Qur'ān, has become the most frequently used Muslim term for the recitation of the Qur'ān out loud in public. This root can mean "follow,"

---

[4] The Arabic word *tajwīd* is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*) of the active verb *jawwada*, which literally means to "do well," but takes on the richer connotation of "to embellish," in the case of recitation, by means of the voice. *Tajwīd* does not occur in the Qur'ān, but came later to mean the art of recitation in the sense of the phonetic rules and other related aspects. The term is used to mean more than one thing, as will be explained below.

[5] A thorough discussion of *r-tt-l*, with copious examples, is provided in Lane 1867, I:3, 1028-29. The form *r-tt-l* also occurs in Sura 25:32, where its subject is God: *wa rattalnāhu tartīlan*, "and We have arranged it [i.e. the Qur'ān] in right order." This interpretation is based on the context, where people had asked Muḥammad why God had not revealed the Message all at once. The commentators agree that the above-quoted phrase refers to an orderly sequential revelation.

[6] E.g. 2:44; 2:113; 2:151; 3:113.

in the sense of conforming to the message of the Qur'ān.[7] The word *qirā'a* also means recitation, but it does not occur in the Qur'ān, and it also may mean the matter of recitation in the sense of the text, and/or its variant readings (*qirā'āt*).[8]

Qur'ān Recitation in the Ḥadīth

Although the Qur'ān itself contains little directly pertaining to how it should be recited, the ḥadīth contain more. If the Ḥadīth are sometimes problematical with respect to ascertaining the precise historical truth about early events connected with Muḥammad and the Muslim community, there is less reason to be skeptical about recitation matter. Whether or not Ḥadīth passages about recitation actually can with confidence be traced all the way back to Muḥammad, the student of the subject at least knows that he is dealing with ancient sources concerning recitation, which most likely reflect basic facts about the practice as it existed in various regions of the early Muslim empire.

The context in which Qur'ān recitation first gained prominence was the Islamic ritual prayer-service known as the *ṣalāt*. The Qur'ān, as it emerged over the years of Muḥammad's prophetic activity, served as the prayer book for the Islamic movement. Recitation was learned directly from Muḥammad and those close companions who arose to take roles of leadership in the art (see Juynboll 1974), like Abū Mūsā al-'Ash^{c}arī, whose reciting voice was likened by Muḥammad to a "flute" of David. Muḥammad is said to have recited very clearly and precisely, "letter by letter" (*ḥarfan ḥarfan*), while drawing out the voice over the long vowels.[9]

There is much in the Ḥadīth concerning the excellent qualities of the Qur'ān and the merits of recitation,[10] but there is much less information of a specific nature covering actual performance rules and what recitation sounded like in the early Umma (Community). Many ḥadīths tell of the value of reciting such and such a verse or sura, as well as the merit

[7] See, for example, al-Ṭabarī 1968, I:518-21, concerning Sura 2:121.

[8] Interestingly, the *talā* root does not provide the active participle that indicates a reciter; that is expressed by *qāri'*, which form of *q-r-'* is absent from the Qur'ān. The word *qur'ān*, however, occurs 70 times in the text. Other forms of the root occur only 18 times.

[9] The first report is from *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,* in the edition with al-Nawawī's commentary (1964). The second report is recorded in Ibn Sa^{c}d's *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*.

[10] The non-specialist reader will find many ḥadīths in English in Robson 1965: II, 446-70.

of reciting large numbers of verses in a specific time frame. This latter is not without significance for the present subject, because a rapid style of recitation was developed—known as *ḥadr*—and it is performed by highly qualified reciters who want to cover a certain portion of the text rapidly, for religious merit as well as for retaining the text in memory. Concerning memorization, Muḥammad is reported to have said:

> It is wrong for one to say that he has forgotten such and such a verse, for he has been made to forget. Study the Qur'ān, for it is more apt to escape from men's minds than animals'.[11]

It is especially difficult for Muslims who do not speak Arabic as a native language to memorize the Qur'ān, and I have heard the above ḥadīth, or similar ones, recited in such countries as Indonesia, where institutes for memorization (*taḥfīẓ*) of the Qur'ān exist alongside recitation schools.

The Ḥadīth declare that a good voice is a prime requisite for reciting the Qur'ān: "God has not listened to anything as He does a prophet with a good voice chanting (*yataghannā*) the Qur'ān aloud."[12] It is also reported that Muḥammad said that, "He does not belong to us who does not chant (*yataghannā*) the Qur'ān."[13] The meaning of *yataghannā* is interpreted by some as "being content" (*yastaghnī*) with the Qur'ān, but by others, such as the Shāfiʿī ḥadīth expert al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), as "making the recitation sad, rendering it delicately. . . and embellishing the recitation with your voices," by means of beautiful sounds (*taḥsīn al-ṣawt*).[14]

The question of loud versus soft recitation has been addressed in a memorable report:

> He who recites the Qur'ān loudly is like him who gives *ṣadaqa* ["charity"] openly, and he who recites the Qur'ān quietly is like him who gives *ṣadaqa* secretly.[15]

Likewise there is a ḥadīth which tells about Muḥammad's manner of pausing in the recitation,[16] an aspect that developed into the important subject of "pauses and starts" (*waqf wa ibtidā'*), which of course governs the precise meaning of each verse and the relationships between verses.

---

[11] See Robson 1965:462 (from the collection of al-Bukhārī).

[12] See Robson 1965 (al-Bukhārī).

[13] See Robson 1965 (al-Bukhārī).

[14] See al-Nawawī 1964, VI:78-79; my trans. of Nawawī's commentary.

[15] See Robson 1965:464 (from the collection of al-Tirmidhī).

[16] See Robson 1965:464 (al-Tirmidhī).

One very revealing ḥadīth concerning recitation style is the following:

> Recite the Qur'ān with the modulations and tones of the Arabs, but avoid the modulations of those who recite love poetry and the modulations of the people of the two Books. After my death people will come who will trill when they recite the Qur'ān as is done in singing and wailing, but it will go no farther than their throats, and they and those who are charmed by their performance will be led into error.[17]

It appears that Muḥammad approved the old Arabian work songs and found them conformable with the spirit of the revelation; or at least, they did not suggest art song or alien religious traditions. It may be that this ḥadīth reflects a later period, when Muslims were in close contact with other than Arab influences. We are told by one source that the Qur'ān came to be recited by non-Muslims, who used popular melodies and even dance motions, with jingling ankle bracelets.[18] The recitation by means of secular melodies, known as *qirā'a b'il-alḥān*, came to be outlawed by the ᶜUlamā' during early ᶜAbbasid times (M. Talbi 1958).

Readings of the Qur'ān

There is also ḥadīth material concerning variant readings of the Qur'ān. For example, one tells of a dispute between two Muslims who recited a passage somewhat differently. Muḥammad was called as a referee and declared that both versions were correct, and that

> a message was sent to me. . . to recite the Qur'ān in one mode, but when I replied that I wished matters to be made easy for my people, a second message instructed me to recite it in two modes. Again I replied that I wished matters to be made easy for my people, and a third message instructed me to recite it in seven modes. . .[19]

Possibly the seven modes relate to Arabic dialectal variations. The later development of seven canonical readings (*al-qirā'āt al-sabᶜ*) is not directly related to this ḥadīth, probably, but reflects variants arising from recitation practice by different readers in different locations of the Muslim empire,

---

[17] See Robson 1965:465 (from al-Baihaqī).

[18] See AbūBakr Muḥammad in al-Ṭalibī [M. Ṭalībī] 1959:78.

[19] See Robson 1965:467.

all using orthographically defective versions of a common text.[20]

The science of variant readings (*ʿilm al-qirā'āt*) is complex and technically demanding. Most reciters know little about it, even though they may learn more than one reading by heart. The master of readings is known as a *muqri'*. Such a specialist is rather rare in the Islamic world, except in traditional centers of Qur'ānic recitation training, such as Cairo and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. In Indonesia, for example, the largest Muslim country, there are very few qualified *muqri'*s, but thousands of excellent *qāri'*s, or reciters in the sense of performance.

Several years ago, while I was doing fieldwork on recitation in Egypt, one of my informants—a venerable *muqri'*—was teaching me about the different readings of the Qur'ān. He showed me his certificate (*ijāza*) of mastery of the "Seven Readings" and emphasized that each *muqri*' had to have these by heart, so as to be able to correct mistakes, either in oral performance or in print, that might be detected anywhere. Each generation has had a certain number of such experts in readings and recitation, and it is thought to be an absolute essential for the well-being of the Muslim community. I asked this *muqri'* how he first learned the variant readings, and he said that he learned them from his own teacher. Did they use a written text? The answer was that they consulted both a written text and memory of the readings as received from a still earlier *muqri'*. The text has been transmitted orally from *muqri'* to *muqri'*, according to my informant, since the time of the Prophet. And *muqri'*s are able to furnish documents containing the chain of transmitters of the text all the way back from their teachers to the time of the seven accepted early reciter-transmitters and beyond them to the Prophet. I asked whether mistakes were ever made. The answer was yes. I asked, then, how a mistake was corrected, or a lapse of memory repaired. My informant then smiled slyly at me and patted his breast. Inside his garment he kept a folded chart of all the variant readings, which he confessed to consulting occasionally when his memory failed him. I asked whether this keeping of a written record was common, and he said that it was. But he also quickly added that the principle of oral transmission was still intact, because the student always had to prove his memorization of the variants to his master.

This story is not recounted here to disprove orality in the transmission of the Qur'ān. Rather, it specifies the kind and extent of oral transmission, which has never, in the case of the Qur'ān, been thought to have taken place entirely divorced from a written text. The original Qur'ān was certainly oral, and the specification of the precise "text"

[20] A clear summary of the development of the readings is al-Said 1975. This book was originally published in Arabic under the title *al-Jamʿ al-ṣawtī al-awwal li'l-Qur'ān al-karīm aw al-muṣḥaf al-murattal*. The total number of readings is ten, according to some authorities, and fourteen, according to others. But the basic seven are accepted by all.

was, from the beginning, possible only from oral sources, partly because of the defective Arabic script that greatly limited even the ᶜUthmanic recension which was achieved over a generation after the death of Muḥammad and in an environment of relatively greater literacy.

Recitation, Literacy, and Orality

Consensus of scholarly opinion has in recent years concluded that the Qur'ān and Arabic poetry were both composed in the *ᶜarabīya* language that required mastery of *iᶜrāb*, the desinential inflection characteristic of Bedouin speech, but difficult for speakers not reared in an Arabic environment (see Rabin 1960; Zwettler 1978:160 and *passim*). Even such persons, especially in urban settings, who could perfectly understand the *ᶜarabīya* of the pre-Islamic poets and of the Qur'ān could probably not thereby *speak* it in any spontaneous way as a vernacular. The ability of poets and Bedouin to speak with inflection was a mark of superiority and power.

Although the poetry of Muḥammad's time, and before, in Arabia was composed orally, and although the poetic language was apparently the same as the language of the Qur'ān, the two genres of literature are actually quite different. Zwettler argues (1978:161) that the reason people called Muḥammad a poet was not because of the "poetic" qualities of the Qur'ān—strictly speaking, there are few—but because of the inflected language that, in its fluent productivity from the Prophet's mouth, greatly affected hearers who were in any case highly susceptible to the power of the spoken word.

Whether or not one accepts the Muslim claim that the Qur'ān was revealed to Muḥammad by supernatural means, and not consciously composed by him, both believer and outside investigator will agree that the Qur'ānic text exhibits many distinctively oral and oral-formulaic traits, such as redundancy, frequent repetition of standard patterns and refrains in a variety of content contexts, oaths, rhyme, assonance, parables, exhortations, and other elements.[21] But since Muḥammad's time, the content of the Qur'ān has been learned by reading the text at least as much as by hearing it recited, indeed much more so. It is true that recitation of the Qur'ān has long been a specialization of blind persons, but they too had to learn the text from a person who had access to the written text. And modern literate blind reciters use braille in memorizing the text.

The fact that even the social and cultural environment of Muḥammad was heavily influenced by literacy, especially in urban settings, and that

[21] For a succinct, perceptive summary of the oral-formulaic and literary elements in the Qur'ān, see Welch 1960: espec. 419-22.

Islamic civilization, like Western civilization, has been highly literate, does not imply that orality is lacking to a substantial degree. Orality and literacy have coexisted throughout Islamic history, but the orality of Muslims is not quite the same as the orality of primary oral societies never influenced by writing and texts.[22] Muslim orality is, to a remarkable degree, liturgical, residing in the conviction that authentic life is made possible only in relation to sacred words. Muslim orality is also a discipline of memory: not a creative process, but a conserving and transmitting process. Even today, visitors to such a center of learning as the Azhar University Mosque in Cairo can see students pacing back and forth reading their text books in an attempt to memorize the contents before taking examinations centered in such mastery.[23] Traditional books and treatises have often been written in rhymed prose in order to make this task easier. With classical theological and legal texts, as with the fundamental sources Qur'ān and ḥadīth, the memorization process ensures that the Muslim community will be able to survive as a people of God by "writing" his commands, as it were, in the lives of the people.

In a real sense the *ḥāfiẓ al-Qur'ān*—the "memorizer" of the scripture—is a sort of person as book, but with more than mere visual letters. The person as book possesses and controls both the live oral-aural dimension of the recitation as revealed out loud, as well as the visual dimension of the Arabic script and, in most cases, the skill to reproduce that script in calligraphic form. My suggestion that the *ḥāfiẓ* somehow embodies the Qur'ān comes close to suggesting that the complete Muslim is both a receptacle and purveyor of divine power and guidance in the community. In writing this, I am reminded of Milton's words,

> He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things—not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy (Hughes 1957:694).

Much the same thing could be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of one who bears the Qur'ān, and al-Nawawī, introduced earlier, wrote an absorbing treatise, *Al-Tibyān fī ādāb ḥamalat al-Qur'ān* ("An Exposition Concerning the Proper Procedures for those who Bear the Qur'ān"), which details not the technical matters of *tajwīd*, but the general spiritual and moral requisites as well as

---

[22] Orality and speech act studies are increasingly important research fields. A good introduction is available in Ong 1967 and 1982. See also Graham 1987.

[23] For a field-based survey of Islamic education, particularly in Morocco, see Eickelman 1978. There is much in this perceptive essay that is relevant to the study of the place of the Qur'ān in the lives of Muslims.

the specific etiquette of living on intimate terms with the Qur'ān.[24]

Muḥammad is believed to have been illiterate and thus unable to have composed the Qur'ān, in the sense of writing it. God is believed to be the sole "author" of the revelation, and to suggest in any manner that there was human involvement in its production is blasphemy. Without venturing far into this controversial field, it is interesting to observe that the pre-Islamic poets composed orally[25] and that Muḥammad, or someone, could, theoretically, have produced the Qur'ān orally, too. Mere literacy would not have been essential in the original framing of the words, although the arrangement of the Qur'ān as we have received it in the ᶜUthmanic recension required literacy to accomplish. To what extent Muḥammad had prepared the way for this arrangement before his death is unknown, although there are reports that he was engaged in it with his amanuensis, Zayd ibn Thābit.[26]

But in addition to the insistence that Muḥammad's illiterate condition prevented him from composing the Qur'ān is the strong conviction among Muslims that the Qur'ān possesses an inimitable quality that is beyond any human agency to have produced.[27] Poets took up the challenge of imitating the Qur'ān in times after Muḥammad, but the results were mixed, depending on the point of view.

Musical Aspects

Neither Arabic literacy nor knowledge of the meaning of Arabic is absolutely required for Qur'ān recitation. On the other hand, there are many reciters who know Arabic well, but whose performance is marred by a limited range of melodic knowledge and a poor sense of the art of recitation. Even reciters who have mastered the rules of *tajwīd*, as phonetics, although their performance may be ritually correct, cannot, without some grounding in the melodic modes of recitation, rise to full mastery. Such reciters will be limited largely to the *tartīl* style, a plain, rhythmic recitation open to most who attempt it.

---

[24] I am presently engaged in translating this work. For a summary and discussion of its applications in specific Qur'ān recitation contexts in contemporary Cairo, see Denny 1980b.

[25] See Zwettler 1978:41-96 and *passim*, for insights about oral composition.

[26] On the collection of the Qur'ān after Muḥammad's death, see Welch 1960: espec. 405-9. For an unorthodox but suggestive thesis, see Burton 1977.

[27] This inimitability is known in Arabic as *iᶜjāz al-Qur'ān*. See von Grunebaum 1960.

A terse definition of *tajwīd* is "rendering the recitation beautifully," and that requires some skill in matching rhythm and melody to the recitation, by means of at least a rudimentary training in the standard forms of Oriental music, known in Arabic as *maqām* (*-āt*), for mode(s), and *naghma* (*naghamāt*), for melodies. When I interviewed reciters and asked them where they had learned the musical sources and ideas for their chanting, I received various answers. Most often the reciters said they had learned the melodies by ear, imitating their teachers or popular reciters heard on the media. Other reciters said they had been formally trained in music. Still others said that they got their *naghamāt*, "melodies," directly from God.

Qur'ān recitation, even of a melodic kind, is not strictly considered to be music, at least in the sense of art song, as was observed earlier. Nor are popular or composed melodies supposed ever to be employed in performance. But there are, of course, many musical aspects to Qur'ān chanting, and formal training in music has done much to raise the practice to a high level of sophistication and effectiveness (see Nelson 1985:ch. 5). But this dimension, however important for understanding the whole subject of recitation as performance, is not central to the oral transmission of the Qur'ān, strictly considered, even though beautiful rendering of it is a major ingredient in the Muslims' enjoyment of their scripture and their sense of bearing it properly in the service of God.

An Overview of Some Basic Styles and Techniques of Qur'ān Recitation

Texts on recitation rules date back at least to the fourth century of the Hijra, when a *qaṣīda* attributed to Ibn Khāqān (d.325/937-38) was composed (Boneschi 1938:51-92). This late date does not, of course, indicate that treatises on recitation performance had not existed earlier, and Ibn Khāqān himself claims to have simply transmitted the method of recitation originally taught by the seven early master readers of the Qur'ān, mentioned above. Ibn Khāqān's ode favors slow, *tartīl* recitation over the more rapid, *ḥadr* style that had become prominent.

A major feature of the ode is the treatment of the ways in which the letters, words, and phrases of the Qur'ān are produced orally, as well as closely related matters of pauses and starts (a sort of oral "punctuation" in the absence of a punctuated text), shadings, lengthenings, assimilations and nasalizations of letters, and other things. From Ibn Khāqān's time down to the present, such technical *tajwīd* matters would comprise the main outline of the elements of recitation. Usually, such performance-oriented manuals have not contained more than rudimentary coverage of the variant readings

of the ᶜUthmanic text, although treatises on the readings, which are usually long and very detailed, more often than not cover the rules of *tajwīd*, and often also the *ādāb* or "etiquette" of *tilāwa*. The readings do not pertain directly to the manner of recitation so much as to its matter.

Tajwīd manuals are impossible to understand without the guidance of a living master of the art, both because of their characteristic terseness of expression and because of the living tradition which they preserve only in outline. To be sure, *tajwīd* manuals usually contain in their opening chapters detailed treatment of the locations of the anatomy (*makhārij al-ḥurūf*) from whence issue the correct sounds of the Arabic alphabet. But it is no easier to produce the sounds from such descriptions than it is to learn Arabic pronunciation from typical opening sections of Arabic textbooks designed for modern students in the West. One must have a native Arabic speaker, or at least sound recordings made by an expert.

In my field research in Egypt and Indonesia, I have collected many published works on *tajwīd* and related topics. Interestingly enough, I found more examples of the genre in Indonesia than in Egypt, both in the used-book market and current titles. My searches were energetic but not scientifically comprehensive, so I make no conclusive claims for my findings. It is possible that more recitation manuals are found in Indonesia because it is simply a much larger country, both in territorial expanse and in population. Egypt is very much a one-city country, because Cairo dominates in all matters, especially pertaining to Islamic scholarship and piety. Indonesia also has a dominant urban center in Jakarta, but there are also other great cities with their own strong local traditions. Surabaya, for example, has an old Arab population with its traditions of Qur'ānic scholarship, as well as intensely pious East Javanese and Madurese populations with a tradition of honored teachers of recitation.

In Egypt, *tajwīd* is taught along with the native language. The subject is properly considered to be for children, in the first instance, although there is much literature that is also aimed at mature readers. In Indonesia, on the other hand, all who enter upon the study of recitation come first as "children," regardless of their chronological age. Recitation teachers, many of whom have studied either in Mecca or Cairo, or who have learned their art from such masters in Indonesia, develop their own favorite techniques for teaching recitation along with elementary Arabic.

It is surprising, at first, for a scholar used to the colloquial Arabic of Egypt or other Middle Eastern countries, to hear the classical Arabic spoken by Islamic teachers and their students throughout the Indonesian archipelago. The full *iᶜrāb* and the archaic constructions seem to come from another age and ethos. This orally inspired skill enables Indonesian Muslims of the more observant variety (*santris*) to celebrate their sense of the unity of the *Umma* through their mastery of or at least basic pro-

ficiency in spoken Arabic. But the spoken Arabic is much closer to the Arabic of the Qur'ān than to any living colloquial. (When I addressed groups of students, sometimes quite young boys and girls, for example in Qur'ānic boarding schools [*pondok pesantrens*], I felt slightly embarrassed by my own Cairene colloquial, compared to the formal, correct speech of my hosts and their charges. I sounded like a Brooklynite in Oxford.) It is ironic that the spoken Arabic of Indonesians is actually closer to written Arabic. That is, orality is engaged in maintaining a tradition of formal language, because of the example and prestige of the Qur'ān.

One *tajwīd* manual that I have found both in Egypt and Indonesia will serve here as a typical example of the genre. It is published in Arabic in both countries. In Indonesia, most *tajwīd* manuals are in Indonesian, with either Arabic script or Roman transliteration for quotations from the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and other classical sources. My example of a *tajwīd* manual is widely known in Indonesia even among people who cannot read it in the original Arabic, because it is frequently cited in the Indonesian language manuals and seems to exert a fair influence on recitation teachers in Indonesia. It is *Hidāyat al-mustafīd fī aḥkām al-tajwīd* ("Guide to the Acquiring of Knowledge in the Rules of *tajwīd"*),[28] by Muḥammad al-Maḥmūd al-Najjār, known as Abū Rīmah, who was a native of Ḥamā, in western Syria. According to the author's own postscript, he wrote the work, which in a printed Egyptian edition runs to 40 pages, over a two-week period in 1316 A.H. (1898 C.E.).

Abū Rīmah declares in his introduction that he wrote the manual in order to provide children with an approach that they could understand, declaring that there was in his day no convenient, intelligible introduction to be had. Toward this end, the treatise is composed in the form of questions and answers, like a catechism. I have been assured by recitation teachers in both Egypt and Indonesia that this "oral" approach works well with children and, indeed, with all beginners. An earlier teaching classic, the *Matn al-Jazarīya*, by the Syrian Shams al-Dīn Abū 'l-Khayr b. al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429), a poem of 107 verses in *rajaz* meter, is also frequently assigned to beginners, but it is exceedingly terse and therefore requires a

[28] My copies were published in Cairo, Egypt and Surabaya, Indonesia, the former by Ṣāḥib al-Maktaba al-Malūkīya wa Maṭbaᶜtuhā, no date. One Indonesian edition was published by Maktabat Saᶜd b. Nāṣir Najḥān, Surabaya, East Java, 1969; another elsewhere in Indonesia, but with no place or date given. The companies that issue such manuals are often minuscule, amounting to family firms that serve very local markets. For Indonesia, see Denny 1988.

commentary.[29] There are still other brief rhymed *tajwīd* manuals intended for beginners, such as the *Tuḥfat al-Aṭfāl* ("The Gift of Children") of Sulaymān al-Jamzūrī (b. ca. 1160's/1750), of Ṭanṭā, Egypt. But this extremely short work of only about 60 verses is so laconic that even in one Egyptian edition there is a lengthy exposition and commentary.[30]

The following table of contents from Abū Rīmah's *Hidāyat al-Mustafīd fī Aḥkām al-Tajwīd* is an epitome of the genre of brief manuals (my commentary and explication in parentheses).

[1] Preface. (Summarizing what is to follow, and proclaiming the benefits of *tajwīd*)
[2] Introduction. (Definition of *tajwīd*)
[3] Section concerning the rules of *istiᶜādha* ("Seeking of refuge" by reciting "I seek refuge in God from the accursed Satan." This formula must be uttered before reciting the Qur'ān. It is a kind of apotropaic utterance that protects the recitation from evil.) and the *basmala*. (The phrase "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate" prefaces any recitation of the Qur'ān and is used in many other contexts of both spoken and written language by pious Muslims, whether the language of discourse is Arabic or not.)
[4] Section concerning the rules of vowelless *nūn* and nunnation (*tanwīn*). (This treats the "n" sound at the end of indefinite nouns, as well as assimilations of the *n* consonant with other letters that begin following words, such as *mīm* and *wāw*.)
[5] Section concerning the rules of vowelless *mīm*. (The "m" sound at the end of a phrase, with no following syllable. Sometimes it is sounded in a nasal tone. At others it is assimilated with a following *mīm*, as in *wa lakum mā kasabtum* in which *wā lakum* is assimilated with *mā* as *wa lakummā*.)
[6] Section concerning the rules of doubled *mīm* and *nūn*
[7] Section concerning the rules of the "sun" and "moon" letters. (The former do not affect the *lām* of the definite article "*al-*" as in *al-Qur'ān*, whereas the latter assimilate the *lām* to the first letter of the defined word, as in *aḏ-dīn* [written in Arabic as *aḷ-dīn*.)
[8] Section concerning the rules of *lām* occurring in a verb. (The moon letter rule of the definite article does not apply, e.g., the *lām* of

[29] One edition in my possession is titled *Matn al-Jazarīya fī maᶜrifat tajwīd āyāt al-Qur'ānīya*, with commentary by Sh. Zakarīyā al-Anṣārī (Cairo: alMaṭbaᶜa al-Saᶜīdīya, n.d.), 40 pp.

[30] This work is found widely. One edition that I located in Indonesia contains Arabic text with Javanese translation under the title *Nayl al-anfāl fī tarjamati tuḥfati 'l-aṭfāl* ("The Attainment of Rich Booty in the Translation of the 'Gift of Children' [i.e. *Tuḥfat al-aṭfāl*]," Semarang: Maktabat wa Maṭbaᶜat Ṭā' hā' Fūtrā, 1381/1962). On the cover of this pamphlet-length edition is a schematic diagram of the human mouth, with the places of articulation of the Arabic letter sounds (*makhārij al-ḥurūf*) marked, a frequent feature of recitation manuals in Indonesia. The Egyptian edition with commentary is *Fatḥu 'l-aqfāl bi sharḥi matni Tuḥfati 'l-Aṭfāl* ("The Opening of Lock by Means of a Commentary on the Meaning of 'Tuḥfat al-Aṭfāl'," Cairo: Maktabat wa Maṭbaᶜat Muḥammad ᶜAlī Ṣubayḥ wa Awlādihi, 1378/1959, 40 pp.).

jaᶜalnā is pronounced, and not assimilated as *jaᶜannā*.)

[9] Section concerning the rules of assimilation (*idghām*). (Various consonants assimilate with others when juxtaposed, like *tā'* and *ṭā'*, *mīm* and *nūn*, and *lām* and *rā'*.)

[10] Section concerning the rules of lengthening (*madd*, *mudūd*) [of vowels] and their divisions. (This is the longest chapter.)

[11] Section concerning the rules of [the letter] *rā'*. (Velarized or soft.)

[12] Section concerning the explanation of the "concussive" letters (*ḥurūf qalqala*). (These letters—*bā', jīm, qāf, ṭā'*, and *dāl*—are sometimes sounded in a strong manner, accented by a following neutral vowel, known in English phonetics as "schwa." An example is the word *ḥaqq*, which, when the final consonant is silent, is sounded *ḥaqqa* rather than the written *ḥaqq*.)

[13] Section concerning the explanation of the numbers of the articulation places of the letters (*makhārij al-ḥurūf*). (This means the locations in the anatomy of the mouth and throat which are used in producing the various sounds of the Arabic alphabet.)

[14] Section concerning the explanation of the manner of articulating the letters (*ṣifāt al-ḥurūf*).

[15] Section concerning the explanation of the placements of pauses. (About *waqf wa ibtidā'* ("pause and start"), mentioned earlier in this essay, which governs the meaning of recitation by oral "punctuation" of the text.)

[16] Section concerning the explanation of forbidden matters which reciters introduce into recitation of the Qur'ān. (Includes such things as performing the recitation with popular melodies, with singing, or with exaggeration in the lengthening of vowels, and other matters considered unseemly, erroneous, or forbidden.)

[17] Section concerning the explanation of *takbīr* [uttering *Allāhu akbar!* "God is most great"] and its occasion, its wording, its beginning, and its ending.

[18] Closing section concerning the explanation of the positions (or precedents) of the pious forbears (*salaf*) after completing the recitation of the Qur'ān and the prayer mentioned by the Prophet, may God bless and preserve him.

Types of Qur'ān Recitation

Most recitation manuals describe three or four types of recitation. The first, known as *taḥqīq*, is a slow, precisely enunciated form of recitation, in which absolute clarity in the oral rendering of the text is paramount. *Taḥqīq* is not the kind of recitation that is offered up for public listening; rather, it is intended for full aural analysis of the text as it should be articulated. *Taḥqīq* is the basis for the best melodic chanting, because it provides a complete performance map, as it were. But *taḥqīq* is not a normal style of recitation, and is rarely heard outside teaching or practice contexts. *Tajwīd*, or more precisely, *mujawwad* recitation, with melodies, is based on *taḥqīq*.

The second style of recitation is *al-ḥadr*, a rapid form of recitation

that proceeds more quickly than the untrained ear can follow. *Ḥadr* recitation must follow the rules of *tajwīd*, but it cannot, obviously, observe all the fine points. Nevertheless, it is considered adequate, especially for individual, private, even *sotto voce* recitation. I have an acquaintance in Indonesia who can recite the entire Qur'ān on the train trip form Surabaya (Java) to Yogyakarta by means of *al-ḥadr*. The time required is around seven hours, as the train makes many stops. He has demonstrated his technique to me, and I have recorded it. Whenever he has made a mistake, he has immediately returned to the place and corrected it before continuing on in as perfect a manner as possible. (Such correction is required in all recitation.) I have recorded the *ḥadr* type of recitation also from an informant in Cairo, and I must say that on review of the tape at a rheostatically controlled slower speed I have been pressed to detect any flaws. Of course, the listener's experience is not the same when listening to rapid recitation as it is when listening to *taḥqīq*—which is laborious—or *tartīl*, which we shall describe next, and which, in any event, has been a standard since the time of Muḥammad.

Tartīl is the type of recitation which was set forth in the Qur'ān as the manner in which the text should be recited. *Tartīl* is plain, unadorned, non-"musical" recitation. As has often been said, all *taḥqīq* is *tartīl*, but not all *tartīl* is *taḥqīq*. A prominent exponent of *tartīl* was the late Egyptian *qāri'*, Shaykh al-Ḥuṣarī, whose recordings via this style have influenced hosts of learners, because of his clear, precise, and warmly resonant recitation, which never became quite melodic, yet at the same time was anything but dull. Shaykh al-Ḥuṣarī's style of Qur'ān chanting remains, in my mind, the highest standard of *tartīl* available in recorded form.[31] Another prominent recitation master, who kindly provided much information and permitted me to observe his training sessions in a number of Cairo locales, limited the style among his students to *tartīl*.[32] His reasons were both pedagogical and religious: *tartīl* is attainable and should be attempted by as many minimally equipped Muslims as possible. *Tartīl* is the style recommended by great recitation experts of the past, for example

[31] Shaykh Maḥmūd Khalīl al-Ḥuṣarī published a useful book on the Qur'ān in which he focused on its recitation more in general religious than in technical terms: *Maᶜa 'l-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo, n.p., 1380/1960; with endorsements by several leading religious scholars, including a former Shaykh of the Azhar University, Maḥmūd Shaltūt.)

[32] Shaykh ᶜĀmīr b. al-Sayyid b. ᶜUthmān, who was born in 1318/1900, kindly gave me two books that he had written on recitation, both of which were privately published by the author for free distribution. The first is *Kitāb fatḥi 'l-qadīr sharḥu tanqihi 'l-taḥrīr* ("The Book of the Victory of the Almighty: A Commentary on the Examination of the Redaction," Cairo 1382/1962, 252 pp.). The book is a technical treatise on the "Ten Readings," covering fine points, sura by sura. The other book is an introduction to recitation, *Kayfa yutlā 'l-Qur'ān* ("How the Qur'ān is Recited," Cairo: 2nd printing, 1393/1974, 93 pp.).

the Shāfiᶜi jurist and ḥadith expert al-Nawawī, mentioned earlier. *Tartīl* is the clearest and least adorned recitation, yet at the same time it provides opportunity for the experience of the Qur'ān's sublime beauty while meditating on its message. Remember that *taḥqīq* is *tartīl*, too, but that all *tartīl* need not be so slowly or rigorously performed as in the precision-oriented subclass of the style. Again, it should not be imagined that non-*taḥqīq tartīl* is in any degree short of observing the rules of *tajwīd*. I see the issue as one of deliberate emphasis on the *manner* of the recitation in *taḥqīq*, and on the *matter* of recitation in the more spontaneous but still perfect recitation of normal *tartīl*. Once one has mastered *tartīl*, he or she can then recite the Qur'ān in a fluent manner, not consciously thinking about the techniques involved any more than Zen archers or, at a more accessible human level, bicyclists have to think about what they are doing while they are performing.

There is a fourth category of recitation, known as *tadwīr*. It is not a separate style, really, because it pertains to speed, falling between *taḥqīq* and *ḥadr*. *Tadwīr* is the preferred course and should be performed in *tartīl* style.

The rules of *tajwīd* apply to all Qur'ān recitation. *Tajwīd*, strictly speaking, is not a particular style, although some reciters use the term in two senses. The first sense is the generic sense just mentioned, namely, the rules of recitation. The second meaning of *tajwīd* is quasi-musical chanting, or cantillation of the Qur'ān which sometimes reaches extremes of florid, emotionally exciting musicality, displaying the virtuosity of performers as much as the inherent beauties of the Qur'ān. This style of recitation is properly known as *mujawwad*, and as such is perfectly acceptable. Over the centuries, there has been much written on "musical" recitation, both pro and con,[33] and we cannot rehearse the positions here except to observe that the melodic, i.e., *mujawwad*, recitation has generally been considered very desirable so long as it does not stray into mere entertainment, use popular or otherwise inappropriate tunes (such as Christian or Jewish melodies), or in any way deviate from the rules of technical *tajwīd*. Of course, the motives of both reciters and listeners must also be pure and the contexts of recitation acceptable. The Egyptian *muqri'* whose preference is

[33] Nelson has thoroughly reviewed this subject (1985:ch.3) and has provided detailed analysis of what she calls "ideal" recitation, both in *mujawwad* and non-*mujawwad* styles in substantial sections of other chapters. Ideal recitation depends on melodic dimensions of recitation, Nelson demonstrates. For insight into traditional Muslim thinking on music and religion, see Macdonald 1901, 1902. The author of this work was Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), one of the greatest Muslim thinkers. His brother Abū 'l-Futūḥ Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126) was a Sufi master and heartily embraced both music and dance in the devotional life, unlike his more cautious brother, who was very circumspect in his highly qualified approval of music. One of Aḥmad's writings on the subject has been translated by Robson under the title *Tracts on Listening to Music* (1938).

for *tartīl* told me more than once that *tajwīd* in the sense of *mujawwad*, melodic recitation, usually tends too much towards musical performance and thus endangers the spiritual dimension of *tilāwat al-Qur'ān*. Remember that the root *tilāwa* is the characteristic Qur'ānic term for recitation, and that it means more than mere performance. The commentaries include among their interpretations of Sura 2:121, "Those to whom we have given the Scripture recite it with the right recitation" (*alladhīna ātaynāhumu 'l-kitāba yatlūnahu ḥaqqa tilāwatihi*), the view that *yatlūnahu ḥaqqa tilāwatihi* ("[they] recite it with the right recitation") means obeying or conforming to the Qur'ān as much as reading or reciting it correctly.[34]

Qur'ān and Community

Although most Muslim countries have modern educational systems, the old-style Qur'ān school (*kuttāb*; *pondok pesantren* in Indonesia) still has an important place in certain locales. Sometimes the *kuttāb* is still the main school, as in small villages. Mostly, recitation instruction is conducted after public school, whether in a mosque, religious school, or other place. In all cases, instruction possesses both an oral and a written dimension. With young children, the oral aspect is more prominent and rote repetition is the main method, reinforced by training in the alphabet and writing. A certain amount of memorization is usually required, but more common is correct recitation using an open copy of the Qur'ān. A minority of Qur'ān schools feature memorization of the entire text, as for example in Indonesia.

The motives for learning the recitation of the Qur'ān are mainly religious, but what is considered properly "religious" in Islam embraces cultural, social, aesthetic, and other dimensions as well. For example, in Indonesia, there are intense competitions (*musābaqa*) in the recitation of the Qur'ān, which begin at the local level of the neighborhood mosque or religious school, and then escalate to the town, city, provincial, and finally national levels. Every two years, a *Musābaqa Tilāwat al-Qur'ān* is held at the national level in Indonesia. This major event has been held fifteen times now. It draws enormous attention from the media and provides opportunities for outstanding reciters to become famous. The competition is called by the government a "national discipline," in that it focuses the efforts and talents of very many people, young and old, on an activity that is believed to reinforce both religious and civic values in Indonesia.

I have attended *musābaqas* in Indonesia, both at the local and the national levels, and can attest to the enormous social, civic, cultural, and

[34] See note 7 for a reference in al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr*

spiritual power that they generate.[35] Young reciters, especially, find themselves highly motivated to perfect their recitation, and in the process all the religious and moral values and habits that ideally accompany any Qur'ān-related activities. Although prizes are awarded to winning contestants, the greatest rewards are intangible. The sheer beauty of the performances appears to be reward enough, both for participants and for their grateful (and in the cases of parents, relatives, teachers, and friends of contestants, *proud*) audiences.

Qur'ān recitation everywhere has the traits of cultural performance as well as universal Islamic religious activity. It is primarily because of the Qur'ān that Islam has retained a high level of orality in its piety and in its way of understanding the nature of things in a cosmos where God, when He decrees a thing, "says to it, 'Be,' and it is" (Sura 2:117). Only when the Qur'ān is recited does it bestow the blessings peculiar to its origin, form, and function. The sound of Qur'ānic recitation is as much a part of its meaning as the written text, but the former is more fundamental than the latter, because it embraces both. That is why Islam can never cease to preserve and transmit the Qur'ān as living recitation. Just as God creates by speech acts, so also did the Qur'ān originally create as it continues to sustain the Muslim community as guidance and blessing conveyed by the human voice.[36]

University of Colorado, Boulder

[35] See Denny 1985:33-37, for a description of the national-level *Musābaqa Tilāwatil Qur'ān* held in Pontianak, West Kalimantan (Borneo) in May of 1985. The Indonesian approach to education in reading and reciting the Qur'ān in Arabic, and the institutions that sustain and promote these activities, are described in Shalihah 1983.

[36] Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following agencies and institutions for support of my field research on Qur'ān recitation: to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a fellowship for research in Cairo, Egypt in 1976-77; to the University of Virginia for a Summer Grant in support of that work in 1977; to the Center for Arabic Studies of the American University in Cairo for official sponsorship and generous academic hospitality; and to the American Research Center in Egypt for the use of its library and status as Honorary Fellow during my stay in Cairo. I also thank the University of Colorado's Council on Research and Creative Work for a Grant-in-Aid in support of travel to Indonesia for a preliminary field survey in 1980, and for a faculty fellowship and Grant-in-Aid for nine months' field research in East Java in 1984-85. The author is also most grateful to have been the recipient of a Fulbright Islamic Civilization Research Grant, awarded by the United States Information Service and administered by the Council on International Exchange of Scholars, for 1984-85 in Indonesia. Finally, he acknowledges the sponsorship of his research by the Islamic State University of Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, East Java, and the official permissions granted by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia), in Jakarta.

References

ben Cheneb 1953 — Moḥammad ben Cheneb. "Tadjwīd." In *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Eds. H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers Leiden: E.J. Brill. pp. 557-58.

Bergsträsser 1932-33 — Gotthelf Bergsträsser. "Die Koranlesung in Kairo." *Der Islam*, 20:1-42; 21:110-40.

Boneschi 1938 — Paulo Boneschi. "La *qaṣīda fi 't-taǧwīd* attribuée à Musà b. ʿUbayd Allāh b. Hāqān." *Rendiconti*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma. Classe de Scienza Morali, Storiche e Filologiche. 14:51-92.

Burton 1977 — John Burton. *The Collection of the Qur'ān*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cantineau and Barbès 1942-47 — Jean Cantineau and Léo Barbès. "La récitation coranique à Damas et à Alger." *Faculté des Lettres de l'Institut des Etudes Orientales, Annales*, 6:66-107.

Denny 1980a — Frederick M. Denny. "Exegesis and Recitation: Their Development as Classical Forms of Qur'ānic Piety." In *Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religions: Essays in Honor of Joseph M. Kitagawa*. Eds. Frank E. Reynolds and Theodore M. Ludwig. Leiden: E.J. Brill. pp. 91-123.

Denny 1980b — _____. "The *Adāb* of Qur'ān Recitation: Text and Context." In *International Congress for the Study of the Qur'ān, Proceedings*. Canberra: Australian National University Press. pp. 143-60.

Denny 1985 — _____. "The Great Indonesian Qur'ān Chanting Tournament." In *William and Mary: The Alumni Gazette Magazine*, 54:33-37. Rpt. with minor revs. and colored photographs in *The World and I*, 6 (1986):216-23.

Denny 1988 — _____. "Qur'ān Recitation Training in Indonesia: A Survey of Contexts and Handbooks." In *Approaches to the History of Interpretation of the Qur'ān*. Ed. by Andrew Rippin. Oxford: Clarendon Press. pp. 288-306.

EI — *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Ed. H.A.R. Gibb et al. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960-.

Eickelman 1978 — Dale F. Eickelman. "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and its Social Reproduction." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 20:485-516.

Graham 1987 — William A. Graham. *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hughes 1957 — Merritt Y. Hughes, ed. *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*. New York: The Odyssey Press.

Juynboll 1974 — G.H.A. Juynboll. "The Position of Qur'ān Recitation in Early Islam." *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 19:240-51.

Lane 1867 — Edward William Lane. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. London: Williams and Norgate.

Macdonald 1901, 1902 — Duncan B. Macdonald. "Emotional Religion in Islam as Affected by Music and Singing. Being a Translation of a Book of the *Iḥyā' ᶜUlūm ad-Dīn* of al-Ghazzālī with Analysis, Annotation, and Appendiceṣ" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1901:195-252, 705-48; 1902:1-28.

al-Nawawī 1964 — al-Nawawī. *Saḥīḥ Muslim (Kitāb al-Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn, Bāb Istiḥbāb Taḥsīn al-Ṣawt bi'l-Qur'ān)*. Cairo: Al- Maṭabaᶜa al-Miṣrīya.

Nelson 1985 — Kristina Nelson. *The Art of Reciting the Qur'ān*. Modern Middle East Series, 11. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Ong 1967 — Walter J. Ong. *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ong 1982 — _____. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. New York: Methuen.

Pacholczyk 1970 — Józef Marcin Pacholczyk. "Regulative Principles in the Koran Chant of Shaikh ᶜAbdu'l-Bāsiṭ ᶜAbdu'ṣ-Ṣamad." PhD. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeleṣ

Rabin 1960 — C. Rabin. "ᶜArabiyya." *EI*, I:561-67.

Robson 1938 — James Robson. *Tracts on Listening to Music*. London: Oriental Translation Fund.

Robson 1965 — _____. *Mishkat al-Masabih: English Translation with Explanatory Notes*. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf.

al-Said 1975 — Labib al-Said. *The Recited Koran: A History of the First Recorded Version*. Trans and adapted by Bernard Weiss et al. Princeton: The Darwin Press.

Shalihah 1983 — Khadijatus Shalihah. *Perkembangan Seni Baca al-Qur'āndan Qiraat Tujuh di Indonesia* ("The Development of the Art of Reading the Qur'ān and the Seven Readings in Indonesia"). Jakarta: Pustaka Alhusna.

al-1fiabarī 968 — Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī. *Jāmiᶜu 'l-bayān ᶜan ta'wīlāyi 'l- qar'ān*. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.

Talbi 1958 — M. Talbi. "La *qirā'a bi-l-alḥān*." *Arabica*, 5:183-90.

al-Ṭalībī 1959 — Muḥammad al-Ṭalībī, ed. *Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa 'l-bidaᶜ* ("The Book of Innovations and Heresies"). Tunis: Al-Maṭbaᶜa al-Rasmīya li 'l-Jumhurīya al-Tūnisīya.

von Grunebaum 1960 — G.E. von Grunebaum. "Iᶜdjāz." *EI*, III:1018-20.

Welch 1960 — Alford T. Welch "Al-K ur'ān." *EI*, V:85-86.

Zwettler 1978 — Michael Zwettler. *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry: Its Character and Implications*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 27-37

Oral Traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad: A Formulaic Approach

R. Marston Speight

The oral traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad are found recorded in the *ḥadīth* literature of Islam. This material consists of many collections of anecdotes, reports, statements, and prescriptions on a variety of subjects, all containing the records of words and deeds attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, to his Companions, and to other Muslims of the early Islamic period.[1] It is common knowledge that in this literature we have to do with material which was originally transmitted orally. Even though the *ḥadīth* texts now exist in books, they bear several marks of oral composition: unvarying style, frequent repetition of expressions, emphasis upon action rather than description, conversational tone, atomistic structure, and, above all, the use of formulas as "the means of expressing the themes," to borrow and apply to prose the words used by Albert B. Lord (1960:49) in his description of Yugoslav oral poetry.

In the case of other literature originally transmitted orally, such as the Biblical tradition, the oral testimonies underwent changes as they were put down in writing, since they were incorporated into large literary wholes to become parts of connected discourses or narratives (see Koch 1969:89). This was not the case with the *ḥadīth* of Islam. We can open any written collection and find there, on the part of the compiler or editor, a scrupulous concern to preserve the conventions of oral recitation. So the interest of a researcher is not so much to prove the orality of the material, but rather to show how an understanding of its oral nature helps to grasp the specific contribution of *ḥadīth* to various practical concerns of the Muslims, such as the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the fulfilling of the duties of private, social, and cultic life. *Ḥadīth* are religious texts, with all that the term signifies of serious purpose. The thousands of reports which

[1] For a general introduction to the *ḥadīth* literature see the article "ḥadīth" in the *EI*. Other introductory books cited in the references: Goldziher 1971; Guillaume 1966; Siddiqi 1961. A few of the collections of *ḥadīth* have been translated into English, such as al-Bukhārī 1979 and Muslim 1971-75.

have been recorded also testify by their nature that they constituted, in their oral stage of development, a living tradition, a flexible and expanding recollection by the community. As they were told and retold, recited and learned, passed on and corroborated by other testimonies, they underwent a great deal of creative transformation. This immense body of texts is, then, of additional interest as an example of Arabic prose from the period of the early development of the Islamic civilization.

Each *ḥadīth* text can be divided into three parts: 1) the chain of transmission, 2) the introduction, or setting, and 3) the report in the form of saying, event, action, story, or recollection. The chain of transmission (*isnād*) is the authenticating device for each text, and, besides giving the names of guarantors, leading back in more or less unbroken continuity to the primary source of the information, it uses a technical vocabulary that indicates the manner of transmission from one link to another in the chain. The *isnād* is not our concern here.

The manuals of *ḥadīth* science describe only two divisions of a *ḥadīth* text, the *isnād* and the "body" (*matn*), or "theme(s), subject(s)." For this purpose of literary analysis we can single out a short introduction to every report, which, although traditionally included as a part of the *matn*, deserves to be treated separately in order to clarify the nature and significance of the report itself.

The Introductory Formula

The chain of transmission ends with the primary guarantor being cited as speaking, either directly or indirectly. Then follows a brief statement of the circumstantial setting for the report, as an introduction, providing a sense of plausibility for the report itself. The introduction is always given in terms of action, never in a purely descriptive manner. Usually it is clear where the setting ends and the report proper begins, but sometimes the setting is a part of the report itself. The following example, taken from the famous collection of al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, is given simply to show how the chain of transmission is linked to the rest of the *ḥadīth*:

> ᶜAbd Allāh ibn Yūsuf reported to us, saying, "Mālik informed us on the authority of Abū al-Zanād, who had it from Al-ᶜAraj, who had it in turn from Abū Hurayra, that the Messenger of God said: 'If one of you leads the people in prayer he should shorten it for the sake of any among them who are weak, ill or elderly. But when one of you prays alone he can take as long as he desires'." (*adhān*:62)

For the purpose of presenting evidence of the introduction feature in the texts, I have read rapidly through 2,285 *ḥadīth* from the collection

called *Ṣaḥīḥ*, by Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875 A.D.), one of the two most respected compilations in the Islamic world. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* contains something over 7,000 reports in all, including many with multiple versions. The formula of introduction is almost always present. I call it a *structural formula*,[2] that is, a constantly repeated syntactical structure which always serves the same purpose. There is also a considerable amount of verbal uniformity in the use of the formula, but to enter into this aspect of the subject would require a discussion of themes, thus taking us beyond the scope of this study.[3]

The structural formula is the verb in its perfect form. In an Arabic sentence the verb normally comes in first place, so each *ḥadīth* is introduced by a verb, an action, setting the stage for the report to follow. In its simplest expression the verb stands alone, with its subject following, introducing the person or persons who figure in the report:

> The Messenger of God *said*. . ..
>
> *qāla* rasūl Allāh. . .. (*aymān*:10)[4]

Other verbs used include: "asked," "saw," "went out," "forbade," "commanded," and so forth. Although the setting is very often expressed simply by the verb alone, it can also contain complementary elements, such as prepositional phrases, adverbial complements, and direct objects, all depending directly upon the verb.

This simple and direct structural formula is capable of uniform expansion by virtue of the Arabic particles *fa-* ("and, so, then"), *thumma* ("then"), *idh* ("when"), *lammā* ("when"), and so on, all followed by the verb in the perfect. There is the formula using two verbs:

> ᶜAlī *preached* and *said*. . ..
>
> *khaṭaba* ᶜAlī fa-*qāla*. . .. (*ḥudūd*:7)

Other combinations of two verbs are: "came and said," "sat down and said," "entered and prayed," and so on.

The formula can also expand to three, four, or more verbs, all in the

---

[2] Using the expression borrowed from Joseph A. Russo in Zwettler 1978:51.

[3] For a brief classification of the circumstantial settings of *ḥadīth* according to theme, see Stetter 1965.

[4] References to the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim give the name of the section (*kitāb*) and the number of the chapter (*bāb*) within the section.

perfect form. For example:

> When Abū Ṭālib *approached* death the Messenger of God *came* to him and *found*. . . and *said*
>
> lammā *ḥaḍarat* Abā Ṭālib al-wafāh *jā'ah* rasūl Allāh fa-*wajada* . . . fa-*qāla*. . .. (*īmān*:9)
>
> * * * * *
>
> My ears *heard* and my eyes *saw* when the Messenger of God *spoke* and *said*. . .
>
> *samiᶜat* udhunāya wa-*abṣarat* ᶜaynāya ḥīn *takallama* rasūl Allāh fa-*qāla*. . .. (*luqaṭa*:3)

Although most examples of the introductory formula have verbs in the perfect form, the requirements of announcing the setting sometimes call for the expression of other aspects of action. For example, the second verb may be in the imperfect:

> A man *came* to him *begging* for a hundred dirhams. . ..
>
> *atāh* rajul *yas'aluh* mi'at dirham. . . . (*aymān*:3)

One verbal form may be an active participle, as:

> I *entered* the mosque where the Messenger of God *was seated*. . ..
>
> dakhaltu al-masjid wa-rasūl Allāh *jālis* . . .. (*īmān*:72)

Formulas Used in the Reports

Turning to the saying, narration, or recollection which makes up the body of the *ḥadīth* text, we find three formulas according to the type of rhetoric that is used. Here we shall refer to some aspects of the thematic content of the literature, but only to point out correlation between theme and formula. For the evidence in this portion of the paper I am drawing upon my study (1970) of the *Musnad* of al-Ṭayālisī (d. 818 A.D.), one of the earliest general compilations of *ḥadīth* to achieve renown. All of its

2,767 texts were examined. In the interest of saving space I shall give the Arabic words and expressions only when it is deemed important to do so for the discussion, or in the case of unusual words. The texts may be classified according to three rhetorical types: declaratory, imperative, and narrative. We can say that each of these types represents a rhetorical formula (as distinguished from a structural or syntactical one) which distinguishes the traditions whose themes are expressed by it.

A. The declaratory formula, as might be expected, is a simple affirmation, either literal or figurative. Here are some examples, showing the variety of ways in which this formula is used.

1. Definitions or clarifications (in citing examples the introductory formula will be placed in brackets)

> [The father of Sulaymān ibn Burayda reported] that the Messenger of God gave permission to visit graves.[5] (807)

> [The Messenger of God said,] "The Night of the Divine Decree (Laylat al-Qadr) is the night of the twenty-fourth."[6] (2167)

> [The Messenger of God said,] "Wine comes from these two trees, the palm tree and the grape vine." (2569)

> [I heard the Messenger of God say, three days before his death,] "No one dies but that he has good thoughts about God." (1779)

2. Negative statements, usually with the exceptive particles, *lā. . .illā*

> [The Prophet said,] "There is no protection except in God and in His Messenger." (1230)

3. Comparative statements

> [The Prophet said,] "Prayer in this, my mosque, is better than a thousand prayers (or a hundred)[7] in another one, unless it be the Mosque of Al-Ḥarām."[8] (950)

---

[5] The *ḥadīth* texts are numbered consecutively in al-Ṭayālisī.

[6] Of the month of Ramadan.

[7] A variant reading.

[8] In Jerusalem

4. Superlative statements

[The Messenger of God said,] "The best medical treatment is cupping." (890)

5. Conditional promises, with the condition expressed in a variety of ways

[The Prophet said,] "Whoever reads Yā Sīn[9] in a night, seeking the face of God, will have his sins forgiven." (2467)

6. Prophecies, with several distinctive rhetorical devices

[I heard the Messenger of God saying,] "This religion will not cease to stand firm; Muslims will band together to fight for it until Judgment Day." (756)

7. Epigrams

[The Messenger of God said,] "Paradise lies in the shadow of the swords." (530)

8. Metaphorical assertions

[The Messenger of God said,] "The relationship between myself and the Prophets can be compared to a house which a man built carefully, but left one brick unlaid. Those who visited the house admired it, except for the empty space for the one brick. Then I laid the brick. I am the Seal of the Prophets." (1785)

[The Messenger of God said,] "The believer is to another believer like the parts of a building that support each other." (503)

9. Rhymes

[When the Messenger of God drank he used to breathe three times and say,] "It is more healthful, more wholesome and more healing (*huwa ahna' wa-amra' wa-abra'*)." (2118)

10. Numerical sayings, in which the items under consideration are coordinated into an easily remembered list. First there is a statement of

[9] Sūra 36 of the Qur'ān.

what all of the items have in common, and then they are listed.

> [The Messenger of God said,] "A Muslim's claim from his brother is fivefold: returning the salutation, visiting the sick, following the bier, saying amen to the *imām* (prayer leader), and blessing (*tashmīt*) the one who sneezes." (2299)

> [The Messenger of God said,] "Seven will find God's protection in the day when there will be no protection except His: a just ruler or an upright leader, a young man who grows up worshipping God, a man whose heart is so directed toward the place of prayer that he returns to it, two men who meet together in the love of God and part in that same love, a man who gives alms in secret so that his left hand does not know what his right hand has done in secret, a man who, when a beautiful woman calls out to him, says, 'I fear God,' and a man who remembers God in solitude and whose eyes flow with tears from fear of God." (2462)

11. Antithetical assertions, with two thoughts placed parallel to each other

> [The Messenger of God said,] "Those who drink wine in this world will not drink it in the hereafter, unless they repent." (1857)

> [The Prophet said,] "Whoever obeys my commander (*amīr*) obeys me, and whoever disobeys my commander disobeys me." (2432)

12. Blessings

> [I heard the Messenger of God say,] "May God grant pardon to Ghifār and peace to Aslam." (1766)[10]

13. Curses

> [I heard the Messenger of God say in a sermon,] "May God inflict with leprosy (or, with bankruptcy) those who monopolize the food market of the Muslims." (55)

Sometimes a composite form of several statements is found, including representative examples of any of the above types of affirmations. This combination of affirmations we call a discourse.

B. The imperative formula consists of a statement in the imperative mood or else a statement conveying the thought of a command, an

[10] In this text note the play on the names of the tribes: "Ghifār ghafara Allāh lahā wa Aslam sālamahā Allāh."

injunction, or a prescription.

1. Injunctions

> [The Prophet said,] "Feed the hungry, relieve the distressed and visit the sick." (489)

> [The Messenger of God said to me,] "O Abū Dharr, when you fast three days in a month make them the thirteenth, the fourteenth, and the fifteenth days." (475)

2. Judgments, which are moral or legal decisions and pronouncements, and which convey a sense of obligation

> [The Prophet said,] "Neither a swindler nor a traitor will enter Paradise." (8)

> [I saw the Messenger of God] condemn an unmarried man who had committed fornication to a hundred lashes and banishment for a year. (1332)

3. Prohibitions

> [Abū Hurayra said,] "The Messenger of God forbade the acquisition of slave girls." (2520)

> [The Messenger of God said,] "Do not set some of the Prophets of God above others." (2366)

> [The Messenger of God said,] "Neither the horse of a believer nor his slave can serve as legal alms (*ṣadaqa*)." (2527)

C. The narrative formula accords with the emphasis that the *ḥadīth* place upon the example of the Prophet for the life of the Muslim community. A vast number of *ḥadīth* recount actions or recall events in the life of Muḥammad or that of early Muslims which are significant in the sense either of being exemplary for the believers, or of constituting elements in the collective recollection of the community, serving to nourish its faith.

Examples of the narrative formula, in order of increasing complexity, are as follows:

> [I heard ᶜAlī say] that every night the Messenger of God prayed (*awtara*) at the beginning of the night, in the middle of it and at the end of it, his prayer lasting until dawn. (115)

> [The Messenger of God was preaching and he saw my father in the sun.]

So he bade him, or signaled to him, to come into the shade. (1298)

[A man of the Anṣār said to the Prophet,] "You put so-and-so in a place of authority, but you did not do that for me." Then he replied, "After me you will see selfishness, but persevere until we meet together around the Basin (*ḥawḍ*)."[11] (1969)

[The Prophet said to him,] "O Abū Ayyūb, would you not like for me to indicate to you an alms which would bring pleasure to God and to His Messenger?" "Why yes," he said. So the Prophet said, "It is to reconcile people who are estranged and to bring together those who are separated." (598)

[The Messenger of God used to pray until his feet swelled. Someone said to him,] "O Messenger of God, why do you do that when all of your sins, both former and latter, have been forgiven?" The Messenger of God said, "Should I not be a grateful slave?" (693)

[I heard ᶜAlī telling (the following):] I presented the Messenger of God with a garment of silk, but he sent it back to me. Then I put it on, and he said to me, "What I despise for myself does not please me for you either." He bade me tear the garment into strips to serve as veils for the women. (119)

It might be asked why some examples of the narrative formula might not be included in the first category of declaratory sayings, or, for that matter, in the second, imperative group, since their main thrust consists precisely of concise and striking affirmations or imperatives. Nos. 598 and 1969 are examples which might elicit such a question. In their entirety however, they do not fit the description of a declaratory or an imperative formula, even though they contain an affirmation (1969) and a moral imperative (598). The narrator in those examples imbeds each saying in a conversational exchange, creating a rudimentary story. And, clearly, historical or biographical recollections, such as nos. 115 and 1298 above, are only to be considered as narrative formulas.

Conclusion

The formulaic approach to the *ḥadīth* literature permits us to ascertain the nature of the texts which transmit the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad. This procedure sets the stage for a rhetorical analysis of the

[11] Eschatological reality.

material.[12] A comparison of variant readings of the same tradition should cast light upon the way in which oral literature develops through its transmission from one generation to another. Fortunately, the *ḥadīth* collections provide abundant evidence of the way in which particular testimonies or recollections underwent interpolations, omissions, distortions, combinations, condensations, and augmentations as they were passed on from one link to another in the chains of transmission. And, finally, the structure and rhetoric of the *ḥadīth* are not to be considered as purely the anonymous productions of a community. They are, in the Muslim view, inseparably linked with some of the outstanding personalities of early Islamic history. Much skepticism has been expressed by non-Muslim scholars regarding the attribution of *ḥadīth* texts to particular individuals, and certainly a critical sense is needed in assessing the evidence for the authenticity of the chains of transmission. Such scholarly reserve should not, however, inhibit a thorough testing for correlations between the insight furnished by the biographies of the guarantors of *ḥadīth* and the subject matter and forms of expression seen in the material itself.

References

al-Bukhārī 1979 — al-Bukhārī. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Trans. by Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān. 4th rev. ed. Chicago: Kazi Publications. 9 vols.

EI 1960- — *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill.

Goldziher 1971 — Ignaz Goldziher. *Muslim Studies*. Trans. by C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern. Chicago: Aldine. vol. 2.

Guillaume 1966 — Alfred Guillaume. *The Traditions of Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924. Rpt. Beirut: Khayat's.

Koch 1969 — Klaus Koch. *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Lord 1960 — Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1968 et seq.

Muslim 1971-75 — Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Trans. by Abdul

[12] Rhetorical analysis of *ḥadīth* is one of my research projects. At the 1985 national meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, I presented a paper entitled "Rhetorical Features of Pronouncement Stories in the *Ḥadīth* Literature of Islam."

Hamid Siddiqi. Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf.

Siddiqi 1961 — Muhammad Zubair Siddiqi. *Ḥadīth Literature*. Calcutta: Calcutta University.

Speight 1970 — R. Marston Speight. "The Musnad of Al-Ṭayālisī: A Study of Islamic Ḥadīth as Oral Literature." Ph.D. diss., The Hartford Seminary Foundation.

Stetter 1965 — Eckart Stetter. "Topoi und Schemata im Ḥadit." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tübingen.

Zwettler 1978 — Michael Zwettler. *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry: Its Character and Implications*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Ḥadīth Collections from which Examples Were Taken

al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismāᶜīl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. 3 vols. Cairo: Dār wa-Maṭābiᶜ al-Shaᶜb, n.d.

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Ed. by Muḥammad Fu'ād ᶜAbd al-Bāqī. 5 vols. Cairo: Al-Ḥalabī, 1955.

al-Ṭayālisī, Sulaymān ibn Dā'ūd. *Al-Musnad*. Ed. by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Amruhī et al. Hyderabad: Majlis Dā'irat al-Maᶜārif al-Niẓāmīya, 1903.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 38-64

Which Came First, the *Zajal* or the *Muwaššaḥa*? Some Evidence for the Oral Origins of Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry

James T. Monroe

I. The Problem

The two Andalusian poetic forms known as *zajal* and *muwaššaḥa* have often been discussed in relation to one another, not only by modern critics,[1] but also by medieval Arab scholars,[2] to such an extent, indeed, that they have been called "sister-genres" (Stern 1974:12). This is so for several compelling reasons: (1) Both forms are strophic, and are closely related in structure. (2) Both incorporate elements of vernacular diction. (3) Both contain puzzling departures from the rules of classical Arabic metrics. (4) *Muwaššaḥa* poets often functioned simultaneously as composers of *zajal*s, and vice-versa. (5) *Muwaššaḥa*s frequently contain passages quoted directly from *zajal*s, while the reverse is also true. (6) As all known medieval Arab authorities are unanimous in pointing out, both genres originated in Andalus and not in the East.[3]

From a linguistic point of view, the *zajal* is composed entirely in the vernacular Arabic dialect of Andalus, occasionally besprinkled with words or phrases in Hispano-Romance. In contrast, the *muwaššaḥa* is in Classical Arabic, with the exception of its final element, which is normally in vernacular diction, either Arabic, Romance, or a combination of both.

The two genres may further be distinguished from one another in structural terms: The *zajal* proper always has an initial refrain (*maṭlaᶜ*) of which a typically common form is a couplet rhymed AA, followed by an indefinite number of strophes, each of which contains a string of lines,

---

[1] See, for example, al-Ahwānī 1957; Gómez 1972; Stern 1974.

[2] See al-Andalusī 1983:255-63; Ḫaldūn 1958:440-55; Rušd 1872:3, I.

[3] For the *muwaššaḥa*, see Bassām 1978:469; al-Andalusī 1983:255; al-Mulk 1949:39-40; Ḫaldūn 1958:440. For the *zajal*, see al-Andalusī 1983:263; Hoenerbach 1956:16; Ḫaldūn 1958:454. For both genres, see Rušd: *idem*.

usually (but not less than) three, called *ġuṣn* and rhyming together, yet differing in rhyme from one strophe to the next (bbb, ccc, ddd, etc.), followed by a final element that rhymes with the refrain (*a*) but reproduces exactly half of the refrain's rhymes. This element is called *markaz*. Furthermore, all the *ġuṣns* in the poem are symmetrical, although they may vary metrically with respect to the *markaz*es. The latter, in turn, are also normally symmetrical. Thus, one archetypal form of *zajal* (of which subsequent developments are complications resulting from the addition of internal rhyme) exhibits the rhyme-scheme AA, bbb*a* (AA), ccc*a* (AA), ddd*a* (AA), etc.[4]

The basic *muwaššaḥa* pattern is similar to that of the *zajal* except that its *markaz*es reproduce the entire set of rhymes found in the refrain and are symmetrical with it: AA, bbb*aa* (AA), ccc*aa* (AA), ddd*aa* (AA), etc.[5] Three further differences are: (1) About one-third of the extant Andalusian *muwaššaḥas* lack a refrain. (2) The overwhelming number of *muwaššaḥa*s are only five strophes long, whereas *zajal*s are often considerably longer. (3) The final *markaz* of the poem, technically called *ḫarja*, is usually in the vernacular; it is introduced as a quotation and, in many cases, it can be shown that it is actually a quotation from another *zajal* or *muwaššaḥa*, normally a refrain, but sometimes a *ḫarja* from a previous poem. To further complicate matters, there exists a hybrid form, linguistically in vernacular Arabic throughout, like the *zajal* proper, but containing *markaz*es that duplicate the full set of rhymes found in the refrain, as occurs in the *muwaššaḥa*. This form which, following S.M. Stern, I shall designate the "*muwaššaḥa*-like *zajal*,"[6] in contrast to the "*zajal* proper" (*idem*) described above, further coincides with the *muwaššaḥa* in that it can be refrainless, often ends with a quotational *ḫarja*, and is usually five stophes long. Structurally the hybrid is thus a *muwaššaḥa* whereas linguistically it is a *zajal*. The fact that the *zajal* is entirely in the vernacular, whereas the vernacular element in the *muwaššaḥa* is relegated to the *ḫarja*, and that the structure of the *zajal* proper is simpler than that of the *muwaššaḥa* of itself tends to suggest that the *zajal* form is the more ancient of the two, and that the *muwaššaḥa* is a later and learned imitation.

Nonetheless, at this juncture we are confronted with a serious problem of documentation, for we are specifically informed by one medieval Arab scholar that the *muwaššaḥa* was *invented* toward the end of the ninth century by Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd of Cabra, a court poet of the

[4] An alternate type is one in which the refrain exhibits an AB rhyme-scheme.

[5] For a more complete listing of rhyme-schemes, see Stern 1974:19-26.

[6] Stern 1974:170. Given the hybrid nature of this type of poem, it is a debatable point whether or not it should instead be called the "*zajal*-like *muwaššaḥa*."

Cordovan Amīr ᶜAbdallāh (*regit* 888-912).[7] Muḥammad's poems, and those of his immediate successors, have been lost,[8] so that it is not until the beginning of the eleventh century that we possess surviving texts, the earliest of which were composed by ᶜUbāda ibn Mā' al-Samā' (d. 1027).[9] In contrast, whereas we are not told who invented the *zajal*,[10] the earliest extant poems in that genre known until recently were those of Ibn Quzmān (d. 1160).

This means that *zajal* texts only surface around two centuries after the invention of the *muwaššaḥa*, and less than a century after the earliest surviving *muwaššaḥa*.[11] Following a positivistic train of reasoning, most scholars, both medieval and modern, have therefore assumed that the *zajal* is a derivative of the *muwaššaḥa*, and have sought to explain their position in terms of a process whereby the masses took over a learned and courtly genre and turned it into a more popular *gesunkenes Kulturgut*.[12] Such a hypothesis, however, ignores one important point: by no means may Ibn Quzmān or his successors be considered popular poets simply because they composed in the vernacular. Instead, they are all learned poets, just as learned as authors of *muwaššaḥa*s for, as has been pointed out previously, the line between one genre and the other was often crossed by the same poet. Nor were Ibn Quzmān's *zajal*s composed for the common people. Instead, the majority of them are panegyrics dedicated to wealthy and learned patrons, whereas the love poems he composed, while they often include popular themes, also exhibit a thorough knowledge of Classical Arabic thematic conventions and literary history.

A further factor is that the structure of the Andalusian *zajal* proper coincides arrestingly with that of the most primitive type of Romance zajalesque poetry, especially with that of Spain, Italy, and France.[13] In contrast, the classical poetry of the Arabs can provide no precise or

---

[7] Bassām 1978:469; Ḫaldūn (1958:440), following al-Andalusī (1983:255), gives the name of the inventor of the genre as Muqaddam Ibn Muᶜafà of Cabra. But see al-Ahwānī 1948:19-33. Both Muḥammad and Muqaddam existed, and were contemporaries.

[8] They had already vanished by the time of Ḫaldūn, and perhaps even earlier. See Ḫaldūn 1958:441.

[9] Two poems by ᶜUbāda are published in Ġāzī 1979: I, 5-10.

[10] Ḥillī records some confusion concerning who invented the *zajal*, thereby betraying that in fact the inventor was unknown. See Hoenerbach 1956:16.

[11] Such texts could, however, have existed before they were documented.

[12] The above, generally speaking, is the view of al-Ahwānī (1957), Gómez (1972), and Stern (1974).

[13] For a recent reappraisal of the Romance material, see Pepió 1984:239-66.

convincing parallels to the *zajal*. We are therefore very much entitled to suspect that the Andalusian *zajal* may have taken over the prosodic form of a pre-existent Romance genre that was already widespread in Western Romania when the Arabs conquered the Iberian Peninsula.

This entirely legitimate suspicion has in recent times been hotly contested, often with less knowledge than intemperateness, by a number of scholars who are at best correct in stressing that the putative Romance congeners of the Andalusian *zajal* are all documented later than the poems of Ibn Quzmān.[14] The possibility therefore arises, as they seek to establish, that the Romance *zajal* could have derived from its Andalusian Arabic congener, rather than the reverse. According to such a hypothesis, we are led back to the moot question concerning the Arabic origins of Romance lyrical poetry.

In the preceding exposition, an attempt has been made to present, as briefly as possible, the results of scholarly research amounting to a vast bibliography on the subject. As with all summaries, one is fully aware that suppression of nuances may lead to oversimplification. Synthesis has, nevertheless, been necessary in the interests of clarity. The above account isolates two major questions: (1) which came first, the *zajal* or the *muwaššaḥa*? (2) which influenced the other, Romance or Arabic strophic poetry? Partisans of the Arabic thesis have, quite naturally, claimed priority for the *muwaššaḥa*, which they attempt to derive from classical Arabic poetry by hook or by crook. Subsequently, they add, the *muwaššaḥa* was taken over by the populace and transformed into the colloquial *zajal*, which was eventually acclimatized in Romance. Up to now, such scholars have had documentable chronology to back up their ideas.

In contrast, partisans of the Romance thesis, since they lack sufficiently early documentation to support their views, have assumed the existence of a Romance folk lyric from which the *muwaššaḥa* derived through its vernacular *ḫarja*. Thereafter, they assert, the *zajal* derived from the *muwaššaḥa* by the same process of popularization proposed by their rivals, for on this one issue the two antagonistic camps seem to agree. Both hypotheses leave much unexplained, particularly the perplexing question of meter, which one group views as a mere expansion of the classical Arabic quantitative system, and the other, as an adoption into Arabic of the stress-syllabic metrics of Romance.

The metrical problem needs further study; it is too complicated a matter to deal with technically and *in extenso* within the confines of this

[14] See especially Gorton 1975; Jones 1980, 1981-82, 1983-84; Latham 1982, 1983; Semah 1984. To the above tendency, contract Gómez 1972; Corriente 1980, 1982, 1984; Haxen 1982; Monroe 1981-82, 1986; Armistead 1981-82; Armistead and Monroe 1985.

article, and will therefore be explored more fully elsewhere. Nonetheless, in a recent publication, I suggested some new and urgent reasons why it is more convincing to view the *muwaššaḥa* as a derivative of an early and truly popular *zajal* genre in vernacular Arabic and Romance, now lost, which existed orally (Armistead and Monroe 1985:212-34). This suggestion has been substantiated more fully, on the basis of internal evidence, in a second article (Monroe 1986). For the purposes of the present discussion, a summary of my arguments goes as follows: it is a characteristic feature of the *muwaššaḥa* genre that each poem ends in a *ḫarja* usually composed in the vernacular, either Arabic or Romance. In this respect, the *ḫarja* contrasts thematically and linguistically with what precedes it. Not only are we specifically told that the inventor of the *muwaššaḥa* back in the late ninth century, "quoted colloquial Arabic and Romance diction, which he called the *markaz* [= *ḫarja*], and based the *muwaššaḥa* upon it" (Bassām 1978:469), but we are also able to show that later, when examples become available, in many instances these *ḫarja*s are texts actually quoted from the refrain of a previous poem which the poet happens to be imitating in structure (*muʿāraḍa*). We therefore have solid proof that the *ḫarja* is an independent poetic nucleus out of which the *muwaššaḥa* is built. I further pointed out that since the *ḫarja* of a later poem is usually in the vernacular, and is preferentially borrowed from the refrain of a previous poem, we are dealing with a phenomenon in which *ḫarja*s are, as can often be documented, actually refrains from earlier *zajal*s. This can be proven from the moment texts surface, but it also indicates that the same process may have been going on during the undocumented period, perhaps as far back as the time when the *muwaššaḥa* was invented. Whatever the case may be, from the moment of its emergence into the glare of history, the *muwaššaḥa* rests upon the *zajal* proper rather than the reverse.

Furthermore, it would be difficult to find a logical explanation for this singular phenomenon of quotation, unless we take into account a further factor that has not been fully appreciated until recently: *muwaššaḥa*s and *zajal*s were not poems intended merely for reading or recitation. Instead, it can be demonstrated that, like their putative Romance congeners, they were essentially songs composed to be sung chorally as follows. First a soloist sang the refrain, which was repeated by the chorus. Then he sang the first strophe, ending on a word that rhymes with the refrain. This provided a cue to the chorus that the refrain was to be sung by them. After they had repeated the refrain, the soloist sang the second strophe, and so on (Stern 1974:1-6). Not only do we possess medieval evidence both internal and external for this method of performance, which I hope to provide in detail elsewhere, but it has survived until the present in public performances of the North African *zajal* (see al-Jirārī 1970). In

fact, knowledge of the performance situation explains the otherwise bewildering rhyme-scheme of the genre.

It follows that the function of the *ḫarja* in a *muwaššaḥa* is not only poetic but is also melodic in a very practical sense, for it indicates to future singers, in a culture lacking the art of musical notation, the precise tune to which a given text should be sung. Add to the preceding remarks that, in general terms, a refrain must necessarily contain at least two poetic lines, coinciding with two musical bars, and we can postulate a generative explanation for the structural difference between the *zajal* and the *muwaššaḥa*: if the commonest type of *zajal* refrain has two lines, as is the case; if a *muwaššaḥa* poet sets out to contrafact such a *zajal*; and if he begins by borrowing its refrain, as we know often happened, then the *muwaššaḥa* he builds onto his borrowed *ḫarja* must reproduce the full rhyme structure of the *ḫarja* in its preceding *markaz*es, and indeed, in its own refrain, otherwise the resulting poem will be asymmetrical (i.e.: AA, bbb*a* [AA], ccc*a* [AA], ddd*a* [AA], eee*a* [AA], fff*aa* [AA]). Thus the structural difference between *zajal* and *muwaššaḥa* can be explained if we assume that the *zajal* was not the *muwaššaḥa's* sister, but was instead its mother. It would therefore be more accurate to define the *muwaššaḥa* in generative terms, as a form that reproduces in its *markaz*es the entire structure, not of its *maṭla*^{c}, but of its *ḫarja*.

Up to this point, I have summarized some theoretical arguments, derived from certain structural features of the texts at hand, to suggest why the *zajal* might antedate the *muwaššaḥa*, from which the latter could be derived. Nonetheless, until now, we have had little documentary proof that the *zajal* did in fact precede the *muwaššaḥa* chronologically, with which to counter the objections of the partisans of the Arabic thesis.[15] In what follows, I shall present some recently garnered evidence in support of the above arguments, "in order to respond to the 'Avez-vous un texte?' of Fustel de Coulanges and his less intelligently positivistic offspring (Rico 1975:557)."

II. The Evidence

(A) The Arab Period

(1) Ibn Quzmān and His Predecessors

In the Introduction to and within his *Dīwān*, Ibn Quzmān mentions two *zajal* poets, Al-Aḫṭal ibn Numāra and Yaḫlaf ibn Rāšid (Corriente

[15] Due to a lack of such proof, Stern's discussion of this problem (1974:52-56) remained inconclusive, while his reasoning was circular.

1980:1-7), about whose lives nothing is known, but whom he singles out as the most illustrious among his predecessors. These names also surface within the body of his poems.[16] Lest this should be considered a poetic fiction on our author's part, let it be added that these two poets are also cited by Ḥillī (1278-1349) in his treatise on vernacular Arabic poetry (Hoenerbach 1956:16). Furthermore, S.M. Stern was able to identify a *zajal* by Yaḫlaf among the documents from the Cairo Geniza (1974:193-95). This poem reveals that the *zajal* was not an innovation introduced by Ibn Quzmān, but a traditional genre of which, with the immodesty that characterized him, he considered himself the most brilliant exponent. The above evidence tallies perfectly with what we are told by Ibn Ḫaldūn (1332-82; ref. at 1958:455), on the authority of Ibn Saʿīd al-Andalusī (1213-86; ref. at 1983:263) who was in turn relying on a lost work by Al-Ḥijārī (ca. 1106-55)[17]: "[*Zajal*s] were composed in Andalus before Abū Bakr Ibn Quzmān, but their ornaments did not appear, nor were their themes poured forth, nor did their elegance become famous, save in his age" (al-Andalusī 1983:263). Of course, since we do not possess biographical data for these two poets, the above information does not take us very far back in time, if we assume, as is reasonable although by no means certain, that Ibn Quzmān is referring to his immediate predecessors rather than to chronologically remote practitioners of the genre.

*(2) Hebrew Zajal*s

A study of the Hebrew *muwaššaḥa* provides valuable clues for documenting the development of its Arabic parent. Nevertheless, because there can be no question linguistically of poems composed in "vernacular Hispano-Hebrew," there being no such diction, most scholars of this corpus have failed to distinguish between the *muwaššaḥa* and the *zajal* structures when classifying and editing the Hebrew corpus. Recently, however, David Wulstan (1982:259) has succeeded in identifying many examples among the religious poems of Ibn-al-Tabbān (late eleventh century) and Ibn Gabirol (ca. 1020-57) which exhibit the *zajal*, as opposed to the *muwaššaḥa*, structure. Such poems, as he points out, antedate Ibn Quzmān by at least a century. Since the Hebrew *muwaššaḥa* was deeply influenced by its Arabic counterpart, we may safely assume that the Hebrew *zajal* forms were also imitations of Arabic *zajal*s that have not survived. The above was known to S.M. Stern, who nevertheless excluded these Hebrew *zajal*s from consideration when he wrote his thesis, on the grounds that they were

[16] Ibn Numāra is mentioned in *Zajal*s No. 4 and 64; Ibn Rāšid, in *Zajal* no. 134.

[17] Concerning Saʿīd's dependence upon Al-Ḥijārī, see al-Ahwānī 1948.

liturgical rather than secular poems (1974:77-78). But since the problem we are dealing with is primarily one of prosodic structure rather than thematic content, his arbitrary exclusion is unacceptable.

(3) Prudish Priests

In 1957, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Ahwānī singled out a passage contained in Arabic MS. 593 of the National Library of Madrid.[18] This MS. is a copy, finished and added to by a Mozarabic monk named Binjant (= Vicente), on Tuesday, October 17, 1087 of the Spanish Era (= AD 1049), of a text entitled *Kitāb ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Usquf* (*The Book of Bishop ᶜAbd al-Malik*). Vicente's copy bears the title *Jamīᶜ Nawāmis al-kanīsat wa-l-qānūn al-muqaddas* (*All the Laws of the Church and the Holy Canon*). It has been identified as coinciding closely, but not entirely, in its wording and overall organization, with a Latin *Excerpta Canonum* attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville, although the possibility exists that the *Excerpta* may be a Mozarabic recension of an earlier Visigothic original, of which the Arabic translation copied by Vicente is a parallel but separate descendant. A passage in the Arabic version states:

> It is not permitted for clergymen to attend performances or *zajal*s in weddings and drinking parties; but rather, they must leave before the appearance of such musical performances and dancers, and withdraw from them.[19]

The corresponding passage in the *Excerpta* reads:

> Let it not be permitted for priests or clergymen to attend any performances in weddings or parties, but rather, they must arise and withdraw from there before the actual performances are begun.[20]

We therefore have an Arabic translation of a Latin text, dated as early as 1046, although the Arabic original from which our MS. was copied must be older, and perhaps considerably so. We are thus dealing, at the very least, with a reference to the *zajal* made over a century before Ibn Quzmān's death. It is also significant to note from the context that *zajal*s

---

[18] 1957:59. For more on this MS., see Robles 1889:242-44; Simonet 1897-1903:720-34, 711-19; Ewald and Loewe 1883: plate 31

[19] "Lā yajūzu li-l-qalāriqīna an yaḥḍurū, l-malāhī wa-z-zajala fī-l-ᶜarā ᶜisi wa-l-mašāribi bal yajibu ᶜalay-him al-inqilābu qabla duḫūli tilka a-aṭrābi wa-l-azfānī wa-t-tanaḥḥī ᶜan-hum" (fol. 333, recto; my trans.).

[20] Migne 1862, vol. 84:583, col. A, no. 60; my trans.

seem to have been sung at drinking parties and weddings,[21] in situations involving music and dancing.[22] Most curious is the implication that *zajal* performances were considered unsuitable for priests to attend. There is, in fact, a strong satirical and obscene tendency in the *zajal* genre of a later period, not only in that of Ibn Quzmān, but also in its Hispano-Romance equivalent.[23] This feature of the genre therefore appears to be very old indeed.

(4) Minstrels and Market Inspectors

In 1955 (67-116), É. Lévi-Provençal published a treatise of *ḥisba* written by one Aḥmad ibn ᶜAbdallāh ibn ᶜAbd al-Ra'ūf. At that time, it was not possible for Lévi-Provençal to identify the author or to assign a date to his work. Instead, he modestly concluded that the latter was a Hispano-Arabic book on the regulation of markets, composed by an unknown inspector of the same (*muḥtasib*). Five years later, Rachel Arié produced a French translation of this treatise, but was equally unable to make any headway in dating it (1960:14-38, 199-214, 349-64).

More recently, in 1973, Pedro Chalmeta Gendrón, in his study of the Andalusian *muḥtasib*, explained how he was finally able to date the work: first, on the basis of internal evidence, and later, thanks to a reference to the author discovered by him in Ibn ᶜIḏārī's (second half of the thirteenth century) *Bayān al-Muġrib*. As Chalmeta points out (382), the *bayān* reports that Ibn ᶜAbd al-Ra'ūf' was promoted from the post of *ṣāḥib al-madīna* to the vizierate in 931. We therefore have a relatively early text, written approximately in the first half of the tenth century. Chalmeta's dating is very important because it makes a passage in that work of great relevance to the present study:

> Those who go about the markets [singing] *zajal*s, *azyād* [?] and other types [of song] are forbidden to do so when [people] are being summoned to

[21] Stern (1974:80) notes Maimonides' similar disapproval of *muwaššaḥa*s, when these were also "sung at drinking parties as well as at marriage celebrations."

[22] On the dancing of *zajal*s, see Pepió 1984. There are references to dancing the *zajal* in Quzmān (*Zajal*s no. 37, 71, 103).

[23] An extreme example is Quzmān's *Zajal* no. 90. For Castilian, see Ruiz 1972:40-42, strophes 115-20 ("*Zajal* to Cruz Cruzada"). See too the remarks by Frenk 1978:309-26.

> Holy War,[24] or when they are being exhorted to go to the Ḥijāz [in pilgrimage]. But [if] they exhort people to participate [in the above enterprises] in a seemly manner, there is no harm in it.[25]

As in item (3) above, where Christian priests were forbidden to attend gatherings where *zajal*s were sung, this text shows that the *zajal* was considered equally scurrilous by Muslim authorities, and consequently, incompatible with holy occasions. It also indicates that *zajal*s were actually sung in the markets rather than within a more learned setting. We thus appear to have before us a reference to a truly popular *zajal*, oral in nature and sung by minstrels in the streets, a *zéjel de juglaría*, indeed. Such a conclusion is further supported by the context in which our passage appears within Ibn ᶜAbd al-Ra'ūf's work, which is one that bans from the markets such unsavory characters as minstrels, storytellers, vendors of amulets, and jugglers (Lévi-Provençal 1950-53:112) while cuppers, hawkers of quack medicines, acrobats, pseudo-crippled beggars, and prostitutes also incur Ibn ᶜAbd al-Ra'ūf's disapproval (Chalmeta 1973:386). Chalmeta's convincing conclusion about the early existence of the *zajal* is the following (*idem*; my trans.):

> Such songs, couplets or, why not?, *zajal*s, were very popular in Córdoba, at least in the period between 925 and 950, and probably long before, since no genre or fashion has ever established itself overnight [...]. Consequently, one must assume the independent and popular existence of these *zajal*s in Córdoba, at least two centuries earlier than has usually been admitted. This is not very difficult to accept, if we keep in mind the parallel that obtains with the ballads. For centuries, the latter were handed down by word of mouth in the lands of Castile, before appearing at court, and before some literate individual, even later, bothered to write them down.

The above provides us with further evidence for the existence of the *zajal* two centuries prior to Ibn Quzmān, while it also indicates that at that time the genre flourished in the Andalusian market places within a minstrel

---

[24] Note that Ibn Quzmān (*Zajal* 86) exhorts his Muslim correligionaries to go forth on a Holy War against Christendom. In other poems of his, he welcomes back the victorious Muslim armies (*Zajal*s no. 38 and 47). Compare how, in the mock-epic of Don Carnal and Dona Cuaresma, Juan Ruiz has both Moors and Christians come forth, each group singing according to its respective musical tradition, to greet the triumphal arrival of Don Amor (Ruiz 1972:334, strophes 1225-41). To the above should be added Rico's discovery that, in the seventh century, victorious Visigothic leaders were greeted by the songs of the populace upon their triumphal return from war: "cum omne plebe plaudentes manibus ymnizantesque" (1975:548).

[25] "Wa-yumnaᶜu l-laḏīna yamšūna ᶜalà l-aswāqi bi-l-azjāli wa-l-azyādi wa-ġayri-hā an lā yakūnū fī waqtin yunfaru fī-hi li-l-jihādi wa-yumšà fī-hi ilà l-ḥijāzi fa-[in] yaḥruḍūna n-nāsa ᶜala ḏalika bi-mā yuwāfiqu l-maᶜnà fa-lā bā'sa bi-ḏalika" (Lévi-Provençal 1950-53:113; my trans.). French translation in Arié 1960:362; Spanish translation in Chalmeta 1979:385.

environment.

(5) The Caliph, the Rebel, and the Muleteer

In 1979, Chalmeta published the *editio princeps* of a recently discovered manuscript of Ibn Ḥayyān's (987-1075) *Kitāb al-Muqtabis*, vol. 5. This work is a key chronicle of Umayyad rule in Andalus, of which scattered volumes have gradually come to light and been published within this century. The fifth volume provides an account of how the future Caliph ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān III, al-Nāṣir (*regit* 912-61) conquered the fortresses of the Alpujarras in Granada, which were supporting the insurrection of the infamous rebel ᶜUmar Ibn Ḥafṣūn, in the year 912. We therefore seem to have a specific date for the following incident that is reported to have taken place during the campaign (64; my trans.):

> All the fortresses of the Alpujarras were also conquered, since they had joined forces with Ibn Ḥafṣūn, but Al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh reduced them to submission during that campaign of his, for the signs of [divine] approval were clear, so that both his warlike and peaceful activities toward them were goodly and successful. One of the insolent fools in those haughty fortresses showered down blame and scorn upon him, saying: "Ruddū, ruddū, aban ummuh fī fummuh" ["Cast down, cast down, the son of his mother, onto his mouth"], but a muleteer in charge of the baggage who was in the ranks near [the Caliph], refuted [the fool, answering]: "Wa-llāh lā naruddu-hā illā bi-rās aban Ḥafṣūn fī ḥukmuh" ["By God, we will not cast it (i.e., 'his mouth') down, save when the head of Ibn Ḥafṣūn is in his power"]. When the latter reached [the Caliph's] ear, he said: "Let him who uttered this be elevated from his menial state; let him be admitted to the ranks of the cavalry, and granted a mount, along with such and such a sum of money." Then was he granted all the above at once, and it became the cause of his ennoblement among [the Caliph's] men, while people caused [this incident] to circulate as a rare anecdote about [the Caliph's] concern [for his supporters].

The verbal duel between the insolent rebel atop the fortress and the Caliph's loyal muleteer constitutes the earliest known poetic text in vernacular Hispano-Arabic. It thus plays a role in Andalusian letters akin to that enjoyed by the Oath of Strasbourg in Romance. Nevertheless, it presents some formidable metrical problems. María Jesús Viguera and Federico Corriente have rightly pointed out that the obviously colloquial rhymes (*ummuh*/*fummuh*/*ḥukmuh*) indicate a popular poetic composition.[26] They propose scanning these lines as an example of accentual *madīd* meter which according to them, derives from a final hemistich of classical *madīd* catalectic (_´ ˘ _´ _ / _´ ˘ _ / _´ _):

[26] See the Spanish translation, Corriente and Viguera 1981:59, n. 18.

Rúddū rúddū bn úmmuh fi fúmmuh
Wállāh lā narúdduhā íllā . . .

The last line, however, does not fit into the *madīd* pattern; hence they propose editorial adjustments to make it do so:

rās abán ḥafṣūni fī ḥúkmuh.

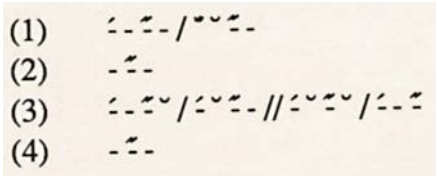
For metrical reasons, it is thus apparent that they suppress the particle *bi-* and assume the existence of the classical inflection *ḥafṣūni*. More recently, Corriente adds (1984:25; my trans.): "Insofar as the *zajal* is concerned, and although this item of information must be accepted with caution, we have pointed out the possible existence of a proto-*zajal*, dating from the year 912, in the text of *Al-Muqtabis* (vol. V) by Ibn Ḥayyān." It is thus to be concluded that Corriente views this text as a proto-*zajal*. There are, however, some caveats to be made on the subject.

The context within which the exchange of verbal abuse between the rebel and the muleteer takes place strongly suggests improvisation. While it is not inconceivable that the rebel could have prepared his speech in advance of the occasion on which it was delivered, and that he could have revised and polished it, it is highly unlikely that the muleteer would have had time other than to improvise his response. The likeliest alternative, therefore, is that the exchange is an oral improvisation, and this assumption is confirmed by the formulaic features characterizing these three lines stylistically. The exchange of insults begins with the words *Ruddū ruddū*, which constitute an initial, incremental repetition such as is typical of oral poetry.[27] The word groups in rhyme position (*fī fummuh*/*fī ḥukmuh*) furthermore, are formulaic. Finally, the elements prior to the rhyme formulae, namely *aban ummuh* and *aban ḥafṣūn*, also constitute a four-syllable formulaic system. This encourages one to think that these two elements should be vowelled colloquially rather than according to semi-classical norms (*ḥafṣūn*, not *ḥafṣūni*; *aban ummuh*, not *bn ummuh*.) The entirely colloquial rendition thus produces a neat stylistic parallel, and is more consistent, from a linguistic point of view, than the reading of my predecessors (note too that no emendation of the text is required). If adopted, my suggestion means, however, that the assumption that our text is in the accentual *madīd* meter must be abandoned. One possible division of lines is the following:

[27] Compare the following openings of traditional Spanish songs: "A la gala, a la gala...," "Ábalas, ábalas...," "Ai flores, ai flores...," "Eya velar, eya velar...," "¿De do viene, de do viene…," "¡Hagádesme, hagádesme...," "Isabel, Isabel...," "Para mí, para mí...," "Por aquí, por aquí..." (Alonso and Blecua 1964:249-62.

(1) Rúddū rúddū ában úmmuh
(2) fī fúmmuh.
(3) Wá-llāh lā narrúdu-hā´ illā´ bi-rās abán ḥafṣūn
(4) fī ḥúkmuh.

The metrical pattern of the above scans "quantitatively:"



According to Corriente's rules for accentual scansion of Hispano-Arabic strophic poetry, syllable length is replaced in the *zajal* by stress, in such a way that the normal stresses of the Hispano-Arabic dialect coincide with the long syllables of classical metrics, and rarely with a short syllable (although the latter does occur), whereas on the other hand, a long classical syllable may replace a short one, if it is unstressed (1980:76). His system is thus flexible enough to allow for just about anything, and implies eloquently that the governing principles of this prosody are accentual, not quantitative. In this spirit, I would venture to suggest that line (1) is equivalent to a single classical hemistich of *ramal* dimeter (´ ˘ ˝ - / ´ ˘ ˝ -). Here, Corriente's rules are not violated in the case of the second metron, where the first short syllable bears a secondary, weak stress, because Corriente is concerned only with primary, linguistic (rather than ictic) stresses in his system (*ában ű́mmuh*),[28] while line (2) is an addition of three syllables for which there is no accounting from within the classical, Ḫalīlian system of scansion. In what follows, line (3) is equivalent to an entire line of *ramal* dimeter catalectic (´ ˘ ˝ - / ´ ˘ ˝ - / ´ ˘ ˝ - / ´ ˘ ˝), while line (4) is again a trisyllabic extra-classical addition. The whole text is therefore anything but Ḫalīlian in nature. In contrast, an exact parallel in layout, meter, rhyme, and rhythm to lines (1) and (2) is found in the refrain of Ibn Quzmān's *Zajal* 10:

Dāba nā̋ ᶜšaq-kí la-l-ā̋ymah	8
Nujā̋ymah.	3

Corriente correctly scans this refrain as a line of *ramal* dimeter plus an

[28] Furthermore, the rules of classical scansion permit a short syllable in this position of the *ramal* metron.

unclassical trisyllabic addition.[29] This structure has numerous parallels in Hispano-Romance poetry, among which one finds the popular Castilian *villancico* (Frauca 1921: I, 113, no. 208):

À la puèrta está Pelàyo	8
y llòra.	3

Let us also note that our vernacular Arabic text exhibits a striking vowel harmony.[30] Taking this factor into account, the only way to obtain anything close to the *zajal* structure Corriente sees would be to break up the lines as follows:

Ruddū ruddū aban ummuh
fī fummuh.
Wa-llāh lā
naruddu-hā
illā bi-rās
aban ḥafṣūn fī ḥukmuh.

The above provides us with an AA, bbb*a* rhyme scheme only if we assume that *lā*, *hā*, and *rās* are assonant rhymes after the Spanish manner, un-Arabic though this may seem. It should also be noted that unlike the normal *zajal*, but coinciding with what prevails in popular Spanish poetry, the lines are occasionally heterosyllabic; that is to say, they are asymmetrical, despite which the above arrangement yields a harmonious and rather striking accentual beat that is almost entirely trochaic in character, except in line two where an amphibrach interrupts the rhythm to add finality to the statement. This amphibrach, which classical prosody cannot account for, is simply a typical *verso de pie quebrado* from the point of view of Hispano-Romance prosody.

Up to this point, I have analyzed the text and suggested one way in which it may be vowelled and scanned. Let me hasten to add that it may not be the only way. It does, however, provide a more satisfactory text

---

[29] Compare Corriente 1980:78 with Corriente 1984:316, n.3 to *Zajal* no. 10. In the former work, Professor Corriente scans the poem as *ramal* dimeter, suppressing the troublesome addition *lalaymah*, whereas in the latter, he restores it. My reading, which differs from the one he proposes (1984:66), will be supported in detail in an article currently in preparation.

[30] If we consider the stressed vowels only, the couplet by the rebel exhibits the following symmetrical sequence: U U A U U. In contrast, the stressed vowels in the muleteer's refutation constitute an exact inversion, A A U A A, to which he adds a final element A A U U. Thus we have an opposition, on an acoustic level, that helps to convey the thematic clash between the two antagonists. While this vocalic subtlety supports my colloquial reading of the text, it also indicates that such a skillful poetic composition can hardly be a pastiche, but must be authentic.

linguistically, rhythmically, and structurally than the attempts of my predecessors. Even should my metrical rendition prove to be entirely wrong (and it is advanced only as a modest working hypothesis), one striking fact emerges from it: this text exhibits metrical features which are notoriously unclassical, yet similar to those we find in the *zajal*s of Ibn Quzmān, whose death it appears to precede by 248 years. Furthermore, if the incident reported by Ibn Ḥayyān is true, and if this text is authentic (and the stylistic features it exhibits provide strong evidence for authenticity),[31] it was composed very shortly after the *muwaššaḥa* was invented, so that it may be considered almost contemporary with that invention. Therefore, it represents an example of vernacular poetry exhibiting metrical features similar to those that surface two and a half centuries later, and are intrinsic to the popular Hispano-Romance lyric.

It is more difficult to assert with any degree of assurance that this text belongs to the *zajal* genre. To begin, it is hardly the case that it could have been sung. Although it might have been delivered in a mocking singsong of the sort used to this day by children in many cultures, a melodic rendition seems unlikely, and choral singing is quite impossible. Instead, it was probably recited.[32] Secondly, the challenge and response remind one thematically of the exchanges of invective common in Arab warfare from Pre-Islamic times and later. The fact that the exchange is brief, colloquial, and couched in Hispanic metrics also reminds one of the satirical couplets that existed all over Romania from very ancient times. For example, in the same trochaic octosyllables as our text, there is a couplet that people sang to mock the Lombard nobleman Adalbert I, Marquis of Ivrea (d. ca. 966; ref. Frenk 1979:I, fasc. 2, 28):

> Adelbertos comis curtis
> macrospalhis, gundopistis.

In Spain, we are told in the *Crónica de España* by Lucas de Tuy (1236) that upon the death of Al-Manṣūr ibn Abī ᶜÃmir at Medinaceli, after the battle of Calatañazor (1002), the Devil, disguised as a bilingual fisherman, appeared in Córdoba, on the banks of the river Guadalquivir, singing both in Arabic and in Romance (*ibid*.: 29),

---

[31] I am, of course, aware that ancient and medieval historians often put words into the mouth of their characters. Nonetheless, in this case, the formulaic, repetitive, acoustic, and linguistic features of our text make this unlikely here; nor is it plausible that a learned historian such as Ibn Ḥayyān would have gone out of his way to counterfeit a colloquial text when he could have more easily composed one in Classical Arabic

[32] The Arabic text states quite explicitly that the rebel *jaᶜala yaqūlu* ("began to say"), and not that he "sang" the insulting couplet under consideration.

En Cañatañaçor
Almançor
perdió ell atamor

Therefore, while our text cannot be called a *zajal* in any strict sense of the word, it is instead a satirical composition with a response that at the same time takes up the initial theme and refutes it in the same meter and rhyme. In this sense only, it bears some resemblance to the *zajal* genre, insofar as the latter, both in Arabic and Romance, has a strong satirical tendency, while the response in our text develops a theme set by the initial challenge, as the strophes of a *zajal*, or the *glosas* of a *villancico*, elaborate upon the theme of their respective refrains. In this sense, "*Ruddū ruddū*. . ." constitutes a basic, embryonic form which professional minstrels could have developed by the addition of strophes and choral singing into the full-fledged *zajal*. Hence, it seems to represent a truly folkloric composition, rudimentary in nature, parallel to the *zajal*, and out of which the latter might have been developed by professional entertainers.

(6) What's in a Name?

If the above text is not a true *zajal*, but is instead an example of folkloric satirical verse that may have preceded that genre, there is nonetheless further evidence for the great antiquity of the *zajal* in Andalus.

It is well known that the Muslim conquest of the Iberian Peninsula was achieved by armies composed largely of Berbers who were led by Arab officers. These Berbers, many of whom must have spoken the lost Romance language of North Africa, were settled in the poorest lands available and, in general, were treated as inferiors by their Arab leaders. They subsequently became Arabized in Andalus along with the native Hispano-Romance-speaking population.

One such Berber family, of unusual distinction, was that of the Banū Zajjālī ("Sons of the man related to the *zajal*-poet"). On the authority of Ibn al-Qūṭiyya (d. 977), Ibn Ḥayyān informs us about a personage known as Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd ibn Abī Sulaymān, al-Zajjālī (d. 843 or 846) as follows (Makki 1973:32; my trans.):

> His name was W'rškyn [?], from the Banu Iṭṭaft of the Nafza tribe,[33] and he was known as Ḥamdūn and nicknamed Al-Aṣmaʿī,[34] being so called because of his intelligence and his prodigious memory. He was the first whom the Amīr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al- Ḥakam [*regit* 822-52] chose and

[33] The Nafza were a tribe of the Botr confederation. The other major grouping of Berbers was that of the Barānis. See Makkī 1973:458, n. 103.

[34] Al-Aṣmaʿī was a famous philologist who died in Marw (Khorasan) in 831.

> asked to be his secretary. He was secretary to the Amīr's son Muḥammad, after him.[35] His wife gave birth to his two sons ᶜAbdallāh and Ḥāmid, the sons of Muḥammad ibn Saᶜīd, who were both skillful secretaries, each of whom served as secretary to the dynasty, save that ᶜAbdallāh's period in office did not last, for he served for close to six months, then death hurried him off. As for Ḥāmid, his brother, the secretaryship adhered to him permanently, and he became famous in it until he died in the year AH 268 [= AD 881].

Ibn Ḥayyān continues to quote Ibn al-Qūṭiyya to the effect that (*ibid*.:33; my trans.)

> [the Banū Zajjālī] were, in olden times, of the commoners of the Botr confederation of Berbers whose roots lay in the region of Tākurūnā,[36] no renown being preserved of their ancestor. Then the Amīr ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥakam was the first to choose their grandfather, this Muḥammad ibn Saᶜīd [of whom we are speaking]. [The Amīr] knew by long experience, of his insight, learning, respectability, and liberality, for which he hired him, then he promoted him up the ranks of his service, appointing him secretary and making him his confidant. Thus the family became prominent, and was attached to the illustrious men of the dynasty.

On the authority of Abū l-Walīd ibn al-Faraḍī (962-1013), Ibn Ḥayyān adds (*ibid*.:33-34; my trans.):

> He was Abū ᶜAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Saᶜīd ibn Mūsà ibn ᶜĪs'à, al-Zajjālī, a member of the Andalusian branch of the Berber confederation of Botr, nicknamed al-Aṣmaᶜī because of his concern for literature and his knowledge of philology. He was one of the most accomplished of the people of his time in these arts, who possessed an ample share of eloquence and an excellent gift for composing poetry. These Zajjālīs, who were introduced forcibly among the illustrious houses of Córdoba, had no old background in government, nor any previous intimacy with the ruler, nor any attachment to his service, for he was the first to come into prominence and to enjoy status among them [. . .].

Al-Zajjālī was a rank and file soldier in the army of the Amīr ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān II (*ibid*.:34). He was a descendent of common as opposed to princely Berbers, as Ibn al-Qūṭiyya, himself a descendent of Sarah, granddaughter of the penultimate Visigothic king Vitiza, is quick to point out with just a hint of aristocratic dismay. His ancestors were members of the Andalusian branch of the Botr confederation, and had been settled in the area of Ronda. Among Ibn Ḥayyān's sources, Ibn al-Faraḍī names three ancestors of Al-Zajjālī (Saᶜīd, Mūsà, and ᶜĪsà), whereas Ibn al-Qūṭiyya mentions only two (Saᶜīd and Abū Sulaymān). Since the *nisba* Al-Zajjālī is

---

[35] This remark is erroneous, for Muḥammad al-Zajjālī died in 843 or 846, before the reign of the Amīr Muḥammad by at least six years (see Makkī 1973:460, n. 110.)

[36] There is no area of Takurūnā in Spain today. It was formerly a region near the city of Ronda, roughly one hundred kilometers west of Málaga (Makkī 1973:460, n. 110.)

an Arabic derivation, it is likely that the family adopted it in Andalus, as they became Arabized, rather than brought it with them from Barbary. It is not clear whether Muḥammad was the first to adopt this *nisba*, or whether the latter was also borne by his ancestors. If the former, then the possibility arises that his father Saʿīd may have been a *zajjāl* ("*zajal*-poet"), although the name could also allude to another type of relationship, such as apprenticeship to a *zajjāl*. In either instance, and allowing for the standard thirty years to a generation, we have solid ground to assume that the *zajal* was in existence in Andalus, at very least, around the early part of the ninth century. If the latter, on the other hand, and assuming that Muḥammad's earliest known ancestor ʿĪsà was born around ninety years before his more illustrious great-grandson, and that he also bore the *nisba* Al-Zajjālī, this would probably take us back to the mid-eighth century. In this case, it would appear that *zajal* poets must have existed in Andalus within the century after the Arab conquest of 711, for it is hardly necessary to add that where there are *zajal* poets, there must be *zajal*s. The latter inference would take us back, at most, four hundred years before Ibn Quzmān, and two centuries before the invention of the *muwaššaḥa*.[37]

(7) Mozarabic Hotheads and Muslim Taunts

Add to the above that, as early as 854, Alvarus of Córdoba, a prominent figure in the Mozarabic martyrs' revolt that shook the Christian community of that city in the mid-ninth century, complained bitterly in his *Indiculus Luminosus* that, among many other outrages to which (in his opinion) Christians were being subjected by Muslims, the latter "defile the priests of God with vernacular proverbs and obscene songs."[38] Naturally, we have no way of knowing precisely to what genre these obscene songs belonged, nor in what language they were sung, but their scandalous nature makes it not implausible that some of them may have been either satirical *zajal*s or verses of the "*Ruddū ruddū*. . ." variety. Furthermore, that early in time, before Andalus had undergone thorough linguistic Arabization on the popular level, it is very likely that some of these songs were in Romance.

(B) The Visigothic Period

[37] For more on the descendants of Muḥammad al-Zajjālī, see Chalmeta 1979; Quzmān, *Zajal* no. 89; Lévi-Provençal 1950-53:III, 335, 382.

[38] "Sacerdotes Dei [. . .] vulgali [sic] proverbio et cantico inhonesto sugillant," (Gil 1973: I, 278; my trans.).

It is natural to expect that references to songs composed under Visigothic rule, all of which derive from Latin sources, will not mention the *zajal* by name. Put differently, since we are dealing with a period for which actual vernacular texts are lost, there can be no assurance that the references contained in our sources are to songs of the type designated after 711 as *zajal*. Nonetheless, I have gathered together certain Latin texts from this period to illustrate the obvious existence of popular songs at that time, in the hope that future research may be able to shed further light on this ancient and currently lost lyrical tradition from the Iberian Peninsula.

(1) Nuns and Laywomen

Saint Leander of Seville (536/38-600) appears to have been more than usually determined to protect the chastity of a virginal nun named Florentina. To this pious end, the goodly saint wrote a treatise in which he depicted in lurid detail (for her edification, of course) all the temptations of the flesh to which a pretty young bride of Christ could unwittingly fall victim. In one chapter of his work, he advises Florentina to avoid, at all cost, any social intercourse with laywomen, among other reasons because the latter are wont to sing unedifying songs:

> How will she associate with you; she with whom you do not draw along Christ's yoke with a common neck? To a dissimilar habit belongs a dissimilar inclination. Like an instrument of Satan, she will sing to you that which will arouse the charms of this world, and thrust you along the paths of the Devil. Flee the song of sirens, my sister.[39]

Saint Leander's warning is of special interest, for it suggests the existence in Visigothic Spain of women's songs, possibly of a type similar to those that were to surface much later, during the Arab period, in the form of the Romance *ḫarja*s and thereafter as the Galician *cantigas de amigo*. Elsewhere, the Saint insists:

> If a scandalous song should delight your ears [...], next the flesh will be stirred with the allurement of sensual pleasure.[40]

[39] "Qui[d] tecum agit, cum qua communi collo Christi iugum non ducis? Dispar habitu, dispar affectu. Organum satanae, hoc tibi canet quod inlecebras saeculi moveat et semitis diaboli impingat. Fuge sirenarum cantus, mi soror" (Ruiz and Melia 1971:38; my trans.).

[40] "Si oblectet aures turpis cantus [...] tunc oblectatione sensibili carnis movetur inlecebra" (Ruiz and Melia 1971:40; my trans.).

(2) Craftsmen and Monks

Saint Isidore of Seville composed a set of rules for monastic life in Visigothic Spain between the years 615 and 619. In it he offers his monks the following advice:

> While they work, the monks must meditate or sing psalms, so that they may lighten their work with the pleasure of song and of the word of God. For if worldly craftsmen do not cease to sing scandalous love songs during their own work, and indeed, so employ their mouths in songs and stories, in order not to withdraw their hands from work, how much more so should the servants of Christ, who must work with their hands in such a manner as always to have the praise of God in their mouths, and with their tongues to offer Him psalms and hymns.[41]

(3) Visigoths versus Ethiopians

G.E. Von Grunebaum has pointed out the intriguing case of Saint Valerius (ca. 630-95), who died shortly before the Arab conquest and was a member of the Visigothic nobility (1956:403-5). The saint describes an unfortunate experience he survived at the hands of a certain person, whom he casts in the role of a villain, named Iustus, "of the barbarous nation of the Ethiopians," who caused scandal by singing jolly songs to the lyre[42] on festive occasions accompanied by much lasciviousness. Iustus also sang "savage incantations" in church, to which he danced until he lapsed into unconsciousness.

(C) The Roman Period

(1) Roman Revelry and the Girls of Gades

The Phoenician colony of Gades (Cádiz) was, under Roman rule, famous for its dancing girls and singers, many of whom earned their living in the streets, taverns, and even private residences of Rome. The Hispano-Roman poet Martial (ca. AD 38-ca. 103), who refers to Gades as "playful" (*Epigrams*, I:61), affirms that a distinctive feature of the fashionable dandy

---

[41] "Monachi operantes meditare vel psallere debent ut carminis verbique dei delectatione consolentur ipsum laborem. Si enim saeculares opifices inter ipsos labores suorum operum amatoria turpia cantare non desinunt atque ita ora sua in cantibus et fabulis implicant ut ab opere manus non subtrahant, quanto magis servi Xri qui sic manibus operare debent, ut semper laudem dei in ore habeant et linguis eius psalmis et hymnis inserviant" (Ruiz and Melia 1971:99; my trans.).

[42] *Lira*, not "luth," contrary to what Von Grunebaum asserts. See Migne 1955, vol. 87, 414, par. 33, col. A.

was that he would be able to hum "the songs of the Nile or of Gades" (*ibid.*: III, 63); he also describes some "girls from licentious Gades," who at parties, "wiggle with studied tremors and unending eroticism, their lascivious hips" (*ibid.*:V, 78), as well as a woman "skilled in adopting lascivious postures to the rhythm of Baetic castanets, and in dancing to the tune of the music of Gades" (*ibid.*:VI, 71). Pliny the Younger (ca. AD 61-ca.113) chides a friend because, instead of accepting his invitation to a refined banquet, he went to dine at a place where he was offered "oysters, sows' wombs, sea urchins, and dancing girls from Gades" (*Epistles*, I:15). Juvenal (ca. AD 60-ca. 128) invites a friend to dinner and warns him:

> Perhaps, hoping to find here a group of girls from Gades, you already see in your imagination how they will adopt their exciting postures to the sound of the music, and how, stirred by applause, they will let themselves fall to the ground, with quivering buttocks. There are married women who attend, beside their husbands, performances of this kind (although anyone would be ashamed to describe them in their presence). [. . .] My humble dwelling is not made for such diversions. That clatter of castanets, those words that even the whore standing naked in the stinking arcade would be ashamed to utter, those obscene cries, those refined excesses, all that is to be heard and enjoyed by him who owns Lacedaemonian mosaics to defile with his own vomit. These are things that appear natural among the rich. Games of dice and adultery are only viewed with disfavor by lesser folk; if those who practice such vices are wealthy, they are considered jolly persons who know how to enjoy themselves. My dinner of today will offer you amusements of another kind. Passages by the Iliad poet will be sung, along with lines by Maro, so sublime that one won't know to whom belongs the victory. These poems being what they are, who cares for the voice of the singer? (*Satires*, XI:162)

Statius (ca. AD 45-96) mentions "the sound of the cymbals of Gades" among those heard in the streets of Rome during the Saturnalia (*Silvae*, I:6, 71). Strabo (b. ca. 64 BC) narrates how the explorer Eudoxus, upon beginning his circumnavigation of the African continent, went to Gades where he "constructed a large ship and two galleys such as those used by pirates; and in the ship he placed girls skilled in musical matters, and physicians, along with craftsmen, and finally set sail, making for India on the high sea" (*Geography*, II:3, 4). In contrast to the above license, Martial recalls with nostalgia the seemingly more chaste "choruses of Rixamae" (*Epigrams*, I:55, 16) near his native Bilbilis (in the area of Calatayud), about the exact location and nature of which nothing is known.

(2) The Dancing Dames of Seville

In the *Breviarium Eborense*, we are told that the two Christian martyrs, Saints Iusta and Rufina of Seville (d. ca. 287) earned their living

by selling pottery (Cumont 1927:332-33). One day, which Franz Cumont has identified as falling within the Adonic festival, "the married women of the town carried around a stone idol named Salabovem [= Salambo] there, and with a Pagan rite, after their custom, demanded gifts from street to street for the honor and use of their god, dancing all the while" (*idem*). When the two Christian women refused to contribute their clay pots as an offering to the idol, since these would be used to plant the pagan "gardens of Adonis," they were hauled before the governor Diogenianus, and incarcerated. After being subjected to torture, they were made to expiate their offense to the god, and were again imprisoned. Iusta died in jail, and her body was thrown into a well,[43] whereas Rufina was executed in the same prison, and her body was cremated in the local amphitheater. Cumont infers from the downfall of Saints Iusta and Rufina the existence of the Oriental Adonic festival in Seville, complete with women dancing publicly in the streets.

III. A Solution

It is well known that singers and dancing girls were connected to the temples of Astarte in the East, and that in such temples ritual prostitution was also practiced. From the pagan and Christian texts mentioned above, it appears that around the turn of the eras, this practice still survived in Phoenician Gades, while the Adonic festivals of Seville attest to the survival of a parallel cult even later. Toward the end of the Visigothic period, the ecstatic dancing, accompanied by song, of the Ethopian Iustus is viewed by Von Grunebaum as a survival of the tradition of Gades. When and if such songs and dances became *zajal*s, we may never know. Nevertheless, it would be rash to deny, on the basis of the evidence provided above, that very early after the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, and from one to two centuries before the invention of the *muwaššaḥa*, a type of poetry called *zajal* already existed there. Precisely what was this *zajal* like? Was it radically different in structure from the *zajal* as we know it from extant specimens? Here, the famous passage on the invention of the *muwaššaḥa* transmitted by Ibn Bassām (wrote ca. 1106-9) is not only of help, but is itself clarified by the evidence provided above. Ibn Bassām states that the inventor of *muwaššaḥa*s

> used to compose them after the manner of the hemistichs of classsical Arabic poetry (except that most of them were composed after the manner of the non-existent, hypothetical meters that are not used in classical Arabic poetry), quoting colloquial Arabic and Romance diction, which he called the *markaz* [= *ḫarja*], and basing the *muwaššaḥa* upon it, without any internal

[43] A point which Cumont disputes (*ibid.*:337).

rhyming in the *markaz*es or in the *ġuṣn*s.[44]

The above passage implies, at the very least, that the earliest *muwaššaḥa*s had *ġuṣn*s and *markaz*es, that is to say, that they were strophic, rather than monorhymed. It also draws attention to the fact that they were based on a final *ḫarja* that was not in Classical Arabic, but in vernacular diction instead, as a consequence of which, the text implies, the meters of these poems were in most cases different from those used in the classical tradition. If we take into account that the purpose of quoting a *ḫarja* is largely musical, insofar as it informs the singers that they should sing the song to the tune of a well-known composition which the poet is contrafacting, then there is no known poetic structure capable of generating the *muwaššaḥa* through the process of contrafaction other than the *zajal* proper, as it has come down to us. Up to the present, scholars have hesitated to reach this conclusion, because there was no clear proof that the *zajal* antedated the *muwaššaḥa*. As of now, however, it is unavoidable to conclude that the *zajal* proper is a very old, traditional Andalusian form that existed orally before the *muwaššaḥa* and that this form was strophic, colloquial, and couched in non-Ḫalīlian meters. This points to a high degree of probability that both the Arab and the Romance zajalesque forms descend from a native Romance prototype and are therefore sisters. In contrast, the *muwaššaḥa* is a learned development of the popular *zajal* in Arabic and Romance, and is therefore its Arab daughter. Finally, the *muwaššaḥa*-like *zajal* is a later and learned adapatation of vernacular Arabic diction, *zajal* themes, and techniques, to the previously invented *muwaššaḥa* structure. Thus, until further notice, it would appear that the *zajal* proper came before the *muwaššaḥa* and that its orgins, at least insofar as form is concerned, are ultimately popular and Romance.

University of California, Berkeley

References

al-Ahwānī 1948 ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ahwānī. "El ʿKitāb al-Muqtaṭaf min azāhir al-ṭuraf' de Ibn Saʿīd." *Al-Andalus*, 12:19-33.

al-Ahwānī 1957 _____. *Al-Zajal fī l-Andalus*. Cairo: Jāmiʿat al-Duwal al-ʿArabiyya.

[44] From Bassām 1978:I, 469. My translation of this rather difficult passage has been justified and defended in Armistead and Monroe 1985:212-34.

al-Andalusī 1983 — Ibn Saᶜīd al-Andalusī. *Kitāb al-Muqtaṭaf min azāhir al-ṭuraf*. Ed. by Sayyid Ḥanafī. Cairo: Markaz Taḥqīq al-Turāṯ.

Alonso and Blecua 1964 — Dámaso Alonso and José Manuel Blecua. *Antología de la poesía española*: *Lírica de tipo tradicional*. 2nd ed. Madrid: Gredos.

Arié 1960 — Rachel Arié. "Le traité de Ḥisba d'Ibn ᶜAbd al-Raᶜūf." *Hespéris-Tamuda*, 1:14-38, 199-214, 349-64.

Armistead 1981-82 — Samuel G. Armistead. "Speed or Bacon? Further Meditations on Professor Alan Jones' 'Sunbeams'." *La Corónica*, 10:148-55.

Armistead and Monroe 1985 — _____. and J. T. Monroe. "Beached Whales and Roaring Mice: Additional Remarks on Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry." *La Corónica*, 13:206-42.

Bassām 1978 — Ibn Bassām. *Kitāb al-Ḏaḫīra*. Ed. by Ihsān ᶜAbbās. Beirut: Dār al-Ṯaqāfa. Vol. I.

Chalmeta 1973 — P. Chalmeta. *El "señor del zoco" en España: Edades media y moderna, contribución al estudio de la historia del mercado*. Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura.

Chalmeta 1979 — *Al-Muqtabis (V) de Ibn Ḥayyān*. Ed. by P. Chalmeta, in collaboration with F. Corriente, M. Ṣubḥ et al. Rabat-Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura.

Corriente 1980 — F. Corriente. *Gramática, métrica y texto del cancionero de Aban Quzmān*. Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura.

Corriente 1982 — _____. "The Metres of the Muwaššaḥa, an Andalusian Adaptation of ᶜArūḍ: A Bridging Hypothesis." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 13:76-82.

Corriente 1984 — _____. *Ibn Quzmān: El cancionero hispanoárabe*. Madrid: Editora Nacional. Trans. by James T. Monroe.

Corriente and Viguera 1981 — _____ and P. Viguera. *Ibn Ḥayyān de Córdoba: Crónica del califa ᶜAbdarraḥmān III an-Nāṣir entre los años 912 y 942 (al-Muqtabis V)*. Zaragoza: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura.

Cumont 1927 — Franz Cumont. "Les syriens en Espagne et les adonies à Séville." *Syria: Revue d'art et d'archéologie*, 8:330-41.

Ewald and Loewe 1883 — Paul Ewald and Gustav Loewe. *Exempla Scripturae Visigoticae*. Heidelberg: Gustav Koester.

Frauca 1921 — Julio Cejador y Frauca. *La verdadera poesía castellana*. Madrid: RABM. Vol. I:113, no. 208.

Frenk 1978 — Margit Frenk. "El zéjel: ¿forma popular castellana?" In *Estudios sobre lírica antigua*. Madrid: Castalia.

Frenk 1979 — _____. "La lírica pretrovadoresca." In *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, II (*Les genres lyriques*). Directed by Erich Köhler. vol. I, fasc. 2. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.

Ġāzī 1979 — Sayyid Ġāzī. *Dīwān al-Muwaššaḥāt al-Andalusiyya*. Alexandria: Manša'at al-Maᶜarif. vol. I:5-10.

Gil 1973 — Juan Gil. *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas. vol. 1:278. Trans. by James T. Monroe.

Gómez 1972 — E. García Gómez. *Todo Ben Quzman*. Madrid: Gredos. 3 vols.

Gorton 1975 — T. J. Gorton. "The Metres of Ibn Quzmān: A 'Classical' Approach." *Journal of Arabic Literature,* 6:1-29.

Ḫaldūn 1958 — Ibn Ḫaldūn. *The Muqaddimah*. Trans. by Franz Rosenthal. New York: Bollingen Foundation. vol. 3:440-55.

Haxen 1982 — Ulf Haxen. "Ḫarğas in Hebrew Muwaššaḥas (A Plea for 'A Third Approach')." *Al-Qanṭara,* 3:473-82.

Hoenerbach 1956 — Wilhelm Hoenerbach. *Die Vulgärarabische Poetik Al-Kitāb al-ᶜAṭil al-Ḫalī Wal-Muraḫḫaṣ al-Ġalī des Ṣafīyaddīn Ḥillī*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

al-Jirārī 1970 — ᶜAbbās ibn ᶜAbdallāh al-Jirārī. *Al-Zajal fī l-Maġrib: al- Qaṣīda*. Rabat: Maktabat al-Ṭālib.

Jones 1980 — Alan Jones. "Romance Scansion and the Muwashshaḥāt: An Emperor's New Clothes?" *Journal of Arabic Literature,* 11:36-55.

Jones 1981-82 — _____. "Sunbeams from Cucumbers? An Arabist's Assessment of the State of Kharja Studies." *La Corónica,* 10:38-53.

Jones 1983-84 — _____. "Eppur si muove." *La Corónica,* 12:45-70.

Latham 1982 — J. D. Latham. "New Light on the Scansion of an Old Andalusian Muwashshaḥa." *Journal of Semitic Studies,* 27:61-75.

Latham 1983 _____. "The Prosody of an Andalusian Muwashshaḥa Reexamined." In *Arabian and Islamic Studies. . . Presented to R. B. Serjeant*. Ed. by R. L. Bidwell and G. R. Smith. London and New York: Longman.

Lévi-Provençal 1950-53 É. Lévi-Provençal. *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*. Paris-Leiden: Maisonneuve-Brill.

Lévi-Provençal 1955 _____. *Trois traités hispaniques de ḥisba*. In *Documents arabes inédits sur la vie sociale et économique en occident musulman au moyen âge*. Première série. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

Makkī 1973 Maḥmūd ᶜAlī Makkī, ed. *Al-Muqtabas min Abnā'i ahli l-Andalus*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ᶜArabī.

Migne 1862 J. P. Migne. *Patrologia Latina*.

Migne 1955 _____. *Patrologia Latina*. vol. 87:414. L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.

Monroe 1981-82 J. T. Monroe. "*¿Pedir peras al olmo?* On Medieval Arabs and Modern Arabists." *La Corónica,* 10:121-47.

Monroe 1986 _____. "Poetic Quotation in the *Muwaššaḥa* and its Implications: Andalusian Strophic Poetry as Song." *La Corónica,* 14:230-50.

al-Mulk 1949 Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk. *Dār al-Ṭirāz*. Ed. by Jawdat Rikābī. Damascus: n.p.

Pepió 1984 Vicente Beltrán Pepió. "De zéjeles y dansas: Orígenes y formación de la estrofa con vuelta." *Revista de Filología Española*, 64:239-66.

Rico 1975 Francisco Rico. "Çorraquín Sancho, Roldán y Oliveros: Un cantar paralelístico castellano del siglo XII." In *Homenaje a la memoria de Don Antonio Rodríguez Moñino: 1910-1970*. Madrid: Castalia.

Robles 1889 F. Guillén Robles. *Catálogo de los manuscritos árabes existentes en la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid*. Madrid.

Ruiz and Melia 1971 Julio Campos Ruiz and Ismael Roca Melia, eds. and Spanish trans. De Institutione Virginum. *Santos padres españoles, San Leandro, San Isidro, San Fructuoso*. Madrid: La Editorial Católica.

Ruiz 1972 Juan Ruiz. *Libro de buen amor*. Ed. by Raymond S. Willis. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rušd 1872 — Ibn Rušd. *Il commento medio de Averroe alla Poetica di Aristotele*. Ed. by Fausto Lasinio. Pisa: Successori Le Monnier.

Semah 1984 — David Semah. "Quantity and Syllabic Parity in the Hispano-Arabic Muwashshaḥa." *Arabica,* 31:80-107.

Simonet 1897-1903 — Francisco Javier Simonet. *Historia de los mozárabes de España*. Madrid: Viuda e hijos de M. Tello.

Stern 1974 — Samuel Miklos Stern. *Hispano-Arabic Strophic Poetry*. Ed. by L. P. Harvey. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Wulstan 1982 — D. Wulstan. "The Muwaššaḥa and the Zağal Revisited." *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 102:247-64.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 65-79

From History to Fiction: The Tale Told By the King's Steward in the *1001 Nights*

Muhsin Mahdi

The tale told by the King of China's steward in the Hunchback story in the *1001 Nights* (*N* 121.22-130.11)[1] is adapted directly from a report about events said to have occurred early in the tenth century in Baghdad and transmitted not as fiction but as history. A comparison of the two accounts of these events—the historical and the fictional—shows the manner in which the storyteller went about transforming history into fiction.

There is, to be sure, another tale in the Hunchback story, that of the barber and the highwaymen (*N* 151.33-152.35), which can be traced to a report transmitted as history by the tenth-century historian al-Masᶜūdī about an incident that occurred at the court of the caliph al-Ma'mūn (ruled 189-218/813-33). But this report deals with a relatively short episode which could have been easily transformed from history into fiction and from one fictional form into another many times between the ninth and the fourteenth century. Furthermore, while the general theme of the historical incident is present in the *1001 Nights* version, the transformation of the characters and linguistic surface is so complete that one cannot speak of the historical account except as a distant, indirect source.

All the other sources of the *1001 Nights* identified so far are themselves fictional. Of these only the well-known *maqāmah* of the tenth-eleventh-century author Badīᶜ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī named after the dish *al-maḍīra* (*N* 166.14-168.24) belongs to high literature; and in this case it is certain that the storyteller adapted his version not from al-Hamadhānī's

[1] *N* = Mahdi 1984. The numbers before the period refer to the Nights, those after the period to the lines within each Night

maqāmah, but from a thirteenth-century collection of stories known as *al-Ḥikāyāt al-ᶜAjībah* ("Wonderful Stories"), where he found the structure, characters, and language of al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmah* already transformed. The rest of the fictional sources, whether whole tales or individual incidents, are to be found in this thirteenth-century collection, or else in independently transmitted stories whose language and fictional form could be adopted by the storyteller with little or no modification.

In no other tale was the storyteller faced with a report that had been transmitted as history, formed part of high literature, contained accurate and detailed references to historical personages and places, and presented linguistic and dialectal peculiarities unfamiliar to him and to his audience. He was no doubt adept at adapting and transforming fictional material when composing his stories, altering, transposing, and inventing incidents to suit his purpose and design. But this historical report must have presented him with additional challenges, not all of which he was trained to meet. A comparison of the *1001 Nights* version of the tale told by the King's steward with its immediate source is likely to provide as full an account as can be expected of the way the storyteller went about refashioning his sources, subjecting them to the rules of his art, and making them fit for incorporation into his longer and complex stories.

The historical report used by the storyteller who composed the Hunchback story was available in the fourteenth century in two main versions. The storyteller used the version reported by al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī[2] in his book *al-Faraj baᶜd al-Shiddah* ("Deliverance after Stress"). The other version is transmitted on the authority of his son ᶜAlī who reported it on the authority of his father. The son's version is sufficiently different from the one published by his father to make it easy to identify (for example, the main dish in the report is called *dīgparīga* instead of *zīrbājah*) and to ascertain that it was not the version used by the storyteller. The following outline shows how closely the storyteller follows the historical version in al-Tanūkhī's *al-Faraj*:

1. Frame: transmission and setting in Baghdad and China (*N* 121.22-122.14 = *al-Faraj* 4:358.3-359.1).
2. Setting: family and business background in Baghdad (*N* 122.15-20 = *al-Faraj* 4:359.2-6).
3. The maiden's first visit to the shop (*N* 122.20-124.5 = *al-Faraj* 4:359.7-360.2).
4. The maiden's second visit (*N* 124.5-15 = *al-Faraj* 4:360.3-17).

[2] (329-84/940-94), a well-known figure in the second half of the tenth century, first as a judge in various cities in Mesopotamia, and later in Baghdad as a prominent aide to the Buyid king ᶜAḍūd al-Dawlah [ruled in Iraq 367-72/978-83]).

5. The maiden's third visit: mutual love revealed
(*N* 124.15-26 = *al-Faraj* 4:360.18-361.16).
6. The servant's visit to the shop: the maiden's identity and arrangements for entering the Caliph's palace revealed
(*N* 124.26-125.12 = *al-Faraj* 4:361.17-363.1).
7. Adventures on the way to the maiden's apartment in the palace
(*N* 125.12-127.15 = *al-Faraj* 4:363.12-365.9).
8. Meeting with Lady Zubaydah
(*N* 127.15-22 = *al-Faraj* 4:365.10-17).
9. Stay in the palace
(*N* 127.22-128.8 = [leaves and returns] *al-Faraj* 4:365.17-366.18).
10. Eating the *zīrbājah*
(*N* 128.8-12 = *al-Faraj* 4:367.1-8).
11. First meeting and punishment
(*N* 128.12-129.12 = *al-Faraj* 4:367.9-368.10).
12. Second meeting and punishment
(*N* 129.12-23 [not in *al-Faraj*]).
13. Epilogue: marriage consummated; the happy couple leave the palace and reside in the city
(*N* 130.1-11 = *al-Faraj* 4:368.11-369.11).

1. The framing of the historical account in al-Tanūkhī follows the normal pattern in historical reports. The frame consists of a chain of authorities, beginning with the last link in the chain—the person who has transmitted the report to the living narrator who is in turn transmitting it orally or writing it down in a book—and ending with the first link, the person who made the statements or experienced the events that are being narrated. A certain amount of information about each link in the chain—the occasion or the setting in which he transmitted the report, and a reference to his reliability as transmitter—can be added where available or useful in confirming the authenticity of the report. In this case, the living narrator was al-Tanūkhī, the author. He heard the report from the juris consult and judge Ibn al-Narsī.[3] Ibn al-Narsī, in turn, heard the report narrated by a certain merchant—whom he designated by name, but al-Tanūkhī admits to having forgotten this merchant's name—to his father.[4] The merchant reported that he once attended a banquet given by a colleague, a famous cloth merchant. A number of dishes were served, including the dish known as *zīrbājah*. The host did not eat of this particular dish, and his guests followed his example. He asked them to eat

[3] Ibn al-Narsī's family resided in the Syrian Gate quarter of Baghdad; he succeeded another well-known judge, Ibn al-Bahlūl, as judge in the city of Hīt; al-Tanūkhī knew Ibn al-Narsī well and found him always to be a reliable reporter, *wa-mā ʿalimtuhu illā thiqatan*.

[4] Ibn al-Narsī was a young man [*ḥadath*] at the time, attending his father, who was receiving a group of people in a social gathering. It is assumed that this took place in Baghdad and that the men attending the gathering were Baghdad notables listening to a report about events that took place in their city not more than a generation before.

of it and allow him to abstain, but they kept after him until he joined them. Instead of washing his hands afterwards along with everyone else, however, he withdrew to wash his hands by himself, and he continued to wash until the attendant told him he had washed his hands forty times. The guests asked him why he washed his hands so many times; he wouldn't say; they insisted; and he began to tell his story.

In the *1001 Nights* version the chain of authorities is reduced from four to two: the King's steward (who substitutes for al-Tanūkhī, Ibn al-Narsī, and the unnamed merchant who narrated the historical report) and the cloth merchant from Baghdad (who substitutes for the cloth merchant who gave the banquet in Baghdad and told his own story). This type of framing—where a character in a story tries to save his life, not by telling his own tale, but merely reporting a tale told by someone else attending a banquet where he, the narrator, happened to be present but was otherwise not involved in the tale at all—had not occurred before in the *1001 Nights*. It will occur again in the Hunchback story as the frame of the tale told by the tailor, but nowhere else in the *1001 Nights* as far as I can recall. It is not farfetched to think that it was modeled after the historical report—where the reporter hears the tale at a banquet, but is not otherwise involved in the tale substituting a chain of framing stories for the chain of transmission. (In the case of the tale told by the barber in the Hunchback story, the chain will proceed as follows: [1] the narrator tells the audience [2] Shahrazad told Shahrayar [3] the tailor told the king of China [4] the barber told the company at the banquet [5] the barber told the Caliph al-Mustanṣir [6] the barber's brother told x.) Thus the most complex story in the *1001 Nights* seems to be formally patterned after the chain of transmitters of historical reports in the wider sense.

The banquet is moved from Baghdad to a city called China, where the story of the Hunchback is in progress. It takes place at a particular time in the story, the night before the day the king's steward narrates the tale to the king of China, and concurrently with other events in the Hunchback story: the hunchback's presumed death and the transportation of his body to the house of the Jewish doctor and from there to that of the King's steward. And the setting is transformed from a pleasant occasion in which a prosperous merchant, the main character in the historical report, invites his colleagues for a meal after which they pass the time listening to his marvelous story, to a solemn occasion: Koran recitations are performed in the presence of the doctors of the religious law and of a large crowd. Then a meal is served. The King's steward happens to be there and so does the cloth merchant from Baghdad, with no explanation of how or why he got there. Then, when he refuses to eat of the *zīrbājah* and the host and guests insist that he do so, the storyteller changes the sequence of the actions in the historical report, giving rise to an inconsistency in his tale

which does not seem to have been noticed by scribes, editors, or translators.

In the historical report, the cloth merchant first eats the *zīrbājah*, then stands aside and washes his hands forty times. The guests inquire why, and he tells his story. The guests follow the story to satisfy their curiosity about this strange affair—their host's refusal to eat of a dish he offers his guests and his having to stand aside and wash his hands forty times after eating of it. The storyteller is not inattentive to the importance of this incident, and as is his wont whenever he notices something interesting—a good meal, an attractive place, a beautiful maiden—he ornaments, elaborates, or exaggerates. In this case he multiplies the number by three: the cloth merchant is made to wash his hands forty times with potash, forty times with cyprus, and forty times with soap. But the point is that he does the washing *before* instead of after he eats the *zīrbājah*, as in the historical report and as the storyteller's own version requires (see *N* 128.11ff, 129.20ff).

The storyteller understood the importance of the number of washings as a kind of punishment. He seized on it as an appropriate place to revise the historical report and add the mutilation theme required by the story of the Hunchback as a whole. The cloth merchant will pay more dearly for having eaten the *zīrbājah*. Not only will he have to wash his hands three-times-forty times, but he will have his thumbs and great toes cut off as well; all this will be interpolated by the storyteller at the appropriate place in the tale (*N* 129.17ff). The entire company will see the mutilation, have its curiosity aroused, center its attention on it, inquire about it, and follow the story to find out why and how it happened, before the cloth merchant tells his tale. None of this could take place until the cloth merchant begins to eat of the *zīrbājah*, a stew hard to eat with four fingers. They notice how he stretches out his hand to eat, trembling, full of fear and anger; and they notice the sinister way the food falls all over the place from between his fingers. They ask him about his maimed thumb, and he tells them about the other maimed thumb and the maimed great toes. Now they are doubly amazed. They ask him how it came about that he was so maimed and had to wash his hands one hundred twenty times. The washing incident is preserved, but pushed to the background. Attention is focused on the mutilation.

2. The storyteller shifts the historical setting backwards, from the time of the caliph al-Muqtadir (ruled 295-320/908-32) and the lifetime of the cloth merchant who narrated his own story in the historical report, to the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd (ruled 170-93/785-809), the mythical caliph of the *1001 Nights*. He replaces the two historical characters, the caliph al-Muqtadir and his mother, Lady Shaghab, with the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and his wife, Lady Zubaydah. The storyteller will fall prey to another

inconsistency before the Hunchback story is done. The fourth narrator, the tailor, will say that he was present at a banquet earlier the same day in the same Chinese city. At that banquet a young man met an old barber. The young man and the old barber had come from Baghdad also, but after the death of the caliph al-Mustanṣir (ruled 623-40/1226-42) and after having first met in Baghdad in the year 653/1255. This inconsistency—that is, characters who lived four and one-half centuries apart are made contemporaries of one another—would only attract the attention of mundane historians, unlike the inconsistency mentioned earlier, which should have drawn the attention of the audience of the *1001 Nights*.

The cloth merchant's father, a modest merchant who gives his son sensible advice and leaves him a modest legacy in the historical report, is transformed by the storyteller into a great merchant who dissipates his wealth through addiction to drinking and music, leaving his son nothing. The son's character, on the other hand, is modified to emphasize his piety and devotion to the memory of his father, and his cleverness as a merchant: his success in repaying the father's debts and building his own fortune. The respective qualities and attributes of merchants and palace-dwellers is a theme that will run throughout the tale. Both in contrast to his father and in his own right, the youth is presented by the storyteller as a pillar of filial piety and mercantile virtue.

3. The four successive visits to the youth's humble shop in the marketplace are adapted by the storyteller from the historical report with only minor improvements in dramatic presentation. On her first visit, the maiden, a stunning beauty magnificently dressed and adorned, arrives early in the morning, when neighboring shops are still closed. She greets the youth and sits down at his shop. Since the youth does not carry the expensive garments she asks for, he makes her wait until he can obtain them for her from the other cloth merchants. This provides him with the occasion to converse with her and be "drowned in the sea of her love." When the neighboring shops are opened, he procures all she wants; she takes clothing worth 5000 pieces of silver and leaves without a word about where she resides or about the price. Love-stricken and bewildered, he is too distracted to demand payment. Here the two versions diverge in describing the youth's reaction. As soon as she departs in the historical report, he recovers his senses, blames himself for allowing a trickstress to dupe him and take advantage of his youth and inexperience, and begins to worry about his impending bankruptcy. In the *1001 Nights* version, the impression she makes on him does not fade as fast from his memory: he remains intoxicated with her love and asks his creditors for more time. His worry about financial troubles is postponed until after the second visit.

4. The second visit takes place a week later. She apologizes for the delay and makes the payment, and they converse until the other merchants

open their shops. She makes him purchase for her from the merchants goods worth twice as much as on the first visit and leaves, again without a word about the price. This time she is absent for more than a month; creditors begin to press him for payment; he worries about the impending bankruptcy which now seems unavoidable and offers his possessions for sale. Thus while the historical report repeats the young cloth merchant's concern with bankruptcy a second time, the *1001 Nights* version does not make him turn to his business concerns until he is forced to do so by his creditors.

5. But the trickstress, who had carefully planned the whole affair, returns in time to make payment and save him from ruin. On this third visit, she does not waste time on merchandise, but engages in such free and pleasant conversation that the youth nearly dies with joy, and then she asks him: "Are you married?"—at which point the poor virgin youth weeps. Still unaware of the trap she has been carefully laying for him, too young and inexperienced to divine her feeling in her actions, face, or speech, and being the merchant he is, he goes to offer her servant some money and ask him to act as go-between. The servant has to explain to him that she is more in love with him than he with her, that buying garments was merely an excuse on her part, and that he should go back and speak to her himself. She is of course ready to be pleased. Having accomplished her aim, she leaves the shop after telling the youth that the servant will bring him the necessary instructions.

The incident in which the cloth merchant tries to bribe the servant to act as go-between is truncated in the *1001 Nights* version in a manner that shows an effort on the part of the storyteller to modify the maiden's character in a significant way. In the historical report, the youth gets up, tells the maiden he is going to repay the other merchants what he owes them, but goes instead to offer money to the servant: "I went back [to the maiden]—I had told her 'I am going to pay [the other merchants] the gold pieces [I owe them]'—when I went back [to her] she asked, 'Have you paid them the gold pieces!?' and laughed. She had seen that I was with the servant [all the time]." The *1001 Nights* version begins with the phrase "She saw me offer the gold pieces to the servant" and omits the rest of the incident, the only one in the historical report in which the maiden expresses herself jocularly and laughs. This is in keeping with the youth's point of view with respect to the maiden in the *1001 Nights* version: he is impressed with her riches, high rank, and beauty, but he does not experience her refined, relaxed, smiling, and forgiving character as does the youth in the historical report. The *1001 Nights* version is more serious, just as it is more grim, than the historical report.

6. A few days later, the servant arrives at the shop to reveal that the maiden is sick with love of him, that she had been raised by and is the

favorite maiden of Lady Zubaydah, the queen-consort of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, and that she is the stewardess of the harem, the one who has the privilege of going in and out of the palace at pleasure to fetch things for her mistress. He reveals also that she has spoken to Lady Zubaydah about him and asked to be allowed to marry him, but that Lady Zubaydah's permission is contingent on seeing him and deciding whether he is worthy of her. Finally, the servant reveals how the maiden (who seems to have made all the necessary arrangements already) will smuggle him into the Caliph's palace so that he can meet Lady Zubaydah. Should the plan succeed, he can hope to marry the maiden; but should he be discovered, the guards will of course strike off his head. He has to decide on the spot, and he decides that he will submit to the test.

In the *1001 Nights* version, the servant then instructs him to "walk to the mosque built by Lady Zubaydah on the bank of the Tigris." He arrives there in the evening, performs his prayers, and passes the night in the mosque. In this episode the storyteller systematically removes from the historical report all the details about the historical topography of Baghdad.

In the historical report, the youth (who presumably lived somewhere in the Karkh area on the west side of the Tigris where the cloth market was located) is instructed to "cross [the Tigris] to al-Mukharrim [a well-known quarter in tenth-century Baghdad situated slightly to the north of the area where the caliphs' Residence, Dār al-Khulafā', was located] and enter the mosque built by the Lady [the mother of the caliph al-Muqtadir] on the bank of the Tigris, on the outer wall of which facing the Tigris the Lady's name is incised in cut brick, and wait there. Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Narsī [al-Tanūkhī adds at this point] said: This was the mosque whose gate has now [that is, at the time Ibn al-Narsī narrated the report] been blocked up by Subuktakīn, the Chief Chamberlain, freedman of [the Buyid king] Muʿizz al-Dawlah [ruled in Baghdad 334-56/945-67], known as Jāshangīr, who connected the mosque to the [walled!] space [or courtyard] of his house, making it the place of prayer for his soldier-slaves." The addition of the information to the historical report was necessary. Ibn al-Narsī's learned audience in Baghdad knew that the mosque he named was not open to the public. He had to explain that, while this was true at the time he was narrating the report, it was not the case during the lifetime of the Lady who built the mosque as a pious foundation; it was then open to the public and could have easily remained open all night. Neither the storyteller nor his audience, on the other hand, knew anything or cared about the historical layout of Baghdad; and none of this information made sense to them. "Walk to the mosque built by Lady Zubaydah on the bank of the Tigris" was good enough for an audience who knew nothing of the topography of a city long in ruins.

7. The youth spends the night in the mosque, waiting for the

adventures that will terminate in the satisfaction of his desires or his death. He is to cross over from the familiar everyday world of the marketplace to the unfamiliar closed world of the Caliph's palace and harem, isolated from the outside world and protected by doorkeepers and guards. When at the break of dawn the maiden's servants arrive with empty boxes followed by the maiden herself, they converse and she weeps as she places him inside the box in which he is to be transported to the palace along with the other boxes in which she pretends to be bringing clothes and other effects for Lady Zubaydah. As the boat floats downstream on its way to the palace, the youth regrets his decision after it is too late, wonders whether he will achieve his desire, weeps, prays to God to save him. Yet he does not abjure his desire or calculate whether its fulfillment would have been worth losing his life, as he does in the historical report: "I said to myself, 'I let myself run the danger of being killed for the sake of a desire that may not be fulfilled after all, and were it to be fulfilled, it would not have been worth dying for'." When the boxes arrive at the door guarded by the chief servant, he insists on inspecting their contents and begins with the box in which the youth is hidden. The youth is so frightened he cannot control himself. His water runs out of the box. The maiden, whose presence of mind and wits never leave her, accuses the chief servant of having been responsible for spilling the flask of holy water from the well of Zamzam in Mecca and spoiling the colors of her Lady's garments. Then the Caliph himself arrives and wants to inspect the contents of the boxes; the youth nearly dies of fear many times over. After the Caliph has inspected all the other boxes, the maiden again saves the situation by insisting that this particular box contains her Lady's special secret effects, which he will soon see when she opens it for him. The box is carried in. The youth is taken out of the box and placed in a secluded room, and the box is filled with other goods for the Caliph to see when opened.

Throughout these breathtaking adventures, and in part because they involve a number of characters in the palace and numerous bits of dialogue, the historical report is full of dialectal expressions. These are removed by the storyteller or else replaced by dialectal expressions current in Mamluk times in Syria and Egypt. The same is true of names of material objects and of the names of the ranks of the palace guards. In trying to embellish the scene in which the box is carried through the palace corridors, the storyteller presents the chief servant as having "started up from his slumber" when it was broad daylight and even the Caliph was up and about. The scene with the Caliph, which in the historical report is short and the dialogue crisp and rapid, is elaborated far beyond what the audience of the historical report would have found believable, making the Caliph open the boxes one after another and look at everything in them. Finally, the storyteller deprives the youth of the food, drink, and other

amenities with which the maiden provides him in his secluded room. This sign of the maiden's kindness did not conform to the severe aspect of her character that was soon to be exhibited in the *1001 Nights* version.

8. The storyteller had yet another reason for depriving the youth of food and drink. In the historical report, the meeting with the queen mother takes place the day following his arrival. The storyteller, however, decided to move rapidly and have him meet Lady Zubaydah, the queen consort, soon after his arrival at the harem.

The meeting in the historical report is a private affair; the queen mother dismisses all but one of her handmaidens. In a brief scene, he kisses the ground before her and invokes God's blessings on her. Without speaking to him, she turns to the maiden her stewardess, praises her for the choice she had made, and gets up from the weight of her raiments and ornaments, receives him surrounded by thirty handmaidens, converses with him, questions him about his condition, is pleased with his answers, praises him, and commits her stewardess, the maiden she esteems as though she were her own child, to his care. None of this would have been believable to knowledgeable men or the audience of the historical report in Baghdad. But it is not nearly as unbelievable as what follows next.

9. As an additional favor, the storyteller's Lady Zubaydah orders that the youth spend ten days "with them," that is, in the harem apartments in the palace, and he has the youth repeat that he remained there ten days and nights, without catching sight of the maiden, however. Lady Zubaydah then asks for and receives the Caliph's permission to marry her stewardess, and she apparently arranges for the marriage ceremony to be performed in the harem, again without the Caliph being in any way involved in the affair. Another ten days and nights elapse while the handmaidens prepare the necessary sweets and foods and equip the maiden for the wedding night. For twenty days the youth, an unmarried commoner, a total stranger to the Caliph's household, smuggled into the palace without the Caliph's knowledge, is made to hide in the harem. The Caliph gives permission that a stewardess be married without being told to whom, a marriage ceremony is arranged in the palace, men are brought in to write and witness the marriage contract, and for ten days the whole palace is in an uproar preparing for the wedding night. The Caliph must have been blind indeed. If the storyteller meant to accentuate the youth's impatience after spending ten days hidden in a room and another ten days smelling the sweets and exquisite dishes being prepared for the wedding night, and make believable his forgetting to wash his hands after eating the *zīrbājah*, he could not have invented a less likely story to achieve his purpose. No tenth-century resident of Baghdad with the most rudimentary knowledge of the customs of the palace would have believed such a story.

The historical report contained information about the topography of the palace and about court ceremonies that was no longer comprehensible to the storyteller and his audience. The day after meeting the queen mother, the youth had to be smuggled out of the palace, hidden in the same box. The exit was somewhat easier than the entrance, the inspection requirements being more perfunctory. He is taken back to the mosque and left there to regain his house on his own. A few days later, one of the maiden's servants arrives with a letter from her and 3000 dinars, a gift from the queen mother who had ordered that he buy appropriate clothes, a she-mule to ride, and a slave to march before him, and in general required that he dress up and equip himself as befits someone who is to be presented before the Caliph. He is to proceed to the Commoners' Gate of the Caliph's Residence on the day of the Mawkib when the Caliph receives the officials of high rank and the public's business is conducted in his presence, and wait there until he is summoned to be presented before the Caliph and married before him (the Caliph having already consented that the ceremony be performed in his presence). He follows these instructions and rides his she-mule to the Commoner's Gate on the assigned day; an attendant calls his name, takes him in, and presents him to to the caliph al-Muqtadir, who is sitting on his throne surrounded by courtiers, judges, and military chiefs. Hardly is the awe-stricken youth inside the audience hall when a judge pronounces the marriage formula and he is conducted out. Upon leaving the audience hall, he is taken to a sumptuous and richly furnished apartment, made to sit down, and left there by himself.

10. This is the apartment in which the maiden was to be conducted to him that night. All day long no one pays any attention to him and he does not notice anyone he knows, only servants moving about and exquisite food being carried in and out. Toward nightfall the doors of the apartment are closed, there is no sign of his bride, and he feels very hungry. He wanders about the empty apartment and hits on the kitchen; the cooks do not recognize him and think he is an insignificant agent. He asks for food and is given a bowl of *zīrbājah*. In his embarrassment, and afraid they may recognize him, he eats, washes his hands in a hurry with some potash he finds in the kitchen (thinking that was enough to remove the *zīrbājah*'s odor), and returns to the spot where he was made to wait.

This episode conforms to the young merchant's character in the historical report and is quite adequate as preparation for what was to follow there. But it is too plain and "realistic" to conform to his character in the *1001 Nights* version. His filial piety, his success as merchant, his trials in entering the palace—all these prepare him for greater reward and greater punishment. Since entering the palace twenty days earlier, he has been resting in his apartment in the harem, where he has been well fed and cared for all along as befits the future bridegroom of Lady Zubaydah's

stewardess. In preparation for being introduced to him as wife, the maiden is conducted to the bath. That night he is offered an elaborate meal, including a bowl of *zīrbājah* so sumptuously prepared and highly sweetened that he neglects all the other dishes and immediately attacks the *zīrbājah* and eats his fill of it, wipes his hands, forgets to wash them (or, as he likes to explain his lack of refinement, "God the Most High made me forget to wash them"), and sits and waits.

11. The next episode is again more elaborate in the *1001 Nights* version, which emphasizes the maiden's high position in the Caliph's palace: the music, the singing, the display of the bride as she moves about the entire palace, where she is given presents of gold and silk garments—all meant to prepare for the major episode that follows and explain the maiden's reaction. After all, she was brought up by Lady Zubaydah herself and had been her chief confidante, accustomed to the most refined company and way of life imaginable. This is the high point of her life, a time in which she is reminded of her worth and position in the palace. She is proud and full of herself, and looking forward to the greatest moment a maiden in her position is said to look forward to: the moment of embracing her beloved—a youth she had gone through so much trouble to seduce and had run great dangers to smuggle into the palace. She is disrobed and left alone with him in bed. Impatient, scarcely believing that the union is taking place, he throws his arms around her neck. She smells the strong odor of the *zīrbājah* on the hands embracing her!

What happened next in the historical report was too mild to fit the storyteller's plans. For there she merely repulses him, accuses him of being unable to rise above his station as a lowly commoner, and gets up to leave the bridal room. He begs her to inform him of his sin, and is told that he had eaten the *zīrbājah* but had not properly washed his hands; how then does he expect to embrace a maiden of her station in life! He begs her to listen to his story, she allows him to tell it, and he swears that henceforth he will never eat *zīrbājah* without washing his hands forty times afterwards. Once she has reminded him that from now on he must conform to the social proprieties of his new station in life, she is neither resentful nor cruel, but smiles, forgives him, orders a sumptuous meal "fit for the caliphs' tables," and they eat, drink, and move to the bed where the marriage is consummated.

In the *1001 Nights* version, on the other hand, the storyteller has now arrived at the episode where the youth had to be maimed for eating the *zīrbājah*. He has prepared for the maiming by having the youth forget to wash his hands, not merely in a hurry and therefore inadequately, as he did in the historical report. He moves now in measured steps to elaborate the episode as fully as he can. The maiden is beside herself. She lets out a

loud cry, her handmaidens come running in, and the youth is left utterly frightened and bewildered about her strange behavior. At first she orders the handmaidens to throw "this madman" out. Upon inquiring what evidence of his madness she has, he finds out that he is a madman because he ate the *zīrbājah* and did not wash his hands, knowing full well that he was about to be in bed with someone of her august rank. Then she orders her handmaidens to hold him down, whips him on the back and buttocks, and asks her handmaidens to send him off to the magistrate of the city police to cut off the hand with which he ate the *zīrbājah* and which he forgot to wash. The youth, who still does not appreciate the enormity of his deed, his sin against the aristocratic social conventions of palace-dwellers, can only curse the *zīrbājah*. The handmaidens entreat their mistress to spare the ignorant youth, but she insists on teaching him a lesson by maiming something of his extremities so that he will never again eat the *zīrbājah* and not wash his hands. She turns to rebuke and curse him, and then leaves the room. For ten days a slave-girl brings him something to eat and drink and tells him the maiden is sick because he ate the *zīrbājah* and did not wash his hands. Still unable to comprehend his fault, he is angry and keeps wondering "what kind of damned manners are these?"

12. Then the maiden returns, furious as ever, and insists on having her revenge. The handmaidens tie him up, and she takes a sharp razor and cuts off his thumbs and great toes. When he is able to open his eyes and speak again, he declares that he will never again eat the *zīrbājah* without washing his hands one hundred twenty times afterwards. She approves and makes him promise and swear to fulfill his pledge.

13. After the first blissful night, the youth in the historical report is able to enjoy the company of the maiden day and night for a whole week without interruption. Then the festivities celebrating the end of the first week of marriage take place. The next day she explains to him that they cannot go on living in the Caliph's palace; it was only because of the queen mother's interest in her that it was possible for him to consummate the marriage in the palace, something that had not happened to anyone else before. She gives him 10,000 dinars (the queen mother had just given her 50,000 on the occasion of her marriage, and the maiden's own wealth in the city is many times that sum, a matter that the merchant remembers with professional interest) and asks him to buy a spacious house with many rooms and a large garden, and not to be tight-fisted as merchants are apt to be. She is used to living in palaces and will not agree to live in a small house. He buys the house that fits her needs; she moves into it with her possessions and handmaidens, and bears him many sons. He continues to trade with success ("for I just could not abandon the business and stop gaining a living"). After many happy years in which he continues to

prosper, she dies. But the obligation to wash his hands forty times every time he eats the *zīrbājah* remains. His sons, to whom he points, are sitting around him; they are the evidence and proof of his story. The audience—all fellow merchants—knew about his wealth and probably were listening to his story in the spacious house he bought for his departed wife. The only doubt they could have entertained would have been the following: how could all this happen to a fellow cloth merchant without his friends and associates learning about it earlier? His absence from his shop, his newly gained wealth, his buying a spacious house, his having a wife and handmaidens who had been accustomed to the life of palace-dwellers—could all this have remained a secret until the day he decided to tell his story? Perhaps they did know the outward features of his new life. They could not of course have known about his adventures in the palace, which had to be kept a secret, at least until after 320/932, the year of the caliph al-Muqtadir's and his mother's death.

In the *1001 Nights* version the merchant concludes his story once he has satisfied the audience's curiosity about how he came to have his thumbs and great toes cut off and why he had to wash his hands one hundred twenty times. The audience is now curious about what happened next, and he continues his story. First he had to wait for his wounds to heal. Once they were healed, the maiden came to him and, finally, the marriage was consummated. He stayed with her "the rest of the month" and it was he who was impatient to leave the palace. The storyteller then follows the historical report until they settle in their new home, but omits the fact that he went back to trading and making his own living and the fact that she gave him many sons. Finally, there is no explanation of how or why he left Baghdad, or why he happens to be in China.

* * * *

Ever since Aristotle spoke of the respective merits of history and poetry, history as something that actually took place has been distinguished from fiction as something that could possibly take place but may not in fact have happened. It was always known that certain kinds of poetry or fiction dealt with strange and impossible things, strange and impossible at least to an audience not credulous enough to believe everything it hears. The *1001 Nights* is of course full of strange and impossible stories. But the tale told by the King's steward (and the Hunchback story as a whole) is not such a story. It claims to be an account of historical events involving historical persons in a well-known time and place, and it does not even hint at anything that is impossible in itself.

Nevertheless, we have seen in how many places the audience of the

historical report would have found that report credible but would have laughed the fictional version out of court. For them, the fictional version was impossible. Although derived from historical reality, it was an outrageous distortion and corruption of history. Nor would they have it particularly interesting or amusing. On the contrary, they would have found it silly and cold, not because they lacked imagination or were ignorant, but because they knew too much. It was a tale about their city and history and institutions and customs, and it was ridiculously inaccurate. Had it been a tale told about China or some inaccessible region at some remote time, they might have been amused by it, for it told of nothing that was inherently impossible. However, possible and impossible do not have to do only with things or events, but with the audience as well. What would have seemed impossible to the audience of the historical report in tenth-century Baghdad could very well seem possible to the audience of *1001 Nights* version in fourteenth-century Damascus or Cairo, which consisted of semi-literate men and women who remembered nothing to gainsay what they had heard about what might have happened in eighth- or ninth-century Baghdad: for all they knew, this was history, or else they were only too willing to transform the fictional version back into history. The same would prove to be true of audiences in later times and other countries or cultures. But it seems to have been especially true of learned Orientalists who have used the *1001 Nights* as a source for the study of the manners and customs of Oriental societies.

Harvard University

References

al-Shāljī 1978 — ᶜAbbūd al-Shāljī, ed. al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī, *al-Faraj baᶜd al-Shiddah*. 5 vols. Beirut.

Mahdi 1984 — Muhsin Mahdi, ed. *The Thousand and One Nights* (*Alf Layla wa-Layla*) *from the Earliest Known Sources*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 80-100

Sīrat Banī Hilāl: Introduction and Notes to an Arab Oral Epic Tradition

Dwight F. Reynolds

> Then he remembers how he used to like to go out of the house at sunset when people were having their evening meal, and used to lean against the maize fence pondering deep in thought, until he was recalled to his surroundings by the voice of a poet who was sitting at some distance to his left, with his audience round him. Then the poet would begin to recite in a wonderfully sweet tone the doings of Abu Zaid, Khalifa and Diyab, and his hearers would remain silent except when ecstasy enlivened them or desire startled them. Then they would demand a repetition and argue and dispute. And so the poet would be silent until they ceased their clamour after a period which might be short or long. Then he would continue his sweet recitation in a monotone. . ..
>
> (Hussein 1982:2)

This poetic tradition which Egypt's preeminent literary scholar, Ṭaha Hussein, recalls at the outset of his autobiography is one familiar through much of the Arab world—the *sīra* of the Banī Hilāl Bedouin tribe which chronicles the tribe's massive migration from their homeland on the Arabian peninsula, their sojourn in Egypt, their conquest of North Africa, and their final defeat one hundred years later. The migration, the conquest, and the defeat are historical events which took place between the tenth and twelfth centuries A.D. From this skein of actual events Arabic oral tradition has woven a rich and complex narrative centered on a cluster of heroic characters. Time and again Bedouin warriors and heroines are pitted against the kings and princes of towns and cities. The individual destinies of the main actors are constantly in a fragile balance with the fate of the tribe itself. Finally, with the conquest of North Africa, the Banī Hilāl nomads themselves become rulers of cities, a situation which leads to the internal fragmentation of the tribe and their eventual demise.

Stories of the Banī Hilāl tribe have been recorded from oral tradition since the fourteenth century in regions located across the breadth of the Arab world: from Morocco on the shores of the Atlantic to Oman on the edges of the Indian Ocean, and as far south into Africa as Nigeria, Chad,

and the Sudan. It is quite probably the single most widespread and best documented narrative of Arabic oral literature. We know far more about the historical development, the geographical distribution, and the living oral tradition of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* than, for example, the *1001 Nights*, which owes its fame almost entirely to the enormous amount of attention it received in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe.[1] Though *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* is little known in the urban centers of the Arab world, in rural areas it has been recorded in prose, in poetry, and in song. The most famous versions are those sung by epic poets in Egypt who perform for nights at a time their versified narrative while accompanying themselves on the *rabāb* (spike-fiddle), the *ṭār* (large frame-drum) or western violin (held vertically on the knee).

The folk *sīra* tradition is one familiar to most scholars of Arabic literature, but it has for the most part escaped the notice of epic scholars, folklorists, and anthropologists in the West. This is certainly due primarily to the dearth of translations into European languages and in particular into English. Over the past two decades, however, *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* has sparked new academic interest and even a few translations. This article, then, is intended as an introduction for non-Arabists to the tradition of, and recent scholarship on, *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*.

The Question of Genre

Sīrat Banī Hilāl has been referred to by western scholars as epic, saga, romance, tale cycle, legend, and geste. A great deal of the confusion stems from the wide variation in performance modes across the Arab world, though certainly the gist of the problem is that *sīra* is an indigenous

[1] The collection of tales known in the West as the *Thousand and One Nights* or *Arabian Nights* bears only a tenuous relation to its Arabic originals. Antoine Galland, who completed the first "translation" of the Arabic *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah,* freehandedly expurgated, retold, and rearranged the tales in his Arabic sources. To these original tales his editor added tales from other sources, and Galland himself filled out nearly one-third of the collection with stories he heard orally from a Lebanese Maronite visiting Paris. Later translators padded even this debased collection with ethnographic detail (Edward W. Lane) and Victorian erotica (Richard Burton). The hundreds of versions and editions of the *Nights* published in Europe remain a monument to the West's fantasies about the Middle East rather than examples of Arabic folk literature. The extreme popularity of the work in Europe eventually motivated Arabic editions which appeared in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Previous to these reintroduced editions, the popularity of the *Nights* in the Middle East had been quite limited. Each of the major European translators (Galland, Lane, Burton, and others) complained of the difficulty in obtaining the few extant manuscripts of the *Nights*, and the evidence for the circulation of these tales in oral tradition previous to the late nineteenth-century printed editions is sparse indeed. For a general if somewhat dated introduction see Littman 1960-. MacDonald 1932 gives a detailed account of how the early editions were compiled.

Arabic genre with no exact parallel in European literatures. A *sīra* is quite literally "a travelling," "a journeying"—the noun formed from the verb *sāra*, "to travel, to journey, to move (on)." It is used to designate a history, a biography, and even a mode of behavior or conduct. The term was first applied in Arabic literature to the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, *sīrat rasūl allāh*, particularly that by Ibn Isḥāq in the recension of Ibn Hishām (see Levi Della Vida 1913-34). The evolution of the folk *siyar* (pl. of *sīra*) is cloudy at best. A collection of narratives told in alternating sequences of prose and poetry appear first in manuscripts and then, in the nineteenth century, in yellow-page chapbooks, though they clearly have their roots in oral tradition and are referred to as early as the twelfth century A.D.: *sīrat ᶜantar ibn shaddād*[2] (the *sīra* of the black poet-knight, ᶜAntar son of Shaddād), *sīrat al-ẓāhir baybars* (the *sīra* of the Egyptian ruler and folk hero, al-Ẓāhir Baybars; see MacDonald 1913-34, Wangelin 1936, Paret 1960-), *sīrat ḥamza al-bahlawān*[3] (the *sīra* of Ḥamza, uncle of the Prophet Muḥammad), *sīrat dhāt al-himma* (the *sīra* of the heroine Dhāt al-Himma and the wars against the Byzantines; see Canard 1935, 1960-, 1961), *sīrat al-malik sayf ibn dhī yazan* (the *sīra* of the Ḥimyarite king, Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan, and his wars against the Abyssinians; see Paret 1924, 1913-34), *sīrat al-zīr sālim* (the *sīra* of the Bedouin warrior, al-Zīr Sālim; see Canova in press), and, of course, *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. All but *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, however, have now disappeared from oral tradition, though recitations of other *siyar* were noted as late as the mid-nineteenth century. The language of these prose/verse narratives of battles, adventure and romance wavers between the spoken colloquial and a rather stilted "classicized" vernacular; nowhere do they reach a level recognized as true *fuṣḥā* (the classical, literary form of Arabic). So the written texts were, and often still are, shunned by many Arab scholars; the oral tradition, in local colloquial dialects, is even further beyond the pale. The folk *siyar*, then, are distinguished by their lengthy narratives (chapbook editions run up to 40 volumes), in alternating sections of prose and poetry (the latter most often the speeches of the main characters), in colloquial or "pseudo-classical" Arabic, focusing on very similar themes of battle, romance, the deeds of chivalrous knights, often interlaced with encounters with supernatural beings such as ghouls and jinns as well.

[2] See Hartmann 1913-34, Heath 1984, Heller 1931 and 1960-; for texts see Hamilton 1819 and Norris 1980.

[3] See Lammens 1913-34, Meredith-Owens 1960-, van Ronkel 1895, Virolleaud 1958-59. *Sīrat Ḥamza* has wandered far and wide across the Middle East and South Asia; its origins probably lie in Iran, but versions are found in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay, Balinese, and Sudanese. In most of these regions the story has acquired layers of local features and provides a fine example of assimilation into extant systems of folk aesthetics.

History

Several of the folk *siyar* have as their central character a hero plucked from the pages of history: ᶜAntar ibn Shaddād was a poet of the pre-Islamic era, Ḥamza was indeed uncle of the Prophet Muḥammad, and al-Ẓāhir Baybars ruled Egypt from about 1260 to 1277 A.D. Most of these figures, however, share little but their name with the corresponding folk heroes. *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, on the other hand, has a more intimate relationship with historical events. The frame of the *sīra* is essentially correct, though the main characters appear to be fictitious.[4] The existence of the Banī Hilāl is documented back to the pre-Islamic period. Through the first centuries after the appearance of Islam in the seventh century A.D., the Banī Hilāl (literally "sons of the crescent moon" or "descendants of Hilāl") in the Arabian peninsula continued to reside primarily in the Najd in central Arabia. In the tenth century, however, the Banī Hilāl began to leave Arabia in large numbers. No doubt some waves of this migration were voluntary, but substantial numbers of the Banī Hilāl were deported to Upper Egypt by the Fāṭimid Caliph of Cairo, al-ᶜAzīz ibn al-Muᶜizz, after their participation in the Qarmatian rebellion and the sacking of the city of al-Medina (see Idris 1960-, Yūnus 1968, Berque 1972). To this day there are populations in Upper Egypt and the Sudan that claim descent from the Banī Hilāl, and some of the most significant field recordings of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* have been from this region.

In the middle of the eleventh century, al-Muᶜizz ibn Bādis, a vassal of the Fāṭimids then governing the province of Ifrīqiya (approximately modern Tunisia and contiguous territories), shifted his allegiance from the Fāṭimid Caliph of Cairo to the ᶜAbbāsid Caliph in Baghdad. The Fāṭimid Caliph, al-Mustanṣir, is then supposed to have handed over Ifrīqiya to the rapacious Banī Hilāl nomads both to punish his wayward vassal and simply to rid himself of their ever-uneasy presence in Egypt. Whether at the instigation of the Caliph or in less organized fashion, the Banī Hilāl did traverse Libya and invade Tunisia. In 1051-52 they captured Gabès; on November 1, 1057, they sacked Qayrawān and thus completed their conquest. There they ruled for almost exactly one hundred years; however, during this period the victorious confederation of clans and tribal groups splintered and fragmented. In their divided state an eastern-moving Moroccan dynasty, the Almohads, found the Banī Hilāl easy prey, defeating them in two large battles in 1153 and 1160. Small groups from the Banī Hilāl appear in histories sporadically over the next century in Morocco and even in Andalusian Spain, but they then disappear entirely. In several

[4] Schleifer (1960-) writes that the character Dhiyāb was an historical, though minor, figure.

regions of North Africa, groups trace their ancestry to this final dispersion of the Banī Hilāl nomadic tribes.

The Growth of the Sīra

Our first evidence of the *sīra* as a poetic tradition turns up two hundred years after the great defeats of the Banī Hilāl. The famous fourteenth-century Arab historiographer, Ibn Khaldūn, toward the end of his *Muqaddima* (*Introduction to History*; 1967:III, 412-40), embarks on a spirited defense of vernacular poetry. His is a unique acceptance in his era of verse not in *fuṣḥā* as true poetry. The poems he cites as examples, as proof of the artistic merit of colloquial poetry, are short poems recounting episodes from *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. Several of these fragments are parallels of texts recorded in the field in the twentieth century in Tunisia and Egypt six hundred years later.

Very little is known of the development of the *sīra* between the writings of Ibn Khaldūn and the late eighteenth century. At that point, however, the historical record comes alive. Over a period of 70 years, from 1785 to 1845, a series of manuscripts were penned in colloquial Arabic, virtual transcriptions of what was heard, seemingly taken down directly from oral performances. Several of the manuscripts, now housed in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek, contain colophons which appear to indicate the names of scribe and poet. The collection totals more than 8,000 pages of prose and poetry from *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* and clearly indicates a fertile and vibrant oral tradition. Smaller collections are found in several other European libraries (see Ayoub 1978, Galley 1981, Pantůček 1970:10-12).

Toward the end of this same period, in 1836, the British Arabist Edward W. Lane published his ethnographic description of Egypt, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. Chapters 21-23 are devoted to the "Public Recitations of Romances." The first, concerning *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, includes a six-page summary of one of the opening episodes of the *sīra*, the birth of the hero Abū Zayd. Lane attests to the great popularity of the folk *siyar* among the Cairenes, and estimates that fifty professional poets existed in Cairo dedicated exclusively to the performance of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, thirty more performed *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*, and six performed *Sīrat ᶜAntar*. Only *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* was a musical tradition, sung to the accompaniment of the *rabāb* (spike-fiddle), but performers of both it and *Sirat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* performed without books—reciters of *Sīrat ᶜAntar* read from manuscripts. Lane further notes that the *siyar* of Dhāt al-Himma and of Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan had been in oral tradition until not long before his sojourn in Egypt.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, accounts of the

Sīrat Banī Hilāl tradition have been written by travelers, historians, ethnographers, and even journalists. Most are but brief mentions of performances; a few contain valuable details on performance styles and extracts from oral or written texts.[55]

Modes of Performance

The composite portrait of the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* which grows out of these many scattered accounts is a surprising one, for while the key elements of the story line, not without significant variation, remain constant, the modes of performance and the choice of poetic forms are quite diverse. The briefest overview reveals performances in prose, in various types of poetry, in alternating sequences of prose and poetry, in sung versified renditions, and in renditions which move quickly to and from spoken prose, rhymed prose (*saj*ʿ), and sung poetry. *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* can perhaps be most clearly conceptualized as an enormous narrative, truly epic in length, a set of key plot elements and characters known by performers who render it in widely diverse genres of oral literature. In Egypt, for example, storytellers narrate the *sīra* in prose as a cycle of tales; some public reciters perform from written copies, and the epic poets, for whom Egypt is famous, versify the narrative in sung improvised poetry in a manner quite similar to the epic traditions of Yugoslavia studied by Milman Parry and Albert Lord (see, e.g., Lord 1960). This epic tradition of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* is currently unique to Egypt, though it may have been more widespread in the past. Even within the epic singing tradition of Egypt, almost mirroring the diversity of verbal forms, the musical styles display an intriguing amount of variety. A large number of melodies are pressed into service as vehicles for epic singing, even songs from the popular urban milieu. Some epic poets perform as soloists while others are accompanied by ensembles of up to eight and ten musicians on *rabāb*s and/or violins, reed flutes, and a variety of percussion instruments. Some poets perform only in rhymed poetry, and others shift register frequently from prose to rhymed prose to poetry. Some poets pace their singing with extensive choral refrains sung by the other musicians and some use no refrains at all. *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* is, in short, an oral tradition which thrives on variation in style while maintaining a clear unifying bond in the story itself. All of these many "sounds" have their own appreciative audiences, or they simply would not continue to exist.

---

[5] An excellent summary of many of these references is found in Breteau et al. 1978. This article, however, restricts itself to North Africa and does not give sources from the Arabian peninsula or the Levant. An evocative description of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* performance in Upper Egypt can be found in Critchfield 1978:48-57.

The Story

Within the essentially historical framework of the migrations and conquests of the Banī Hilāl tribe, the *sīra* has evolved into a series of intricate tales built on tensions among a constellation of central characters. In this it may be differentiated from the other Arabic folk *siyar* which all deal primarily with a single heroic character. *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* may be compared more easily, say, to the Arthur cycles or the *Iliad*, while the other, now defunct, *siyar* more closely resemble, in this aspect, *Beowulf*, the *Chanson de Roland*, or *El Cid*. The cast of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* consists basically of several key male roles playing opposite a single female lead role:

Abū Zayd, often thought of as "the" hero of the *sīra*, is the primary hero of the Banī Hilāl; however, he is not their greatest warrior. Crafty and cunning, he often prefers to avoid battle through ruses and trickery. It is this aspect of his character which leads to varying interpretations from poet to poet and region to region. His deceptions frequently skirt the borderline between honorable and dishonorable behavior. Furthermore, he is black, due to the extraordinary circumstances of his birth,[6] and is often mistaken by outsiders for a mere slave, which allows him at many points to travel disguised as an epic poet into enemy territory. In Egypt it is not uncommon to see an Egyptian audience sitting and listening to an epic poet sing about Abū Zayd disguised as an epic poet singing to an Egyptian audience sitting round him.

Dhiyāb, leader of the Zughba clan, is the most powerful warrior of the Banī Hilāl confederation, and it is by his hand that the tribe's ultimate foe, al-Zanātī Khalīfa, is fated to die. However, he is hot-blooded, easily slighted, and very touchy on points of honor, which often sets him in conflict with Abū Zayd. Time after time, after some perceived slight by other members of the tribal council, Dhiyāb leads his clan out of the confederation, only to return in the final desperate hour of battle to save the Banī Hilāl from destruction. Though he is rash and often a source of conflict, the tribe must endure his behavior for only he can slay al-Zanātī.

Sulṭān Ḥasan is the dignified arbitrator, the mediator of tribal tensions among the Banī Hilāl and the moderating force who often holds the

[6] Abū Zayd's mother, Khaḍrā al-Sharīfa, visited a well with her women. There they watched a number of birds come and go until a large black bird swooped out of the sky and chased all the others away. Khaḍrā wished aloud for a son as strong and noble as this bird even if he be just as black. Her wish was granted. Her son's color, however, causes the two of them to be ostracized from the tribe under the suspicion of adultery. They are taken in by another tribe where Abū Zayd grows up; they are reconciled to the Banī Hilāl only after Abū Zayd unknowingly falls just short of slaying his father in battle.

clans together despite the rivalries and conflicts of their leaders. More devout than the younger heroes, Abū Zayd and Dhiyāb, he is also the statesman of the tribe in dealings with outsiders.

Al-Zanātī Khalīfa, leader of the Berbers of North Africa, is the foe the Banī Hilāl must defeat in order to rule Ifrīqiya. Just how evil he is varies from poet to poet. In Egypt, an episode is often sung early in the story of the *sīra* in which al-Zanātī murders seventy descendants of the Prophet in a mosque in Mecca while they are at prayer, clearly marking him as a villain beyond redemption. Other poets transpose him into a nearly tragic figure struggling against his predestined demise at the hand of Dhiyāb.

Against these four versions of manhood stands one idealized vision of womanhood, al-Jāzya, who is, quite simply, the most beautiful and wisest woman in the world. She sits with the sheikhs in the tribal council and has authority in their decisions; she at times rides into battle, and not a few times carries the fate of the entire tribe in her hands when she is married off to an opponent (inevitably smitten with her beauty) to gain pasturage and safe passage for the tribe in difficult terrain, while remaining solely responsible for finding some means of escape or an honorable deception by which to break off the marriage so that she may rejoin the tribe on their westward journey.

The *sīra* is often divided into three parts.[7] The first recounts the history of the tribe, the birth of the central heroes, and their adventures as youths. Then a severe drought strikes the Najd and the council decides new pasturage must be found if the tribe is to survive. A scouting party is formed consisting of Abū Zayd and his three nephews. The second section of the *sīra*, the "Reconnaissance" (*al-riyāda*), tells the adventures of these four young heroes as they travel to Tunisia seeking a new homeland for the tribe. Disaster, however, strikes three times and the first nephew, Yūnus, is held captive by the princess ᶜAzīza after she has fallen madly in love with him. With Yūnus her prisoner, she attempts to seduce him (a favorite episode in more than one quarter) while he, à la Galahad, stoically resists her charms. Another nephew is killed in battle, and the third dies from a snake bite; Abū Zayd returns to the tribe alone, to the great anger of many,

[7] al-Abnoudy (1978:22-28) prefers to divide the *sīra* into four parts: 1) the birth and youth of the heroes, 2) the reconnaissance, 3) the westward journey, and 4) the seven kingdoms (i.e., of the divided Banī Hilāl clans once they have conquered Tunisia). Yūnus (1973:185) has suggested a tripartite division by generation: 1) the generation of the fathers, Rizq, Sarḥān, and Ghānim; 2) the generation of the central heroes, Abū Zayd, Dhiyāb, and Ḥasan; 3) the generation of their sons who fight the final fratricidal battles. The chapbooks of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries commonly label the "reconnaissance" and the "westward journey" in the same manner, but have varying titles for the first and final sections of the *sīra*. In oral tradition, since the episodes are rarely recited "in order," the divisions play little role.

and Dhiyāb in particular. Drought, however, forces cooperation. The Banī Hilāl depart westward toward Tunisia the Verdant in search of grazing lands, to rescue Yūnus, and to avenge the murder of the seventy descendants of the Prophet killed by al-Zanātī.

The third section of the *sīra* is the "Westward Journey" (*al-taghrība*), an elaborate series of battle cycles and romances which takes the tribe on a not-very-direct route through Iraq, Syria, Jerusalem, Gaza, Egypt, and Libya on the way to Tunisia. There the final battles are fought against the Berbers led by al-Zanātī Khalīfa and the unavoidable fate of the tribe is played out. The Banī Hilāl who in unity were victorious are divided in the ensuing peace. The rivalries between Dhiyāb and Abū Zayd burst the bonds that held together the clans and the warring factions eventually destroy themselves.

Texts in Translation: English

Very few texts of any length from *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* have been translated into English, and translations previous to the last twenty years have all been flawed as examples of the tradition. The brief summary which appears in Lane's work mentioned above (1895:391-92) contains one short passage of verse translation which constitutes the very first translation from the *sīra* of any kind into English. The translation and summary are taken from a written text in Lane's possession; he does, however, include a transcribed melody from a live performance which bears some resemblance to melodies used by poets even today.

An entire episode from the *sīra* was translated by Lady Anne and Wilfred Scawen Blunt from manuscript at the end of the nineteenth century with the title, "The Stealing of the Mare" (1892/1914). It was on the merits of this lone example that Bowra included Arabic epic poetry in his comparative study (1952) of heroic poetry. The translation is quite good and suffers only from the fact that the episode in question is entirely marginal to the overall movement of the epic. In it, the hero Abū Zayd helps a lady in distress by stealing the mare of al-Agheyli Jaber so her son might marry his true love. Such narrative detours, tales of adventure, deeds of chivalry, and so forth abound in the repertoires of many performers, and the translation stands as a fine example of these episodic asides.

The Patterson translation (1930) of four Banī Hilāl tales from Shuwa Arabic (Nigeria) is a rather curious document. It was originally transcribed from oral tradition by a Shuwa Arab *mallam*: "much of his transcription of them [the tales] was simply a phonetic rendering in Arabic characters of the spoken words and it has been revised to produce the

present version" (*ibid*.:18). Many of us would be much more satisfied with that original transcription, for the "present version" is a reader for government officers studying Shuwa Arabic and for use in schools and contains Arabic texts and English translations. Though the language has been altered to a great degree, the tales, told in prose and verse, are presumably somewhat intact and provide evidence of the *sīra* tradition from the very edges of its known geographical distribution.

By far the best, and the lengthiest, texts in English translation are to be found in two recent dissertations: Cathryn Anita Baker, "The Hilali Saga in the Tunisian South" (1978), and Susan E. Slyomovics, "The Merchant of Art: An Egyptian Hilali Oral Epic Poet in Performance" (1985). These have the added advantage of representing the two "heartlands" of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* oral tradition. Baker's work is drawn from extensive fieldwork in southern Tunisia, 1971-73, where she recorded sixty-six different reciters (sixty men and six women). Two sections of the dissertation are of particular note here. In the first (Chapter Two), Baker collates and summarizes the plot of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* as recited in the Tunisian South from thirty-three episodes representing seventy hours of recordings. In the following section (Chapter Three), a major work in itself, Baker presents a two-hundred-page English translation of one reciter's version of the *sīra* accompanied by the complete Arabic text and explanatory notes. The narrative is prose with a few interspersed rhymed couplets and some longer poetic sequences. The translation remains close to the Arabic and yet quite readable. The dissertation also includes an historical introduction, an analysis of the reciter's view of history, and an examination of the characters and stereotypes within the *sīra*.

In Upper Egypt, where Slyomovics conducted her research, the predominant mode of performance is musical and versified—epic singing at its most artistic level. This dissertation is unique in the field of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* studies on several counts: first, it provides the first detailed analysis of a single poet and his craft; second, it provides a performance-based approach to a lengthy text; third, it discloses layer after layer of social and contextual analysis with which to examine the processes of composition, the performer-audience interaction, the interaction between the researcher and the event, and, of course, the text itself.

Slyomovics' text is more than a translation—it is the transcription of a performance. In it we read not only the intricately punned words of the poet, but the comments of the audience members, the conversations during tea and cigarette breaks, and a dispute among the listeners over a pun in the text interpreted as a personal insult by one listener. From this incident the power of the poet, a social outcast in many respects, to praise or ridicule in public performance with a large degree of impunity, is clearly demonstrated. The text presented particular difficulties in translation, for

the epic poet structures his performance around a large number of puns by which he indicates central themes and his own interpretation of the traditional texts. These are admirably dealt with in a layout which highlights the punned words in the English translation.

Two much shorter published texts are worthy of note: Sayyid Hurreiz, in *Ja'aliyyin Folktales: an Interplay of African, Arabian and Islamic Elements* (1977), includes a sparse version of the *sīra* from northern Sudan in English translation and transliterated Arabic. Here the *sīra* is narrated as a prose tale and the over arching plot of the epic is told in just seven pages. Stone and Lunde have provided perhaps the most easily read introduction to *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. Their short article (1983), is a pastiche of historical background, translated texts, and commentary. Unfortunately, the authors did not see fit to acknowledge the origin of their texts.[8]

Texts in Translation: French

The oldest scholarly translation into French is that of Alfred Bel (1902-3).[9] Though published in three installments, the text is a singular poem concerning the heroine of the *sīra*, al-Jāzya. It is 79 verses long, each verse carrying a double rhyme (at the end of each hemistich). The first thirty-seven verses are rhymed ABAB; verses thirty-eight through seventy-eight are rhymed CDCD, and the final line returns to rhyme A. Bel has provided a lengthy introduction, the Arabic text with ample footnotes, as well as the translation and explanatory notes. Though short, the extended double rhyme makes this a fascinating text in Arabic.

More recently, several lengthy texts and collections of texts have appeared in French in popular and scholarly editions. Two of the Arab world's most prominent scholars of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* have published books in French from their research. Tahar Guiga has published, in both Arabic (1968a) and French (1968b), a collection of texts inherited from his father, ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Guiga. The edition is a popularized one aimed at bringing these texts, originally in local Bedouin dialect, to a larger audience. The Arabic text is an intriguing compromise which unites written forms understandable to all educated Arabs while retaining some idioms and

[8] Also under general introductions can be mentioned a retold version for young readers (Davis and Ashabrenner 1960); reading level approximately fifth to eighth grade.

[9] René Basset presented an earlier article (1885) concerning a tale of al-Jāzya *à propos* a recent translation by L. Guin of the legend of Rouba (Oran, 1884); Basset summarizes a chapbook of the *sīra* and its major divisions, translating short passages relevant to the story published by Guin. He also refers to a version published by M. Largeau (1879) which I have been unable to examine.

vocabulary items to give a sense of the texts' colloquial heritage. The French text is preceded by a comprehensive introduction to the *sīra* as a pan-Arab tradition and in the local Tunisian context of these tales told mostly in prose, but with some poetic sequences.

Abd al-Raḥmān al-Abnoudy, himself a poet of distinction in Egypt, has gathered together a series of extracts of oral performances he has recorded from epic poets in Egypt (1978). The introduction provides a précis of the plot of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* and the texts are then presented as a sampler from the entire epic. Unfortunately, the French translation is at times rather rough, and due to the nature of the work itself, the transitions from one section to the next are not always smooth. It is, however, a valuable representative of the Egyptian poetic tradition of the *sīra*; in fact, it remains the only example of the epic poetry performance style in French translation. The two introductions from Guiga's and Abnoudy's works form an interesting contrast in which these two well-qualified researchers summarize a single tradition from slightly different geographical and cultural standpoints.

The most scholarly of the French texts is that published by Galley and Ayoub, *Histoire des Bani Hilal et de ce qui leur advint dans leur marche vers l'ouest* (1983). After a short historical introduction three texts are presented in Arabic with facing French translations. The first is from a manuscript and consists of a single 249-line poem. The rhyme scheme is laid out in transliteration for those who do not read Arabic script. The second and third texts are oral performances recorded in 1967 and 1975 in the south and northwest of Tunisia respectively. Both are in prose with short sections of verse. The texts have been closely transcribed into Arabic script from the recordings utilizing vocalizations and diacritics to faithfully render the reciters' pronunciation. The French translations follow the Arabic fairly closely, though with a fair amount of paraphrases; particularly troublesome vocabulary items have been retained in Arabic with explanatory notes. The translations read very well and the translators have done an admirable job of following, as much as is possible, the rhythm of the Arabic original. For scholars interested in close linguistic or ethnopoetic analysis, these are without doubt the best of the French texts and translations.

The most recent and lengthiest addition to this series of French translations has been the work of Lucienne Saada, *La Geste Hilalienne; version de Bou Thadi* (1985). Saada has set her sights on a literary translation which will communicate the aesthetic appeal of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. She has succeeded, at least, in producing a text of such length that some degree of the scope and richness of the tradition clearly comes through. The text is entirely from a single reciter, Mohammed Hsini, recorded over a period of six years, totaling approximately twenty hours of performance.

Scholars will find it frustrating that although the text is divided into many small sequences and episodes, no account is given of how these were ordered and arranged, whether any sections represent collations of more than one performance, and which texts were recorded within the same performance session. The text has some interesting idiosyncrasies that will interest other researchers (Abū Zayd, for instance, kills his father in Hsini's version, a variant I, at least, am not familiar with from other texts), and it will certainly attract much attention as the longest text yet translated into a European language from the *sīra*.

Notes on Recent Scholarship

Any discussion of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* scholarship must begin by noting that most of it is in Arabic, and the majority of that remains unpublished. Three international symposia have been held in recent years in the Middle East on the Arabic folk *siyar*: Hammamat, Tunisia (June 26-28, 1980); Cairo, Egypt (January 2-7, 1985); and Gabès, Tunisia (July 12-20, 1985).[10] The papers from these conferences, mostly in Arabic, have circulated widely in unpublished form among researchers, and it is hoped that they will appear in print in the near future. This brief review of recent scholarship touches on a number of themes in current research, but focuses primarily on studies currently available in published form.

The location and description of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* manuscripts has remained an on-going concern among researchers: S. Pantůček published a preliminary listing of known manuscripts in 1970 which has been supplemented by A. Ayoub's thorough investigation of the Berlin manuscript collection (1978) and M. Galley's description of manuscripts in British libraries (1981). A very useful account of manuscripts and various descriptions which have appeared in print of the *sīra* in oral tradition in North Africa from Ibn Khaldūn to the present has been given by C. Breteau, M. Galley, and A. Roth (1978). The fourteenth-century Ibn Khaldūn texts have received attention from A. Baker (1983), who has suggested some corrections to the Franz Rosenthal translation of the *Muqaddima*, and from A. Ayoub (1982), who has explored new approaches to these problematic texts.

The most interesting studies for folklorists and scholars of oral literature will be those focusing on narrative techniques. S. Slyomovics in her dissertation (mentioned above under "texts in translation") has written extensively about one poet's use of paronomasia as a structuring and interpretive device. In a further article (1987) she has compared an oral and a written version of the death-poem of a character in the *sīra*. The oral version is marked by frequent puns, the written version by none. She

[10] An account of the first symposium can be found in Galley and Roth (1980).

concludes with an analysis of the discrepancy and explores the concept of epic characters themselves functioning as puns in the organization of oral epic texts.

Bridget Connelly's Ph.D. dissertation, "The Oral-Formulaic Tradition of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*" (1974/1986) applies the Parry-Lord theories of oral-formulaic composition to sample texts from the Egyptian epic singing tradition. In her structural analysis of the Patterson translations from Shuwa Arabic she reveals: "a pattern of repeating and variation of character and episode configuration, of recurring antithetical images and word play. . .[which] provides the tales with a kind of counter logical balance and structural coherence" (1973:24) in opposition to the translator's own judgment on the tales as "garbled" history.

Another structural approach, derived mainly from Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, has been applied by A. Ayoub in an unpublished paper to a corpus of written episodes and has led him to propose a sequence of functions (Departure-Opposition-Ruse-Dream foretelling of the future-Pact-War-Victory) as a fundamental description of tales from the written tradition. A further foray into the structural description of the written texts has been published by D. Onaeva (1975).

The dream function present in Ayoub's study is an extremely common element in both written and oral versions; the outcome of the episode is foreshadowed in the beginning or middle of the narrative in a revelatory dream. This had led to much speculation about the sequencing of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* performances, in which the audience is often led into an initial conflict, then through a dream that echoes the end of the tale, and finally back into the story through to its foretold conclusion. A. Hawwās (1980) has dealt with the most famous of these dream sequences, where Su^{c}ada, daughter of al-Zanātī Khalīfa, foresees the arrival of the Banī Hilāl and her father's death, while G. Canova (1984) has given a more general treatment of this motif.

Several recent studies have explored individual characters within the *sīra*: Ayoub and Galley (1977) have examined a Tunisian *sous-verre* painting of al-Jāzya and have coupled their analysis of the visual representation with an analysis of al-Jāzya's role in the *sīra*. Galley (1984) has also studied the contrasting female roles of many characters in a comparative analysis of mother-son, sister-brother, and wife-husband relationships from oral and written sources. N. Chellig has examined the figure of al-Jāzya as an "archétype de l'inconscient collectif" in Algeria in an unpublished paper. And two texts concerning the hero Dhiyāb have been compared by Breteau and Galley (1973).

An article focusing on the role of the poet-performer within the Egyptian tradition has been published by Canova (1983), and A. al-Abnoudy (in press) has attempted to delineate the roles of the *shā^{c}ir* (poet) and the *rāwī* (reciter) in modern tradition; this supposed division of labor between the "creating poet" and the "memorizing/performing reciter" has been a point of discussion in Arabic literary studies in reference to periods

stretching back to the pre-Islamic era.

Linguistic analyses of written texts have been offered by A. Roth in her studies of verb forms and of pronominal forms in Banī Hilāl manuscripts (1980, 1981). At the 1985 Cairo conference on the Arabic folk *siyar*, D. Madeyska presented a paper on the "Language and Structure of the Sira," and a paper at this same conference, by M. Yāqūṭ, examined grammatical structures in the *sīra* of Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan.

Perhaps the single most important contribution in recent scholarship has been the release of several recordings from the epic singing tradition of Egypt, which allows scholars not directly involved in fieldwork to acquire some idea of the musical factors active in this performance mode, an area which has been for the most part ignored. G. Canova has released a disc, *Egitto I: Epica* (1980), devoted entirely to epic singing. The English and Italian notes are quite extensive and include musicological notes by H. Touma, as well as the full texts in transliterated Arabic, an Italian translation, bibliography, photos, and discography. The selections are long enough to give a rough idea of the pacing of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* performance and varied enough to give some notion of the musical diversity which exists in the Egyptian tradition. Single examples of epic singing on anthology discs can be found on Tiberiu Alexandru's *The Folk Music of Egypt* (1967), and Alain Weber's *Music of the Nile Valley* (1981). The latter offers a lengthy selection from the *sīra*, but no text or translation is included.

Conclusion

There is not space here to mention all of the recent work on *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, particularly given the large number of unpublished papers being circulated. Though the notes above are extremely sparse, they represent, I hope, most of the most often recurring topics of *sīra* research in the last few years. There is perhaps room, however, to note some of the areas that have not yet been adequately explored. *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* has been dealt with predominantly as history and as "text." Manuscripts even now are the fodder for more published papers than is the oral tradition. Nevertheless, interests have shifted over the last two decades to include a number of studies focusing on the poets and reciters, the processes of composition, and narrative technique in live performance. This, of course, parallels the recent, and not so recent, shifts in folklore in general. I began this article by pointing out that *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* is probably the most widespread and best-documented narrative of Arabic oral literature. That does not mean that we have anything close to a full ethnographic portrait of the tradition; rather, it means that most of Arabic oral literature has been grossly ignored by anthropologists and literary scholars alike. Bits and pieces of evidence which have drifted in from nearly twenty Arab countries over the past two centuries indicate that this narrative, in all its various forms, is a

"powerful text," one which remains meaningful to a significant audience in many regions of the Middle East. The new interest in the role of the poet, in performance, and in contextualized studies will bring a great many new ideas and interpretations. Let us hope that the scope will widen even more, to include audience interpretations of the *sīra* and conceptualizations of the tradition. That road may eventually lead us even closer to an understanding of the enduring role *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* has played in Arab culture for the past six hundred years.

University of Pennsylvania

REFERENCES

al-Abnoudy 1978 — Abderrahman al-Abnoudy. *La Geste hilalienne*. Trans. by Tahar Guiga. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization.

al-Abnoudy in press — _____. "Al-sīra al-shaʿbiyya bayn al-shāʿir wa-'l-rāwī." In *The Arab Folk Epic (Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Arab Folk Epic, 2-7 January 1985)*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization.

Alexandru 1967 — Tiberiu Alexandru. *The Folk Music of Egypt: An Anthology*. Cairo: Ministry of Culture/Sono Cairo.

Ayoub 1978 — A. Ayoub. "A propos des manuscrits de la geste des Benī Hilāl conservés à Berlin." In *Association internationale d'étude des civilizations méditerranéennes: Actes IIième congrès*. Ed. by M. Galley. Algiers: Société Nationale d'Edition et Diffusion. pp. 347-63.

Ayoub 1982 — _____. "Approches de la poésie bedouine hilalienne chez Ibn Khaldoun." In *Actes du Colloque International sur Ibn Khaldoun, 21-26 June 1978*. Algiers: Société Nationale d'Edition et Diffusion. pp. 321-45.

Ayoub unpublished — _____. "The Manuscripts of the Hilali Epic: An Essay on a Segmentary-Sequential Mode of Reading." Conference of the American Oriental Society—West Branch, Phoenix, Arizona, 27-28 February 1982.

Ayoub and Galley 1977 — _____ and Micheline Galley. *Images de Djāzya: à propos d'une peinture sous-verre de Tunisie*. Paris: Editions du Centre National de Recherche Scientifique.

Baker 1978 — Cathryn Anita Baker. "The Hilali Saga in the Tunisian South." Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University.

Baker 1983 — _____. "Wadrān: Key to an Enigma?" *Arabica*, 30:190-99.

Basset 1885 — René Basset. “Un épisode d’une chanson de geste arabe sur la seconde conquète de l’Afrique septentrionale par les Musulmans.” *Bulletin de correspondance africaine*, 4:136-48.

Bel 1902-03 — Alfred Bel. “La Djāza, chanson arabe précédée d’observations sur quelques légendes arabes et sur la geste des Benī Hilāl.” *Journal asiatique*, ser. 9, 19:289-347; ser. 9, 20:169-236; ser. 10, 1:311-66.

Berque 1972 — J. Berque. “De Nouveau sur les Benī Hilāl?” *Studia Islamica*, 36:99-111.

Blunt and Blunt 1892/1914 — Wilfred Scawen Blunt and Lady Anne Blunt. *The Romance of the Stealing of the Mare*. London: Reeves and Turner, 1892. Rpt. in Wilfred Scawen Blunt, *Poetical Works*. London: Macmillan, 1914. vol 2:129-217.

Bowra 1952 — C. M. Bowra. *Heroic Poetry*. London: Macmillan.

Breteau et al. 1978 — C. Breteau, M. Galley, and A. Roth. “Témoignages de la ‘longue marche’ hilalienne.” In *Association internationale d’étude des civilizations méditerranéennes: Actes IIième congrès*. Ed. by M. Galley. Algiers: Société Nationale d’Edition et Diffusion. pp. 329-46.

Breteau and Galley 1973 — _____ and Micheline Galley. “Réflexions sur deux versions algériennes de Dyāb le Hilalien.” In *Actes du Ier congrès des cultures méditerranéennes d’influence arabo-berbère, 3-6 April 1972*. Ed. by M. Galley. Algiers: Société National d’Edition et Diffusion. pp. 358-64.

Canard 1935 — M. Canard. “Delhemma, épopée arabe des guerres arabo-byzantines.” *Byzantion*, 10:283-300.

Canard 1960 — _____. “Dhū l’-Himma or Dhāt al-Himma.” *EI*²:s.v.

Canard 1961 — _____. “Les principaux personnages du roman de chevalrie arabe *Ḏāt al-Himma wa-l-Baṭṭal*.” *Arabica*, 8:158-73.

Canova 1980 — G. Canova. *Egitto I; Epica*. I Suoni, Musica de Tradizione Orale, 5. Milan.

Canova 1983 — _____. “Il poeta epico nella tradizione araba: nota e testimonianze.” *Quaderni di studi arabi*, 1:87-104.

Canova 1984 — _____. “La Funzione del sogno nella poesia epica hilaliana.” *Quaderni di studi arabi*, 2:107-25.

Canova in press — _____. “Qiṣṣat al-zīr sālim wa-aṣl al-bahlawān.” In *The Arab Folk Epic* (*Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Arab Folk Epic, 2-7 January 1985*). Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization.

Chellig in press — N. Chellig. "El-Djāzya: un archétype de l'inconscient collectif en Algérie." In *The Arab Folk Epic (Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Arab Folk Epic, 2-7 January 1985)*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization.

Connelly 1973 — Bridget Connelly. "The Structure of Four Banī Hilāl Tales: Prolegomena to the Study of *Sīra* Literature." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 4:18-47.

Connelly 1974/1986 — _____. "The Oral-Formulaic Tradition of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1974. Publ. as *Arab Folk Epic and Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Critchfield 1978 — Richard Critchfield. *Shahhat, an Egyptian*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Davis and Ashabrenner 1960 — Russell Davis and Brent Ashabrenner. *Ten Thousand Desert Swords*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.

EI[1] — *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill. 1913-24.

EI[2] — *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill. 1960-.

Galley 1981 — Micheline Galley. "Manuscrits et documents relatifs à la geste hilalienne dans les bibliothèques anglaises." *Littérature orale arabo-berbère*, 12:183-92.

Galley 1984 — _____. "Femmes de la geste hilalienne." *Littérature orale arabo-berbère*, 15:31-44.

Galley and Ayoub 1983 — _____ and ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Ayoub. *Histoire des Beni Hilal et de ce qui leur advint dans leur marche vers l'ouest*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Galley and Roth 1980 — _____ and A. Roth. "Table ronde: la geste hilalienne." *Littérature orale arabo-berbère*, 1:211-14.

Guiga 1968a — Tahar Guiga. *Min aqāṣīṣ banī hilāl*. Coll. by ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Guiga. Tunis: Dār al-Tūnissiyya.

Guiga 1968b — _____, trans. *La Geste hilalienne*. Trans. from the Arabic (Guiga 1968a). Tunis: Maison Tunisienne de l'Edition.

Hamilton 1819 — Terrick Hamilton. *Antar: A Bedoueen Romance*. London: John Murray.

Hartmann 1913-34 — M. Hartmann. "The Romance of ᶜAntar." *EI*[1]:s.v.

Hawwās 1980 — A. Hawwās. "Ḥulm suᶜada al-mundhir: shadhara min al-sīra al-hilāliyya." *al-Thaqāfa al-Jadīda*, 1:59-64.

Heath 1984 — Peter Heath. "A Critical Review of Modern Scholarship on Sīrat ᶜAntar ibn Shaddād and the Popular Sīra." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 15:19-44.

Heller 1931 — B. Heller. *Die Bedeutung des arabischen ᶜAntars-Romans für die vergleichende Literaturkunde*. Leipzig: Hermann Eichblatt.

Heller 1960- — _____. "The Romance of ᶜAntar." *EI*²:s.v.

Hurreiz 1977 — Sayyid H. Hurreiz. *Ja'aliyyin Folktales: An Interplay of African, Arabian, and Islamic Elements*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hussein 1982 — Ṭaha Hussein. *An Egyptian Childhood*. Trans. by E. H. Paxton. Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press.

Idris 1960- — H. R. Idris. "Hilāl." *EI*²:s.v.

Khaldūn 1967 — Ibn Khaldūn. *The Muqaddima*. Trans. by F. Rosenthal. 3 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lammens 1913-34 — H. Lammens. "Ḥamza." *EI*¹:s.v.

Lane 1895 — Edward W. Lane. *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. Rpt. London: East-West Publications and Cairo: Livres de France, 1978.

Largeau 1879 — M. Largeau. *Flore saharienne, histoire et légendes traduites de l'arabe*. Geneva.

Levi Della Vida 1913-34 — G. Levi Della Vida. "Sīra." *EI*¹:s.v.

Littman 1960- — E. Littman. "Alf Laylah wah-Laylah." *EI*²:s.v.

Lord 1960 — Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1968 et seq.

MacDonald 1932 — Duncan B. MacDonald. "A Bibliographical and Literary Study of the First Appearance of the Arabian Nights in Europe." *Library Quarterly*, 2:387-420.

MacDonald 1913-34 — _____. "The Romance of Baibars." *EI*¹:s.v.

Madeyska in press — Danuta Madeyska. "The Language and Structure of the Sīrat." In *The Arab Folk Epic (Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Arab Folk Epic, 2-7 January 1985)*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization.

Meredith-Owens 1960- — G. M. Meredith-Owens. "Ḥamza b. ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib." *EI*²:s.v.

Norris 1980 — H. T. Norris. *The Adventures of Antar*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.

Onaeva 1975 — D. Onaeva. "K xarakteristike struktury *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*." *Voprosy vostochnogo literaturovendeniia i tektologii* (for 1975):3-16.

Pantůček 1970 — Svetozár Pantůček. *Das Epos über den Westzug der Banī Hilāl*. Prague: Academia.

Paret 1913-34 — R. Paret. "Saif b. Dhī Yazan." *EI*[1]:s.v.

Paret 1924 — _____. *Sīrat Saif ibn Dhī-Jazan*. Hanover.

Paret 1960- — _____. "Sirat Baybars." *EI*[2]:s.v.

Patterson 1930 — J. R. Patterson, trans. *Stories of Abu Zeid the Hilali in Shuwa Arabic*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner.

Roth 1980 — A. Roth. "Notes sur le functionnement du verbe dans un fragment manuscrit de la geste hilalienne." *Littérature orale arabo-berbère,* 11:87-114.

Roth 1981 — _____. "Notes sur quelques formes pronominales dans un fragment manuscrit de la geste hilalienne." *Littérature orale arabo-berbère*, 12:163-81.

Saada 1985 — Lucienne Saada. *La Geste hilalienne; version de Bou Thadi*. Paris: Gallimard.

Schleifer 1960- — J. Schleifer. "The Saga of the Banī Hilāl." *EI*[2]:s.v.

Slyomovics 1985 — Susan E. Slyomovics. "The Merchant of Art: An Egyptian Oral Epic Poet in Performance." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Slyomovics 1987 — _____. "The Death-Song of ᶜAmir Khafājī: Puns in an Oral and Printed Episode of Sīrat Banī Hilāl." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 18:62-78.

Stone and Lunde 1983 — C. E. M. Stone and Paul Lunde. "The Romance of the Beni Hilal." *Ur*, 1:32-39.

van Ronkel 1895 — S. van Ronkel. *De Roman van Amīr Hamza*. Leiden:Brill.

Virolleaud 1958-59 — C. Virolleaud. "Le Roman de l'Emir Hamza." *Ethnographie*, 53:3-10.

Wangelin 1936 — Helmut Wangelin. *Das arabische Volksbuch vom König al-Zahir Baibars*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Weber 1981 — Alain Weber. *Music of the Nile Valley*. Lyrichord LLST-7355 Stereo.

Yāqūṭ in press — M. Yāqūṭ. “al-tarākib al-naḥwiyya fī Sīrat sayf ibn dhī yazan.” In *The Arab Folk Epic (Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Arab Folk Epic, 2-7 January 1985)*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization.

Yūnus 1968 — ᶜAbd al-Ḥamid Yūnus. *al-Hilāliyya fī ’l-ta’rīkh wa-’l-adab al-shaᶜbī*. 2nd ed. Cairo: Dār al-Maᶜrifa.

Yūnus 1973 — ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd Yūnus. *Difāᶜ ᶜan al-fulklūr*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 101-24

Epic Splitting: An Arab Folk Gloss on the Meaning of the Hero Pattern

Bridget Connelly
with Henry Massie, M.D.

Epic narrative typically spells out departures and arrivals very clearly (see Bowra 1952:179 ff). The Arabic migration epic *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, in its many different cultural transformations and retellings, has a structure based on geographic displacements. Narrators from Egypt to Tunisia and the Lake Chad area all construct their versions of the story cyclically around a basic morphology of: LACK — DEPARTURE — CONTRACT — VIOLATION — RESOLUTION (battle or trickery/victory or defeat) — LACK LIQUIDATED or NEW LACK (which engenders a new geographic displacement, be it a return or a new departure) (see Connelly 1973, 1986; Ayoub 1982b).

Versions of the legendary saga collected from a Shuwa Arab *muᶜallim* follow the African epic pattern (see Okpewho 1979:88) of structuring the narrative around the cycle of the hero. I have shown elsewhere how a 13- cycle pattern of alternating scenes forms the gross constituent units out of which the narrator constructed his version (Connelly 1973). Each episode of the hero's life—from his birth through his early adventures or tests, to his adult adventures and conflicts, to his old age and succession by his children and his eventual death—appears as a journey. Each journey begins with a council scene of some kind during which a need or a lack is identified (be it childlessness, famine, drought, or some other sterility or threat). A journey is made away from home (be it the tribal group in council or literally the mother in the boy hero's first adventures); a boundary is transgressed; a conflict ensues, resulting in either victory or defeat; and the hero returns to the group for another council scene which sets up a repetition of the cycle.

Egyptian or Tunisian oral narrators emphasize different episodes from the whole *sīra*, for it is rarely told in these areas in its "entirety," from the birth to the death of the hero. In Egypt, professional singers of tales called *shuᶜarā' al-rabāba* (or *rebab* poets) compose verse narratives in oral performance to musical accompaniment (see Abnoudy 1978, Canova 1982, Connelly 1986). The performance tradition in Tunisia is much less

formal, less ceremonial. Its active bearers are amateur tale-tellers who spin prose versions at informal gatherings (Baker 1978, A. Guiga 1968a and b, Galley and Ayoub 1983). Tunisian narrators dwell mostly on the middle and later portions of the legendary autobiography of the Hilālī tribe; they detail the conflicts of the tribe in its conquest of Tunis the Green, the eventual victory of the Hilāl over the Zanātī Berber tribe, and the final disruption and dispersal of Banī Hilāl through fratricidal territorial conflicts. Egyptian narrators like to tell the birth of the hero episode and to chronicle the early years of the tribe in Arabia before their arrival in Egypt and the Maghrib. Whatever the form (sung verse or spoken prose, or a mixture of the two), whoever the main hero of the piece, whichever the episode stressed, one thing remains the same in the fluid re-creation of this living, oral tradition: the key theme of journey comprised of a separation, an adventure, and a return. These motifs comprise the basic constituent units, the repeating frame around which individual storytellers and singers reconstruct the Banī Hilāl epic.[1]

This stable morphological pattern which the Arabic *sīra* tradition evinces (Connelly 1973, 1986; Ayoub 1982b, Heath 1983) coincides closely with the hero pattern identified variously by von Hahn (1876), Nutt (1881), Rank (1959), Raglan (1934, 1956), Taylor (1964), and J. Campbell (1956) as the Expulsion-Return pattern. Albert Lord (1960) and Michael Nagler (1974) have termed this pattern Withdrawal-Devastation-Return. More recently both Archer Taylor (1964:129) and Alan Dundes (1977/1980:231) have agreed that an empirically demonstrable pattern for the heroic biography does indeed exist.[2] Dundes qualifies this to include the Indo-European and Semitic hero only, whereas Taylor implies that the pattern is much more universal: "The discovery of a biographical pattern is not very surprising. . .. It is a natural utilization of a pattern easily inferred from life itself, or from biography, history, and human psychology.... We are only at the beginning of studies that will interpret its importance" (1964:129).

Dell Skeels (1967) and Dundes (1977/80) have attempted to offer

---

[1] See Claude Bremond (1982) for a critique of Thompson's *Motif Index* and Propp's functions. Bremond makes a plea for a less randomized concept of the motif, one which deals in constituent units as opposed to "interesting details."

[2] Victor Cook concludes in his cross-cultural analysis of Raglan's hero pattern that "no accurate description of that ephemeral rascal, the hero, exists" (1965:151). Despite this negative conclusion, Cook's comparative data do in fact suggest that the long-identified Aryan Expulsion-Return pattern may well be universally present; for, although all of Raglan's criteria do not overlap when applied to the lives of 25 culture heroes (including five major cultures outside the Curcum-Mediterranean), there does appear a larger-scale abstract paradigm which Cook overlooked: DEPARTURE (Separation/Expulsion/ Abandonment) — ADVENTURE (Conflict/Battle/Triumph/ Defeat) — RETURN (Reconciliation/Recognition). Cook himself points this out incidentally in his comments that the midlife of the hero has a high frequency of coincidence (151).

psychoanalytic interpretations of the meaning of the pattern, Skeels proposing that there are two potentially universal morphological patterns: 1) the departure-return (or flight) pattern, and 2) the interdiction-violation-consequence pattern. The first pattern in Skeels' schema parallels the psychological pattern of regression (the psychopathology of schizophrenia) marked by too great an attachment to the mother and similar in its expression to the wish-fulfillment or anxiety dream. The second narrative sequence (interdiction-violation-consequence) parallels the psychological pattern of obsessive-compulsive paranoia, marked by too much fear of the father and expressive of repressed erotic and aggressive drives. Dundes' foray into the meaning of the hero pattern highlights but does not go beyond Freudian oedipal interpretation. He defends the Freudian stance against Rank's rival birth-trauma theory, maintaining that Rank's interpretation of the hero pattern as a re-individuation of birth trauma is an error.

While Rank's interpretation may not work in every specific, as Dundes amply details (1977/1980:240), it does work symbolically to gloss what might be the essence of the larger key, constituent units of the heroic pattern; for the "trauma" of birth represents a universal life passage marked by separation. Dundes' insistence on the hero's tribulations as essentially oedipal misses the fact that the key themes in the heroic biographical pattern parallel much more directly other normal, prior developmental processes identified by more recent post-Freudian psychiatry.

In infancy, as Massie has described in his developmental research (Massie and Rosenthal 1986), infants and mothers are closely attached to each other in a mutually reciprocal pattern of gazes, touches, smiles, holding, and clinging which defines both their physical and emotional relationship. This changes dramatically when the infant becomes a toddler and embarks on the both physical and intra-psychic task of separating from his mother. According to Margaret Mahler, the separation-individuation process "signals the very beginning of normal and pathological identity formation" and "the ordinary way of becoming a separate individual with a separate identity" (McDevitt and Mahler 1980). Mahler's observational studies of mothers and infants in the first three years of life demonstrate typical spatial-displacement behavior patterns which parallel the deep-lying epic-hero narrative patterns to a very exact degree. Near the end of the first year of life, as they master locomotion, babies crawl or toddle away from the mother, experiment with the world beyond her, and then, often "devastated," hustle back. They use mother as the "home base" to which they periodically return for "libidinal refueling" (Mahler 1963:314). She also documents how the physical separation from and return of the infant to the mother begin what she calls the "hatching process" (McDevitt and

Mahler 1980:400). The circular interaction of mother and infant (the baby's cues, the mother's responses and choices of what cues to respond to, and the child's response to the mother's selective response) give rise to patterns of behavior and to the personality of the child. The child emerges as an individual and the mother functions as a "mirroring frame of reference" (401).

These spatial-displacement behaviors, Mahler's research shows, parallel later verbal behavior. They mark the beginning of a "succession of migrations by means of which the individual progressively moves away from his first objects" (Grinberg and Grinberg 1984:19). This pattern furthermore reappears in various manifestations during normal developmental (or identity) crises of the maturation process (Erikson 1950). The normal, real-life biography thus universally evinces the same pattern of separation and return which appears as a key framework in the heroic narrative. The remarkable coincidence between the developmental pattern Mahler identifies, the separation-individuation process, and the compositional pattern the *sīra* reveals might be termed a universal pattern of experience (Burke 1931:149 ff). The expression of that pattern in the *sīra* (or more generally in heroic epic) represents a "verbal parallel to a pattern of experience," which is Kenneth Burke's definition of the symbol. Burke conceives of art forms as just this sort of re-individuation of the rhythms and forms of basic human biological and psychological experience.[3]

The Arabic term designating what is known in European tradition as the oral epic genre indirectly calls attention to the parallel. The orally originating folk genre is known as *al-sīra* (pl. *siyar*). The word may be translated as "biography" (or even "folk auto-biography") to reflect more closely the proper Arabic meaning and connotation. Etymologically, the root from which the word derives implies a going, so the word *sīra* may also be translated "path" or "ways," as the Ways of the Hilāl.

Universals can always be pointed out, similar patterns remarked, but what remains interesting is not so much the documented fact of an observable pattern but rather, as Taylor has reminded us (1964:129), the significance of the pattern and the particular meaning with which specific groups in given times and places endow the pattern. According to Burke, the symbol becomes more or less highly charged as outside life experience coincides with the pattern articulated by the symbol.

Of all the Arabic *sīra*s, the one which appears to have remained most highly charged, by virtue of the frequency and continuity of its retellings

[3] For a study which points to the universality of the pattern, see J .A. Campbell 1985. When the term "re-individuation" appears in the text, the reader should distinguish Burke's term "re-individuation" from Mahler's more purely psychological "individuation." Both are defined above.

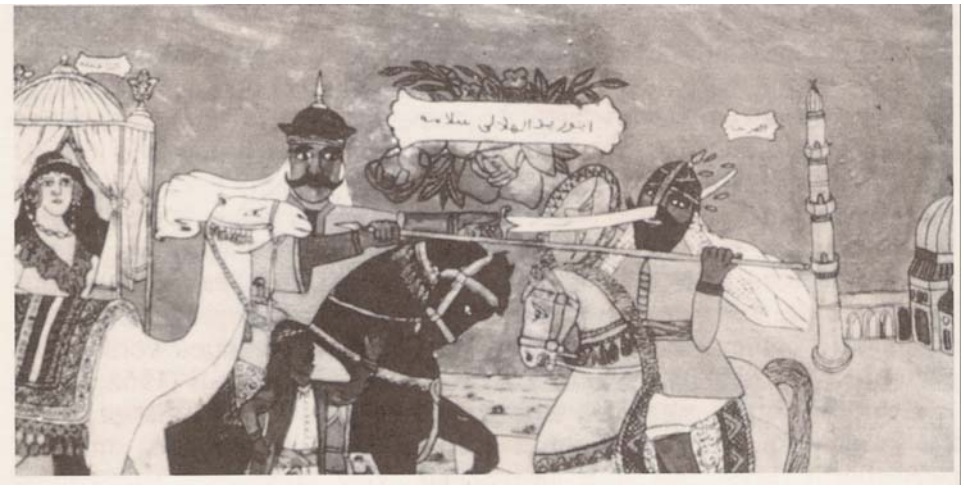
in living oral tradition, is the Banī Hilāl epic. *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* chronicles, from the folk point of view, the migrations of an Arab confederation of bedouin tribes from the Arabian peninsula to Upper Egypt, across North Africa and the Sudan to Libya, Tunis, Algeria, and parts of the Lake Chad area during the tenth through twelfth centuries. Sub-clans of the tribe (e.g., the Sulaym, Zughba, Riyāḥ) settled in these various regions. Their version of the history of the migrations to and resettlements in the "lands of the West" has been told and retold through the centuries and makes up the corpus of epic tales known as *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*.[4]

What makes these tales retain their symbolic charge? Why do they still survive for the telling across a broad expanse of Arabic lands some 800 years after the events which they commemorate? To answer these questions, we propose in this essay to focus on one case history and to look at the re-individuation of the saga (or symbolic pattern) in contemporary and Protectorate Tunisia. The tradition in Tunisia offers a particularly interesting gloss on the meaning of the *sīra* (as well as the meaning of the larger epic hero pattern) in the form of reverse-glass paintings of the heroic story material. Most of these paintings were the products of folk artists who commemorated visually the material celebrated verbally in poetry, song, and story by other performers. M. Masmoudi (1968, 1969, 1972) documents cases of folk artisans' workshops which flourished under the French Protectorate in areas such as Sfax. Here poets, singers, storytellers (*fḍāwiīn*, s. *fḍāwī*) congregated. Their common subject matter and mission was commemoration of the great trek westward by the Muslim, bedouin Arabs and their conquest of the Maghrib.

Specimens of reverse-glass paintings dating from the Protectorate years hang today in the private chambers of very old grandmothers, in antique shops, in museums, and even in beauty parlors. Stalls in the Tunis souks today overflow with more recently rendered reproductions of the heroic paintings. Many of the paintings reproduce the same scene—a swordsman splitting his opponent's head in two. The name of the hero may vary—ᶜAntar bin Shaddād or Abū Zayd al-Hilālī, the main protagonists of two important Arabic *siyar.* In one typical painting we purchased in 1978 from a rue Zarkoun antique dealer, a camel-litter-borne woman and a small retainer on foot accompany the black hero who is astride a horse, wielding his sword. The hero (Abū Zayd) and his retinue thrust into the picture from the left periphery of the frame to fill it. In the mid-section of the painting, two mounted riders confront each other. Written tags

[4] For a hypothesis concerning the transmission of the Hilālī saga in both its oral and written manifestations, as well as its professional and amateur retellings, see Connelly 1986:ch.10. Baker 1978, Berque 1972, and Breteau et al. 1978 offer convenient summaries of the scholarly literature (primary and secondary) pertaining to the history of the migrations.

identify them as Abū Zayd and al-Haras. The enemy appears to be guarding a city fortification or a green area which is depicted to the right. The central focus of the painting, however, is the encounter of the hero with the enemy as the hero slices his opponent in half, cleaving him through his helmet, his nose, the cleft in his chin, and his coat of mail, which sometimes in other paintings unlinks in a puddle of blood on the ground. (See accompanying illustrations.)



Tunisian Reverse-Glass Painting of Abū Zayd (anonymous)

ᶜAlī and the Ghoul, Tunisian Pulp Print (Dār al-Menar)

The hero appears to look straight at the viewer while he is hacking the enemy in two with one hand. The opponent whose head is being split in two also stares at the viewer. The camel-borne lady too views the spectator rather than the spectacle before her. Only the retainer seems to look at the scene depicted, while all the others appear to make direct eye contact with the viewer.

Tunisian vendors and owners of reverse-glass heroic paintings attest to the historical-biographical intent of the tradition. Antique art dealers interviewed in the spring of 1984 informed us that the reverse-glass paintings which hung in their shops represented tales of the Muslim heroes who fought in the name of Islam and the Prophet of God. Heroes from the Arabic *siyar* (ᶜAntar and Abū Zayd) hung side by side with figures from official Muslim history, Islamic saints and Companions of the Prophet (ᶜAlī and Ḥusayn). When asked about the relationship between the *sīra* heroes and the Islamic historical figures depicted, dealers related that they were all holy subjects, that Abū Zayd and ᶜAntar were Arab ancestors who brought Islam to North Africa. When asked more specifically about a picture of Abū Zayd splitting a foe in half, dealers would tell the story of the marriage of Zāziya (the famous Hilālī heroine) to the Zanātī Khalīfa (the Berber ruler of Tunis in the *sīra*) in exchange for green pastures and grain to feed her tribe's people and herds. One dealer summarized: "it's about a marriage, that is an abduction, a bride-stealing."

We had first noticed paintings of Abū Zayd and ᶜAntar hanging alongside Koranic verses, other religious inscriptions, and painted, decorative invocations of the name of God on the walls of the private chambers of the grandmother of Tunisian friends in 1972 (Connelly 1974). The elderly lady said that the paintings had been commissioned by her family as part of her trousseau to decorate her bridal chambers and to bring *baraka* ("grace, blessings, good fortune"). The subjects, she continued, were sacred ones. The heroes depicted represented to her ancient Muslim heroes who fought in the name of God and Islam. She herself claimed descendants from the Turkish bourgeoisie and the nineteenth-century Ottoman rulers of Tunisia. The paintings had hung in her private quarters for some sixty years. Her children and grandchildren knew little about the pictures save that their grandmother kept them close to her and cherished them as good luck pieces to guard against the evil eye.[5]

Departing from the fact that pictures of Arab epic material decorate the nuptial chambers in the traditional homes of many elderly ladies throughout Tunisia, two scholars have suggested that the paintings function as protective emblems of fertility. Ayoub and Galley (1977) analyze in

[5] Sarah Moussa and the Ezzine family generously provided the above information.

detail a reverse-glass painting of the Hilālī heroine al-Jāziya, called Zāziya in local parlance. They demonstrate with parallels from the legendary story tradition circulating orally in the Maghrib how Zāziya is viewed as a guarantor of group survival, as a procurer of food, and as a model of group values by virtue of her sacrifice of herself in marriage to the citified, sedentary, local Berber ruler in exchange for food for her nomad tribe and grazing ground for their ever-hungry herds. This interpretation may be true, but it is a partial truth and one that only touches at the surface of the matter and does not reach the deep-lying cultural meaning and intention of the folk representations.

The more frequent visual interpretation of the *siyar* is the fully bloody and violent encounter of swordsmen. Storytellers between the two world wars used to lay out in marketplaces cheap pulp-printed copies of the reverse-glass paintings. According to one witness[6] to such performances, the *fḍāwī* used the prints laid out on the ground as a vehicle for telling the heroic narratives of the coming of the Arabs to North Africa. Tunisians who comment on the painting do not mention the violence of the scene. Rather, they tell the condensed *sīra* story; they describe the Arabo-Islamic conquest of North Africa. The rupture, the dramatic sundering, the bloody explicitness of the blow rendered and the wound received are not mentioned. Yet artists reproduce the same type-scene again and again in their representation of the *sīra* heroes. Art vendors sell them, elderly brides cherish them as keepsakes, scholars comment upon them, museums now collect them.

Why, one might ask, is this scene of rupture and mayhem preserved as a visual commemoration of Tunisian history? And why is this one scene so often chosen to represent the whole of the *sīra*?

Certain texts can be turned to in search of an answer to these questions. The scene appears as a repeated battle motif in Arabic siyar, in several medieval European epics, as well as in at least one ninth-century Arabic encyclopedic history. *Taghrībat Banī Hilāl ilà bilād al-gharb* (Beirut: n.p., n.d: Books 15-20) gives the narrative of the epic encounter of the Hilāl against the Zanātī Khalīfa who holds Tunis the Green, which is the very encounter depicted in many Tunisian glass-paintings:

> The two meet like two mountains; dust flies under them;
> the horses' hoofs strike fire as the two heroes meet.
> Abū Zayd and al-Hasīs meet in combat like two mountains,
> the crow of discord flies overhead. They hit hard blows.
> The blows unlink the metal mail chains
> Abū Zayd remains firmly seated on his charger.
> He hits Hasīs with the spear and throws him on the ground

[6] Thanks to A. Aissa for his generous assistance and information about the pre-World War *sīra* tradition in Tunisia.

> The strong spear broke his coat of mail.
> While the girls cried out their pride in the tribe of Abū Zayd
> and Abū Zayd follows after Hasīs's fleeing tribe to gather up the
> stray horses and cattle lost in the melee.
>
> (Book 15)

In this nineteenth-century printed edition of the *sīra*, the blow is not emphasized as such. Curiously, the most explicit textual commentary on the blow depicted in the Tunisian folk paintings comes not from Tunisian oral versions of the *sīra* nor from the many *kutub ṣafrā'* (pulp editions) of the Banī Hilāl epic circulating throughout North Africa, Egypt, and other parts of the Middle East. Rather, the famous early eleventh-century French epic, *The Song of Roland*, offers the most striking textual parallel. I cite but one of the four repetitions of the motif wherein Pagan and Frank meet in the battlefield encounter (Terry 1965:1644-60):

> He tries to flee, but cannot get away
> Before Count Roland stops him with such a blow
> That his whole helmet down to the nose-piece breaks,
> The sword blade cleaves through nose and mouth and teeth,
> Down through his body encased in shining mail,
> Into the saddle all silver-trimmed and gold,
> And drives on deep into the horse's back.
> Nothing can save them—both man and beast fall dead.
> Spaniards cry out in horror at the sight
> The Frenchmen say, "Our lord knows how to fight!"
>
> The wondrous battle is spirited and grim
> Blow after blow the angry Frenchmen strike.
> Their sword blades cleave through fists and ribs and spines,
> Through cloth and armor into the living flesh.
> On the green grass the bright blood flows in streams.
> The pagans say, "This is too much for us!
> Mohammed's curse upon the Empire fall!
> There are no men as hard to kill as these."

A late tenth-century document, known as the Hague Fragment, contains a similar description of a battle encounter between Muslims and Charlemagne's men. The Latin prose schoolboy's rendition of an original poem describes fearful massacres and man-to-man combat scenes which, as Menéndez-Pidal (1960:376) has commented, show a very great coincidence of detail with the *Roland*:

> Bertrandus strikes a young pagan. The sword crosses through his head, his chest, his navel. His guts flow out. The hard armor is useless and the sword splits the backbone of the horse and nails itself in the ground half its length. Bertrandus pulls it out and brandishes it to massacre more enemies.

Such blows in the European medieval genre were epic

commonplaces. Menéndez-Pidal indicates others: in Alicsans (1348) where the hero Vivien's sword stops short of the saddle and does not rend the horse; in the Danish version of the *Roland*, the sword blow cleaves from helmet to saddle (Aebischer, ref. in Menéndez-Pidal 1960:378). The Cid slices the Moor Bucar from the head to the belt (l. 2424); and in two passages of the *Chançun de Williame* (ll. 796 and 1838), the sword slices to the ground, though the description is rapid and does not dwell on the details of the blow. Although Menéndez-Pidal does not pursue references outside the Mediterranean, the Icelandic saga tradition, in which realistic fiction for the most part dominates the fantastic, also contains at least six such vertical epic blows.[7] Menéndez-Pidal terms the superhuman proportions of the splitting motif in the *chansons de geste* and other medieval epics a consecrated formula "à la fois si outrancière et si durable." One wonders what the epic audience response must have been to such violent scenes of rupture. Norman Daniel argues at great length that the violence is all hyperbolic good fun (1984:17, 77, 104, 105, 117, 118). The jongleur's audience of professional soldiers greeted such impossible feats of physical strength and endurance with the "good-tempered envy of real soldiers, who no doubt could smile at exaggeration as well as anyone" (Daniel 1984:105a). He claims that the brutality of these set pieces was not meant to be realistic or to be taken literally (97) and that

> It is sometimes difficult to recognize a joke across the centuries. . . especially when the author takes frivolously what our own age takes more seriously. The reverse also happens. The poets often make a joke of killing and torture, but hardly of loyalty. It is not a matter of approval or disapproval, but just what we can laugh about. It is much like the way one nation thinks funny what another does not—"the past is a foreign country." (17)

Daniel continues that the repetition of impossible feats was not meant to be accepted seriously, callously, or credulously. He sees a calculated, cumulative effect of all the violence, for even whether credible or not, repeated scenes of violence create an atmosphere. Though the audience can dismiss each separate inflated statement, it still retains an overwhelming impression of violence. The calculated effect of such use of hyperbolic set-piece scenes and formulas is to treat violence as a macabre joke: "the grisly humour is an evasion of authentic violence naturalistically recounted" (97). The extravagance serves to dilute the tragedy (100).

An Arabic historical chronicle from the mid-ninth century suggests that Daniel may be quite correct in his interpretation of audience response to the hyperbole of the epic blow. Abū Ḥānīfā Aḥmad al-Dīnawarī (d. 895 A.D.) in his encyclopedic history Kitāb al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl (The Book of Long Reports) reports the following battle scene which contains not only

[7] Thanks to Dr. Linda Durston and Professor John Lindow for this information.

the splitting motif but also the response of the observer.

> And Kisrā (Chosroes) marched with his army, and approached Armenia, and when he reached Azerbaijan, his maternal uncle Bundawayh and Musil the Armenian joined him, as well as his satraps (*marzubān*) and those of Fars (Persia). News of this reached Bahrām Shūbīn, and he marched with his soldiers in forced marches until he met up with him (Kisrā) in Azerbaijan, where he set up camp at a parasang's distance from Kisrā's encampment, in preparation for battle. A golden throne was set up for Kisrā and Thiyādūs (a Byzantine ruler) on a hilltop overlooking the battlefield, and when the bodies of cavalry had lined up, one of the *Hazārmardīn* (lit., "1000 men"= Byzantine soldiers) came up to Kisrā and said, "Show me the one who has gained mastery over your kingdom!" Now Kisrā was smitten with *anafah* ("hurt pride, shame") from this soldier's upbraiding of him, but he concealed it, and pointed out Bahrām Shūbīn, saying, "He is the veiled one on the piebald horse, wearing the red turban, standing in front of his men." The Byzantine went over to Bahrām Shūbīn and called out to him as follows, "Come let us duel together!" Bahrām came out to him, and they exchanged a couple of blows, but the Byzantine's sword left no mark on Bahrām, because of the excellence of his armor. Bahrām struck him on the top of his head which was covered with a helmet of iron (*bayḍah*), and his sword cut through the helmet lengthwise until it reached the Byzantine's chest, and he continued cutting until the Byzantine fell in two pieces, one to the right, the other to the left.
>
> Kisrā saw this, and burst out laughing. Thiyādūs became angry and said, "You see one of my men, who is the equivalent of 1,000 men, has been killed, and you laugh as if you are pleased to see Byzantines being killed." Kisrā said, "My laughter was not out of delight at his being killed: however, he upbraided me, as you heard, and I would have liked him to know that the one who has gained mastery over my kingdom, and from whom I fled unto you, is the one whose blow killed him!"[8]

Dīnawarī's text focuses as much on the reaction of the two onlookers as on the details of the blow itself. The audience-in-the-text's response to the dramatic scene points to (1) the ambivalence of the response to the blow, (2) the hyperbolic meaning and intent of the blow, and (3) its symbolic meaning and intent. To summarize the text, the powerful Chosroes, who has fled his own land to take refuge with the Byzantine forces against the Persian hero Bahrām Shūbīn, laughs when he sees the outlandish scene before him—a man split in two! The laughter is both an appropriate and an inappropriate response, we learn. The Byzantine leader angrily points to the inappropriateness of the laughter. The Chosroes explains his reaction to this truly awful scene: it's funny to see the soldier sundered because the latter had insulted him. The soldier had rubbed in the fact that Bahrām Shūbīn had routed the Chosroes from his powerhold. Kisrā's delight was in seeing his denigrator know just exactly how absurdly mighty was his Persian conqueror (Bahrām Shūbīn). The

[8] Guirgass 1888:96-97. The passage is translated by Michael Chyet.

ambivalently bitter "last laugh," so to speak, belonged to Kisrā. The blow of such epic, superhuman proportions represents here in this particular text, if we infer from our observer's comments, the blow to one's pride (*anafa*—"hurt pride, shame") that being conquered means. The man who laughs has been invaded and his lands conquered by the extraordinary might of the Persian invader. His pride and sense of self have been wounded in the necessity of taking flight. He gains satisfaction (delight, laughter) and release from his hurt in seeing graphically before him how absolutely, hyperbolically powerful is his foe. The absurd force of the blow releases all the repressed anguish and rage experienced at the sword of the Islamic conquerer.

The Arabic text states clearly that we are in the realm of hyperbole. Thiyādūs equates one man with 1,000 men; that is, one soldier stands for his whole cavalry squadron. The splittee (the man rent) thus metonymically represents the whole group sliced down—the flanks of the army spread on the battlefield to the left and to the right. This early text dwells in its details on the result of the mighty sword blow—how it splits the soldier into two pieces, one falling to the right and the other to the left. The splitter (the swordsman) is the invader. The splittee represents the invaded, the conquered. Likewise, in Tunisian folk paintings the invader, the outsider arriving at the borders of settled land, deals the blow that splits the inhabitant in two.

The oft-repeated scene in folk epics, history, and story-paintings represents the pain and anguish of being invaded—how deeply the confrontation and clash of cultures wounds, how profoundly such invasion (and the assimilation of identities it causes) splits people in two and traumatizes them to their very core. And it is thus that Tunisian folk artists rework the splitting motif as the essence of the epic encounter and the essence of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. Of all the many stock scenes which are the commonplaces of epic and *sīra* alike, the Tunisian artist chooses to paint this particular scene time and again, repeating it, reinterpreting it only slightly. The scene metonymically stands for the whole of the *sīra*, which itself stands as an autobiography of the people who have made up its traditional audience and artists through some 800 years after the events it memorializes.

A dramatic sundering that represents in the popular imagination a marriage of East and West, of Arab and Berber, of nomad and sedentary populations—this is the gloss the folk-paintings provide for the *sīra*, especially the cycle called the *Taghrība* (westward migration). To judge from the metonymy provided by the Tunisian glass-painters, the mass identity conversion that the successive Islamic migrations and military campaigns effected in the wide territory which became Islamicized and Arabicized was not an easy one. Beneath the apparent homogeneity of

Arabo-Muslim cultural identity in Tunisia lie many anomalies and many traumas. Harry Norris (1985:51) claims that the "clash of color and the position of the [invading] Arab *vis à vis* the [African inhabitant]. . . is a theme of central significance in all the *siyar*." *Sīra* literature and the other Arabic material which might be termed epic, the pseudo-Maghāzī literature, each chronicle the Arabo-Muslim conquests. They differ from each other in their attitude toward Islam. While the Maghāzī are full of zeal and fervent faith, the *siyar* contain a secularly ambivalent, even paradoxical, stance toward official Islam (Norris 1980).

Southern Tunisian *rāwīs* ("narrators") taped by Anita Baker in 1971-73 betray profound ambivalence concerning the Islamic invasions and their own relationship with Arab-Berber adversaries whom they claim as direct ancestors (Baker 1978:612-17; Connelly 1986:ch. 9). One episode recounted by many of the Baker *rāwīs* tells about the arrival of the Hilālīs at a garden in the outskirts of Tunis and how the tribe devastated the lush fruit bearing trees and green lands. Baker comments that the sedentary, agricultural community narrators she recorded all reckon how Tunisia used to be a fertile paradise before the Hilālī invasion. Yet, at the same time, as rural folk, they identify with the camel-riding herdsmen who routed urban authority and disrupted the centers of officialdom (Baker 1978:614). Southern Tunisian *rāwīs* take it for a commonplace that the Hilālīs Arabicized the North African countryside which, until their arrival, spoke Berber even though Arabic had long become the language of the urban center (612-16). Tahar Guiga suggests that Tunisian oral versions of the Hilālī epic probably reflect a period of Maghribi history dominated by problems of cohabitation of invaders and invaded—"une cohabitation plus ou moins tolérable mais rendue nécessaire entre Hilaliens et habitants du pays et en premier lieu avec les éléments nomades locaux qui partageaient le même genre de vie et obéissaient aux mêmes valeurs, je veux dire la puissante confédération des Zénètes" (1985:36). Guiga analyzes the ways in which new bonds of identity were established between Berber inhabitants and invading Arabs, represented symbolically in the *sīra* by Zanātīs and Hilālīs. He suggests that the descendants of the Arab tribes who were integrated willy-nilly into North African society came to feel attached to the land where they were living and indeed attached to the whole of society. These new bonds of attachment, Guiga hypothesizes, led the Hilālī (1) to consider their own ancestors as invaders, (2) to cultivate a sincere admiration for the Zanātīs as defenders of the threshold, and (3) to dream (the conflicts now appeased) of a new society restructured on the basis of the nomadic values practiced by both Zanātī and Hilālī (1985:36).

Although Guiga's reading of the Banī Hilāl epic stresses the integration and the positive identifications of the two groups forged to merge into a single identity, the "rhetoric of the image" offered by

Tunisian traditional artists argues differently. Apparently, the scars still remain from the cleavage of identities soldered into one in the "epic" encounter of East and West. The antagonists whose gazes transfix the viewer from the walls of elderly Tunisian brides memorialize a trauma in the identity formation of North Africans. The past literally "hangs over the present as memories that are profoundly in conflict" (see Vance 1979:378, on the violence in the *Roland*). The figurative representation of the invader splitting the invaded stands for the splicing of identities (or violent "marriage") that formed Tunisian Arabo-Muslim identity. The hyperbole of the image represents a hyperbolic feeling—all the pain and anguish of migration, separation, invasion, foreign language acquisition, and cultural assimilation implied in the Arabicization and Islamicization of the North African population. The trope thus represents a trauma.[9]

The precise nature of that trauma is the one the image expressed hyperbolically and synecdochically: splitting. The Arabic rhetorical term closest to hyperbole is *mubālagha*. According to the medieval rhetorician al-ᶜAskarī, it means "to reach the ultimate limits of the meaning and its furthest borders.... [It does not] twist, but stretches the traits as far as possible" (Ghazoul 1980:116, citing al-ᶜAskarī, *Kitāb al-Ṣināᶜtayn*, p. 378). Following the Arabic concept of hyperbolic expression, this analysis will pursue the meaning of the splitting image to its furthest reach.

The term "splitting" in psychoanalytic parlance refers to an ego-defense mechanism which "protects the ego from conflict by means of dissociating or actively keeping apart contradictory experiences of the self and significant others" (Kernberg 1977:107). This defensive operation serves to prevent or control anxiety; it also protects the threatened individual from further disintegration and increases social adaptation (*ibid*.:108). In Freud's initial definition of the mechanism, he comments on its ingenuity as a solution to what a person perceives as a dangerous reality and a threat (1938/1964:275-76):

> On the one hand,. . . the person rejects reality and refuses to accept any prohibition; on the other hand,. . . he recognizes the danger of reality, takes over the fear of that danger as a pathological symptom and tries subsequently to divest himself of the fear. It must be confessed that this is a very ingenious solution of the difficulty. Both of the parties to the dispute obtain their share: the instinct is allowed to retain its satisfaction and proper respect is shown to reality. But everything has to be paid for in one way or another, and this success is achieved at the price of a rift in the ego which never heals, but which increases as time goes on.

Splitting can be a psychopathological symptom, but as a defense

[9] On the close relationship between rhetorical tropes and the psychic defense mechanisms, see Benveniste 1971:75, Todorov 1977/1982:248, Bloom 1976:1.

mechanism it is part of normal human development and identity formation. In the rapproachment phase of the separation-individuation process which Mahler describes, splitting arises as a normal defense mechanism in the two-year-old's well-known intense ambivalence toward his mother. The child splits his mother into good and bad. This separation of his love-object occurs as a result of the infant's physical separation from his mother, his discovery of frustration and conflicts, and other worrisome events which meet him in his forays into the unknown territories beyond Mom. The toddler, hurtling back to his mother's arms (often to suckle at her breast), projects his very real fears and loss of self-confidence onto his rescuer, viewing her at once as an idealized All Good and denigrated All Bad. Such projection of his own impulses and negative experiences creates at once a fear of the other upon whom the impulse has been projected, and a need to control that person. Tantrums, negativism, and other nay-saying to mother become a way of experiencing control over an otherwise overwhelming environment (Mahler 1963, Kernberg 1977, McDevitt and Mahler 1980, Abelin 1971).

At other times in the course of normal human development, when certain situations take on the proportions of crises and threaten the individual's identity, regression may occur and the separation-individuation mechanisms reassert themselves. Migration is one of these crises which normally cause a variety of anxieties and confusions. Grinberg and Grinberg's psychoanalytic studies (1984) show that most migrations are somehow failed ones. Migration myths too always in some way represent a failure. The myth of the promised land, the fantasy of a better future, a richer, larger way of life is often a lie. Frustrations about the reality of the new land give way to anxieties about the new life and a yearning for the old, lost way of life and the lost place.[10] The migratory experience can trigger (1) separation anxiety, (2) depressive anxieties and a sense of loss and mourning, (3) persecution anxieties stemming from confrontation with the new and unknown, (4) confusional anxieties because of a failure to discriminate between the old and the new, and (5) super-ego anxieties over conflicting loyalties and values (13-14). The Grinbergs propose that the traumas of migration (including language and culture loss, and often war or other violence) parallel the separation-individuation process. The experience is marked by the same spatial displacement pattern of departure-separation-arrival. The arrival often culminates in feelings of helplessness and separation anxieties which cause the individual to yearn for a return to the old, or conversely to over adapt to the new.

The migratory experience is shared by numerous people in a variety

[10] Much Arabic lyric poetry centers around this sense of loss as told in the frequent topos of the lamentation over the abandoned encampment and the blackened forts of the former abodes of the beloved.

of ways: foreign workers, exiles, refugees, displaced persons, and even colonized or invaded populations (see Grinberg and Grinberg 1984:21, Spicer 1971, Barth 1969). Migration, the boundary disputes which arise from it, the violence such geographic encroachments engender, the problems of exogamous marriages, and the genealogical synthesis of groups (Berber, Arab, and Black African in the person of the Black hero) form the key thematic material of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* (Connelly 1986). Tunisian narrators dwell almost exclusively on the third cycle of the epic, known as *al-taghrība* (westward migration). Sayyid Hurreiz believes that Hilālī legends in the Sudan reflect the dilemma of African-Arab identity and "spell out clearly the nature of the process of acculturation resulting from the interplay, compromise and accommodation of two different cultures" (1972:162). The tales attempt to identify the tribe ethnically with both Africa and Arabia through an African maternal ancestor and an Arab paternal ancestor. The Banī Hilāl tales in the Sudan, as in Tunisia, form a part of a traditional lore about Muslim ancestors who arrive from the outside to live with the African natives, intermarry with them, and introduce them to Islam.

Other legends which circulate orally in Tunisia and parts of the lands conquered by the Arab Muslims also point symbolically to the traumatic splitting caused by the fusion of identities that the successive Arab migrations set off. Another reverse-glass painting, for example, shows the famous sword of Muḥammad, called Dhū'l-Faqār ("the possessor of a split"; see Lane 1863-93:2425-26).[11] In paintings of ᶜAlī and the Rās al-Ghūl (the Ghoul), the Muslim hero wields a split sword, that is, a sword with two points or a cleft in the blade. Here the split or separation becomes part of the weapon rather than a vertical splitting of the conquered infidel.

Muḥammad's sword's name calls attention to the split: Who possesses it? The sword which renders the blow or the victim who receives it? The cause and the effect become interchangeable. Whichever the representation, the split itself stands as a displacement and condensation

[11] According to legends, the famous sword belonged to a heathen whom Muḥammad killed in battle. The sword is said to have borne an inscription ending with the words *lā yuqtal Muslim bi-Kāfir* ("no Muslim shall be slain for an unbeliever"). Muslim swords often bear the engraving: *lā sayf illā Dhū'l-Faqār* ("there is no sword save The Split Sword"), with the words *wa-lā fatā illā ᶜAlī* ("and there is no hero save ᶜAlī") sometimes added. The grooved blade (*fuqra* or *sayf mufaqqar*) with its two points was supposed to be used to pierce the eyes of an enemy. My account follows the *EI*^{2}, under the entry "Dhū'l-Faqār."

Southern Tunisian Hilālī *rāwīs* like to highlight the famous scene where the hero Diyāb puts out the eye of the Zanātī Khalīfa. The term used is literally "the stirrup of the eye," or the eyeball (see Baker 1978:143, Connelly 1986:ch. 9). The dead metaphor points to an upward displacement of the wound which metaphorically represents the psychic castration and penetration experienced by the invaded population at the swords of the Arabs.

of the force of the blow, in both its physical and moral qualities. The blow separates, it sunders as it solders, and it splices as it slices. It cleaves (apart/onto) and it cleaves (apart/together). The oxymoron contained in the antonymous homonymy of the English words exactly expresses the psychic operation of the fusion of identities rendered by the sword of the conquering Arab Muslims.

As in the encounter of Persian and Greek in the Dīnawarī text, as well as in the encounter of Arab and Berber in the Tunisian paintings and Hilālī legends (and in the medieval French encounter of Arab "pagan" and Frank), the split is symbolically insisted upon as the point of connection between the invader and the invaded. The force of the blow in both the *Roland* and the Dīnawarī texts is equated with honor and one's value as a man (*anafa*). Eugene Vance quotes a passage from Roland to show how a hero's identity and fame are connected with the blows he deals; indeed, it may be "the commemorative posterity of the singer that inspires the epic blows of the hero" (1979:380; cited from *Roland* 1013-16):

> Now let each man take care to deal great blows,
> Lest a bad song be sung of us!...
> A bad example shall never be made of me.

Victory in the *gestes* is a victory of memory over oblivion, and the more violent the deed the more memorable (387, 393). Oral epic, Vance tells us, is elegiac. It commemorates and ceremonializes the "tortuous paradox of joy born of death and suffering" (395). For Vance, the violence memorialized in medieval narrative is not so much a "trauma in the authorial unconscious" as the "conflicting nature of words and signs" (378). He concludes that the transition from oral culture to scriptural culture involved some kind of violence (402).

In the case of the Arabic *sīra* at least, the violence, trauma, bloodshed, and conflict seem much less abstract than any "radical anxiety" about the difference between utterance and writing (Vance 1979:402). The splitting image as a symbol re-individuates a pattern of experience based on a real, historical, foreign penetration and political incorporation. The image re-individuates the repressed emotional and psychic responses of the people who experienced the resulting social and cultural upheaval. The symbol remains fresh today for a large population of the Tunisian south not so much by virtue of the memory of the past it contains, but rather its relevance to the present. Contemporary Tunisian artists use the Hilālī lore ever more frequently. Brahim Dhahak, for example, has completed a series of 30 engravings celebrating the whole Tunisian version of the *sīra*. The film-maker Tayyeb Louichi, in his movie "Shadows of the Earth," uses references to the Hilālī migrations as a symbol for the experience of migrant workers from southern, rural areas who leave to earn their living

in France. The audience of Baker's 60 *rāwīs* as well as the *rāwīs* themselves, were mostly farm laborers and seasonal workers. Many had endured the anguish associated with migration since they had spent time in France as migrant laborers or served in the French army. As part of the Tunisian south, they live daily in an "inferior economic and political position" (Baker 1978:372 n., Connelly 1986:ch. 9).

The "bonds of attachment" forged between invader and invaded to form the racial history and ancestry of these people came at great cost. In order to assimilate the Arabic language, the Arab's religious and cultural identity, the Berber group had to repress almost certain feelings of persecution and hatred. The emphasis on positive bonds of attachment, such as Guiga argues was the case during the Ḥafṣid period, involved a certain denial of ambivalence. Identification with the powerful aggressor and the necessity of submission to the disruptive force of the immigrant Hilālī tribesmen destroyed old group cohesion and threatened the group itself. Such a migration becomes, the Grinbergs argue, a true catastrophe and the agent of catastrophic change (1984:35-36); it sets off psychic defense mechanisms. Ambivalence denied results in a defensive splitting of the ego, which in turn results in a wound that "never heals, but which increases as time goes on" (Freud, cited above; see also Douglas 1966:140-58). The "split" Berber image thus represents this denial and the wound caused by the incorporation of the aggressor and the denial of a certainly justifiable xenophobia.

Tunisian versions of the Hilālī legend express the repressed confusional anxieties and persecution anxieties metaphorically. The *rāwīs'* language abounds in dead metaphors expressive of the fear of being eaten up by the enemy or gobbled up by the Old Sabbath Woman Witch (see Baker 1978: Arabic texts, Connelly 1986:ch. 9). Survival anxieties dominate and fear of hunger becomes a central theme. The poems and stories almost all have an elegiac tone of mourning and loss counterbalanced by idealized hopes for a better life in the Green Promised Land of Tunis which will be their salvation. Conflict is most often met not by direct confrontation and battle but rather by means of trickery, ruse, and wiles. The woman becomes the mediator in disputes. The tribe turns to the Amazon-like beauty Zāziya time and again to save them. She does so in various ways: she sacrifices herself, in one of the most frequently told episodes, by marrying the enemy Bin Hāshim in order to procure fertile lands and food for her tribe; when all else fails and the tribal entity is in utter confusion and disarray with internecine wars, Zāziya dons male clothing and battle armor to lead the orphans of the tribe to avenge themselves. This theme of confusion of male-female sexual identity recurs several times in the tales Baker collected. In one, a male becomes a female or a female a male three times (see Connelly 1986:ch. 9 for a fuller

analysis of this theme).

Themes such as these (irresolution of bisexual identity, food obsessions, incorporation-dependency fantasies, yearning for an idealized past or future) are the very ones the Grinbergs cite as the conflicts experienced by immigrants. One's "mother tongue" is "invested with libido," they claim, and its loss is traumatic. A certain identity crisis is involved in giving up one's language. They also show how over adaptation to a new culture often causes denial, splitting, and regression—a wish to return, like the toddler, to "mother" or home or to some symbolic reincarnation of her secure arms. The migrant often finds "libidinal refueling"—which we all seek in times of severe crisis (and growth)—symbolically in rhetorical, ceremonial events such as epic narration (see Spicer 1971, Grinberg and Grinberg 1984, Bowra 1964).

Vance has suggested that all oral epic memory by nature involves repression and regression. The Arabic *sīra* becomes for its audiences a narrative quest for origins and a symbolic return. In the underlying, buried cyclical mode of composition which progresses by retrogression, the listener returns symbolically to a primitive, familiar structure. The narrative repetitions of the separation-conflict-return pattern enable the listener to participate metaphorically and ceremonially once again in the rhythms of the primal human biological pattern and to re-experience the greater group narrative quest for its identity in the re-individuation of the biography.

As Kenneth Burke teaches us, form is the appeal, and form in art is what offers an arousal and gratification of desires (1931:124, 138 espec.). Much as the child listening to the rhythmic incantation of nursery rhymes re-experiences on a primordial, unconscious level the rhythms of its mother's heartbeat, its first familiar pattern of experience (*ibid.*:140-41), so the group re-experiences narratively the rhythmic forms of the separation-individuation process. The narrative quest for group identity becomes not so much a solution to any crisis as a ventilation of anxieties experienced by the audience. In the case of the Banī Hilāl epic in Tunisia, commemoration of the old migration saga in words and images functions to spell out the rupture, to expose the "cleaving" of Berber onto Arab.

University of California, Berkeley
University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco

References

Abelin 1971 — E. I. Abelin. "The Role of the Father in the Separation-Individuation Process." In *Separation-Individuation: Essays in Honor of Margaret Mahler*. Ed. by McDevitt and Settlage. New York: International Universities Press. pp. 229-53.

Abnoudy 1978 — ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Abnoudy. *La Geste Hilalienne*. Cairo: L'Organisation Egyptienne Générale du Livre.

Ayoub and Galley 1977 — Abderrahman Ayoub and Micheline Galley. *Images de Djâzya: à propos d'une peinture sous-verre de Tunisie*. Paris: CNRS Editions.

Ayoub 1982a — _____. "The Hilali Epic: Material and Memory." Paper delivered at the Berkeley Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

Ayoub 1982b — _____."The Syntagmatic Structure of Sīrat Banī Hilāl." Paper delivered to the Berkeley Friends of Oral Literature.

Baker 1978 — Cathryn Anita Baker. "The Hilali Saga in the Tunisian South." Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University.

Barth 1969 — Frederick Barth. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

Benveniste 1971 — Emile Benveniste. "Remarks on the Function of Language in Freudian Theory." In *Problems in General Linguistics*. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press.

Berque 1972 — Jacques Berque. "De nouveau sur les Bani Hilal?" *Studia Islamica*, 36:99-111.

Bloom 1976 — Harold Bloom. *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Bowra 1964 — Cecil Maurice Bowra. "The Meaning of a Heroic Age." In *In General and Particular*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. pp. 63-84.

Bowra 1952/1978 — _____. *Heroic Poetry*. London: Macmillan.

Bremond 1982 — Claude Bremond. "A Critique of the Motif," *French Literary Theory* Today. Ed. by T. Todorov. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 125-46.

Breteau et al. 1978 — Claude Breteau, Micheline Galley, and Arlette Roth. "Témoignages de la 'longue marche' hilalienne." In *Actes du Deuxième Congrès International d'Étude des Cultures de la Méditerranée occidentale*. Algiers: SNED. pp. 329-46.

Burke 1931/1968 Kenneth Burke. *Counterstatement*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

J. Campbell 1956 Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Meridian.

J. A. Campbell1985 JoAnn F. Campbell. "Parental Adaptations and the Separation-Individuation Process in Children in Some Overseas Nigerian Families." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington.

Canova 1982 Giovanni Canova. *Egitto: Epica*. Record and Booklet. I Suoni di Tradizione Orale.

Connelly 1973 Bridget Connelly. "The Structure of Four Banī Hilāl Tales: Prolegomena to the Study of Sīra Literature." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 4:18-47.

Connelly 1974 _____. "The Oral-Formulaic Tradition of Sīrat Banī Hilāl." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Connelly 1986 _____. *Arab Folk Epic and Identity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Cook 1965 Victor Cook. "Lord Raglan's Hero—A Cross Cultural Critique." *Florida Anthropologist*, 18:147-54.

Daniel 1984 Norman Daniel. *Heroes and Saracens: A Reinterpretation of the Chansons de Geste*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Douglas 1966 Mary Douglas. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Praeger.

Dundes 1977/1980 Alan Dundes. "The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus." In *Interpreting Folklore*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 223-62.

EI^2 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 1960.

Erikson 1950 Erik Erikson. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Freud 1938/1964 Sigmund Freud. "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense." In *Complete Psychological Works of S. Freud*. London: Hogarth Press, vol. 23:275-78.

Galley and Ayoub 1983 Micheline Galley and Abderrahman Ayoub. *Histoire des Beni Hilal*. Paris: Classiques Africains.

Ghazoul 1980 Ferial Jabouri Ghazoul. *The Arabian Nights: A Structural Analysis*. Cairo: UNESCO Publications.

Grinberg and Grinberg 1984 — Leon and Rebecca Grinberg. "A Psychoanalytic Study of Migration: Its Normal and Pathological Aspects." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 32:13-38.

A. Guiga 1968a — Abderrahman Guiga. *La Geste Hilalienne*. Tunis: La Maison Tunisienne d'Edition.

A. Guiga 1968b — _____. *Min Aqāṣīṣ Banī Hilāl*. Tunisia: La Maison Tunisienne d'Edition.

T. Guiga 1985 — Tahar Guiga. "L'Autre face de la geste hilalienne." In *Arabic Folk Epics* (Abstracts of papers for Conference sponsored by the University of Cairo and the International Association of Studies on Mediterranean Civilizations):35-37.

Guirgass 1888 — V. Guirgass, ed. *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl Abū Ḥānīfa Aḥmad al-Dīnawārī*. Leiden: Brill.

Heath 1983 — Peter Heath. "The Thirsty Sword: Structure and Composition in Sīrat ᶜAntar ibn Shaddād." Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University.

Hurreiz 1972 — Sayyid Hurreiz. "Afro-Arab Relations in the Sudanese Folktale" and "The Cycle of Abu Zeid." In *African Folklore*. Ed. by Richard Dorson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 157-63; 371-85.

Hurreiz 1977 — _____. *Ja'aliyyin Folktales: An Interplay of African, Arabian and Islamic Elements*. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University.

Kernberg 1977 — Otto Kernberg. "The Structural Diagnosis of Borderline Personality Organization." In *Borderline Personality Disorders*. Ed. by P. Hartcollis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 87-120.

Lane 1863-93 — Edward W. Lane. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate.

Lord 1960 — Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mahler 1963 — Margaret Mahler. "Thoughts About Development and Individuation." *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 18:307-24.

McDevitt and Mahler 1980 — John B. McDevitt and Margaret S. Mahler. "Object Constancy, Individuality and Internalization." In *The Course of Life: Psychoanalytic Contributions toward Understanding Personality Development, Vol. I, Infancy and Early Childhood*. Ed. by Greenspan and Pollock. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health. pp. 407-23.

Marzouki 1978 — Mohamed Marzouki. *al-Gāzya al-Hilāliya*. Tunis: La Maison Tunisienne d'Edition.

Masmoudi 1968 — Mohamed Masmoudi. "Une peinture sous-verre à thème héroïque." *Cahiers des arts et traditions populaires*, 2.

Masmoudi 1969 — _____. "Deux autres peintures sous-verre à thème héroïque." *Cahiers des arts et traditions populaires*, 3.

Masmoudi 1972 — _____. *La Peinture sous-verre en Tunisie*. Tunis: Cérès Editions.

Massie and Rosenthal 1986 — Henry Massie and Judith Rosenthal. *Childhood Psychosis in the First Four Years of Life*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Menéndez-Pidal 1960 — Ramón Menéndez-Pidal. *La Chanson de Roland et la tradition épique des Francs*. Paris: Editions Picard.

Nagler 1974 — Michael N. Nagler. *Spontaneity and Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Norris 1980 — H.T. Norris. *The Adventures of ʿAntar*. Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, Ltd.

Norris 1985 — _____. "The Futūḥ al-Bahnasā, Its Relation to Pseudo-Maghāzī Literature, Arabic *Siyar*, and Western *Geste*." In *Arabic Folk Epics* (Abstracts of papers for Conference sponsored by University of Cairo and the International Association of Studies on Mediterranean Civilizations): 50-52.

Nutt 1881 — Alfred Nutt. "The Aryan Expulsion-and-Return Formula in the Folk and Hero Tales of the Celts." *The Folklore Record*, 5:1-44.

Okpewho 1979 — Isidore Okpewho. *The Epic in Africa*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Patterson and Butcher 1930 — J.R. Patterson and P.G. Butcher, eds. *Stories of Abu Zeid the Hilali in Shuwa Arabic*. London: Kegan, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd.

Raglan 1934 — Lord Raglan. "The Hero of Tradition." *Folklore*, 45:212-31.

Raglan 1956 _____. *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama*. New York: Vintage.

Rank 1959 Otto Rank. *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*. New York: Vintage.

Skeels 1967 Dell Skeels. "Two Psychological Patterns Underlying the Morphologies of Propp and Dundes." *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 21:244-61.

Spicer 1971 Edward Spicer. "Persistent Identity Systems." *Science*, 4011:795-800.

Stoller 1974 Robert Stoller. *Splitting: A Case of Female Masculinity*. London: The Hogarth Press.

Taylor 1964 Archer Taylor. "The Biographical Pattern in Traditional Narrative." *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 1:114-29.

Terry 1965 Patricia Terry, trans. *The Song of Roland*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill.

Todorov 1977/1980 Tzvetan Todorov. *Theories of the Symbol*. Trans. by Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Vance 1979 Eugene Vance. "*Roland* and the Poetics of Memory." In *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*. Ed. by J.V. Harari. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 374-403.

von Hahn 1876 Johann Georg von Hahn. *Sagwissenschaftliche Studien*. Jena: F. Mauke.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 125-50

Arabic Folk Epic and Western *Chanson de Geste*

H.T. Norris

In the year 1892, Lady Anne Blunt published her translation of one portion of the Arabic popular romance, the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. She called it *The Celebrated Romance of the Stealing of the Mare*.[1] Lady Blunt, and her husband, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, were Romantics. The latter once wrote, "to cast off the slough of Europe, to have done with ugliness and noise, to bathe one's sick Western soul in the pure healing of the East. The mere act of passing from one's graceless London clothes into the white draperies of Arabia is a new birth."[2]

They were also medievalists. To them, the heroic tales of the Arabs, and those of Abū Zayd al-Hilālī in particular, seemed to evoke memories of what they had read, or heard, of the *chansons de geste* of medieval Christendom, so that Lady Blunt felt moved to write in her Preface (1892:viii-ix):

> As a romance, "Abu Zeyd" is of more undoubted interest. It is not only an excellent example of the Mediaeval Epic in its Eastern dress, but is old enough to have been itself, perhaps, a model from which Europe took its romantic inspiration. It is not generally remembered how immense an influence the Arab invasion of Spain in the eighth century had on European thought, political, religious, and literary. From Arabia through Spain the idea of Christian "chivalry" sprang, the romance of the horseman of noble blood armed with the lance as contrasted with the base-born citizen on foot. The knight-errantry of our middle-ages was purely Arabian; the championing of the distressed, especially of women, by wandering adventurers; the magnanimous code of honor in war; even the coats of mail-armour, and the heraldic bearings, which last may perhaps be traced to the "wusms" or family brands used in Arab tribes for the marking of their camels. Again, the feudalism of the middle ages was Arabian; the union of

[1] The work is dedicated to Charles Doughty. Its Arabic text, *Qiṣṣat faras ʿUqaylī wa mā jarā lahā maʿal-Amīr Abū Zayd*, is probably derived from a lithograph copy now in Cambridge University Library (*Moh 208 D.2*[1]) which was once in the library of Lady Anne Blunt.

[2] Cited in Ahmed 1978:102, from The Earl of Lytton's *Wilfred Scawen Blunt, A Memoir by his Grandson*.

> the temporal with the spiritual authority in politics; and in literature, the purely Semitic form of rhymed verse, as distinguished from the classic scansion and the unrhymed sagas of Europe. The romantic cycle of Abu Zeyd may very well have been known to the first singers of the cycle of Charlemagne and King Arthur, and have suggested to them their method.

This opinion was shared by others at that time. Alphonse de Lamartine found the ᶜAbsī hero, ᶜAntar ibn Shaddād, to be the ideal of nomadic nobility. This assessment accorded well with the view—common among explorers and soldiers of Empire—that the bedouin Arab, as opposed to the peasant, somehow mirrored the image and ideal of western medieval chivalry. Roland and the Cid came readily to mind.

This view did not pass unchallenged. Bernhard Heller, who was one of the first scholars of this century to study the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, undertook an exhaustive analysis of its content. He outlined four principal thematic levels which contributed to the creation of the composition: the pre-Islamic, the Islamic, Persian history and epic literature, and, lastly, the Crusading influence and the influence of Byzantium.[3] Heller was particularly interested in comparative literature. He likened certain passages in the *Sīra* with others in Western *chanson de geste*. Shared motives and adventures included an episode in the *Chanson de Roland* where Roland, dying, breaks his sword. This is matched in the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, where the dying champion, named al-Ḥārith ibn Ẓālim, likewise tries to shatter his sword. Heller, on the other hand, expressed the view (1931) that it was extremely unlikely that the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*—and indeed any other of the popular Arab folk epics—could have had any marked influence on Western *chanson de geste* itself. The similarities were coincidental, or were the stock in trade of the storyteller of the high Middle Ages, be he a westerner or an oriental. The same applied to the *pseudo-Maghāzī* and "early conquest" literature, the exploits of ᶜAlī and the Companions of the Prophet. Even the scholarly attempts to find interborrowings between the Byzantine epic of *Digenes Akritas* and the Romance of Dhāt al-Himma (*Sīrat al-Amīra Dhāt al-Himma*) offered little real substance to show for much labor.[4]

The renewed surge of interest by specialists in popular folk epic, in a number of fields, in the examination of the possible parallels, borrowings, and stylistic similarities between the great romances of East and West indicates that the question is still open. It has produced a series of publications in recent years. Among the least known is the study by Luṭfī ᶜAbd al-Badīᶜ (l964) entitled *La épica árabe y su influencia en la épica*

---

[3] This and kindred topics relating to early attempts at studying *Sīra* in relation to *chanson* are discussed at length in an important recent article, Heath 1984.

[4] See Ibrāhīm n.d.:253-54.

castellana.[5]

If the avid reader of the stories of King Arthur, his knights, and Merlin—or of the very different story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—were given the opportunity to examine a translation of, even an extended passage from, one of the most famous Arabic *Sīras* or from the *pseudo-Maghāzī* and *pseudo-Futūḥ* books, he might well be struck by some similarity of champion, weaponry, forms of combat, and poetic contest in all these works. Dorothy L. Sayers, in the introduction to her edition of *The Song of Roland* (1975), lists among those essential elements which are to be observed in its content the following: its poetic form, its image of feudalism, vassalage, the tokens, rules of chivalry and of battle, nurture and companionage, horses, swords, other weapons, and armor. All these also figure prominently in Arabic *Sīra* and in *pseudo-Maghāzī*.

The following passage in the popular work *Futūḥ al-Yaman*, commonly called *Rā's al-Ghūl*, attributed to Muḥammad ibn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān (Abū-Ḥasan) al-Bakrī,[6] written in the post-Crusading period—a fantastic story as to how the Prophet and ᶜAlī, his son-in-law, rescued the persecuted believers in the Yemen—gives a representative example of an encounter in popular Arabic folk epic, narrated by the folk poet or read by the storyteller. It differs only in its scale from the principal *Sīras*:

> When Allāh brought the dawn, the *Imām* ᶜAlī, may Allāh be pleased with him, mounted, and he pondered, looking to left and to right. In front of him he found two ways. The *Imām* ᶜAlī said, "O ᶜAmr, which of these two will bring us to Rā's al-Ghūl?" ᶜAmr said to him, "This road terminates in the land of Rā's al-Ghūl, which is located at the opening to the land of the Yemen, but its ways are hard and its terrors are many. Numerous are the mountains and the hills, few are the water points and the pools." Whilst the *Imām* ᶜAlī was engaged in conversation with ᶜAmr, lo, the dust was stirred

[5] Luṭfī ᶜAbd al-Badīᶜ is extensively quoted in de Fuentes 1978:espec. 26, 29, 32, 101, 103, 131.

[6] See al-Bakrī n.d.:118: "This famous raid was completed at the commencement of Rajab 1282/November-December 1865. The administration of its printing was undertaken at the financial cost of the Kastiliyya Press, the Sikka Jadīda, Cairo." It is probably this work which is condemned by Ibn Kathīr in his Koran *tafsīr*: "As for what is said by the public about al-Baṭṭāl from the *Sīra* attributed to Dalhama and al-Baṭṭāl and prince ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb and the *Qāḍī* ᶜUqba, it is all false and slanderous. It is cold invention, ignorance, and devilishly harmful. Such is only current among the foolish or the vilely ignorant, just as the *Sīra* of ᶜAntar ibn Shaddād the ᶜAbsī, falsely fabricated, circulates amongst them. So too the *Sīra of al-Bakrī* and al-Danaf and others. The falsehood perpetrated in the *Sīra of al-Bakrī* is the most sinful and criminal of all, because its writer, by intent, puts false sayings into the mouth of the Prophet—the blessing and peace of God be upon him—so let him take his place in Hell fire" (cited in Fārūq Khūrshīd, *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, in his preface to volume 1).

up and it rose into the sky and blocked all the countryside round about.[7] The air was clogged with dust, like unto smoke. The *Imām* ᶜAlī said—may Allāh be pleased with him—"Sit you all down in your place until I uncover the cause of this dust." Then he went his way until he reached that dust, then lo, he was made aware of the cause of it and he saw a tall knight riding on a dark bay charger, high and compact in build. The man was wearing red clothes and around his waist was a girdle which was studded with pearl. He was girded with a sword furbished and burnished and, in his hand, he held a long spear. It had a point from which death glinted at every man who beheld it. He had a black slave who was riding on a thin haired mount. In his hand he held a slaughtered ram, and he was leading a reddish camel upon the back of which was a palenquin, crowned with pearls and jewels. He stopped at a distance from those who were watching.

That knight dismounted from his charger and he began to recite:

My steed precedes the gusts of wind which blow,
A draught of death is poured from my point.
My fame is noised abroad in every land,
due to my blows bestowed in twos and threes.
I pass through haunts, which, had King Solomon
in person passed that way,
he would have suffered terrors in that place.
Humanity, entire, fears my assault
and dreads (the keenness of) my spearhead.

The narrator said: When the knight had concluded his poem, he made his camel kneel, having himself dismounted. He threw the head of the ram on to the ground and made for a high tree. He stretched his hand towards it and he dragged it and uprooted it from the earth and he cast it down upon the ground. He ordered the slave to break it in pieces. The slave said to him, "To hear is to obey." At that instant he arose and went up to a huge stone, which resembled a ballista. It needed ten men of courage to handle. He clutched the tree with his left hand, and the stone with his right, and he began to smite the tree until it was shattered. All this occurred as the *Imām* ᶜAlī looked and observed. His amazement grew as he watched. Then the slave lit the fire and placed the ram upon it and he proceeded to turn it over and over until it was well roasted on every side. He called to the maiden who was in the palenquin and she came out to him. He made her sit on that stone which he had used as a tool for breaking the tree. He offered food to the knight, and the slave began to cut up the meat and it was thrown to the maiden. The two of them—the knight and the maiden—continued eating until they were satisfied. The narrator said: When the knight had finished eating, the maiden arose and entered the palenquin. Then, when the knight had finished his meal, the slave brought him a wine skin which he had with him, since that was his custom. When he had eaten he drank from that wine skin. The knight grasped it and raised it above his mouth. ᶜUmar said: We heard it and it flowed, sounding like an echo and a roar similar to that of the flood of a river in flow when it pours down from the summits of the mountains, and, as it went down into the belly of the knight it made the sound of a [revolving] water wheel. We [at some distance] heard where we were positioned, and we came, having heard the sound of that roar. We reached (the place of) the *Imām*, and we began to watch them, and see what they were doing. Then, when the knight had finished drinking his wine, he unsheathed his sword which was brightly burnished,

[7] A phrase common to all *Sīras* where the heat of battle is described.

> and he said to the slave, "Take this sword and bring me word of these men [yonder]." The slave said, "To hear is to obey." Then the slave took the sword and he came to where we were. He said, "Who are you, what tribes do you hail from, and where are you making for?" ᶜAmr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī said to him, "We are the stars in the ascendant, the sharp swords and the stubborn lions and the impregnable fortresses and the shining planets. We are the people of faith and the eliminators of the people of oppression. We are the Companions of the pride and glory of the faith, of Muḥammad, the lord of the offspring of ᶜAdnān." The narrator said: Whilst that slave was in conversation with ᶜAmr, lo, dust was stirred up aloft and it choked all districts round about. Then the dust lifted, and was rent asunder, to disclose—so that all could see, and all might be astonished—to reveal the armies of Muḥammad [warriors] with a will to wage war, with the intent of men iron in will, armed with *Mashraft* swords. In the front of that army was al-Faḍl ibn ᶜAbbās and amongst them there was a confused uproar of voices, like unto speech which is impaired. They called with a great voice "There is no God but Allah," "Allah is most great," and "Blessing and peace be upon the Messenger and the Warner." The narrator said: When the slave beheld those matters and when he heard that tumult and supplication to the Almighty, he returned in all haste and he told his lord (the knight) about those things and about what had come to pass.[8]

In the above, though the scenario is entirely oriental, there is evidence of the conflict and hostility which the Crusades had aroused in the Muslim East. In such works as the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars*, and *pseudo-Maghāzī* works, for example *Futūḥ al-Maghrib*, where the name of King Louis, the Crusader, appears, some known Crusader names, and other anonymous names of Franks, Saxons, Byzantines, and possibly Scandinavians enter the Arabic text. The names are given to allies of the principal hero in the tale, or they are among his chief opponents (Norris 1980:200, 205, 229, 248). In matters of detail, and in the sub-plots of the *Sīras*, few would dispute that the West could have borrowed themes from the East, and that there might be borrowings in the opposite direction.

Heller included a selection to illustrate these in his article on the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (*EI*). Mention has been made of al-Ḥārith ibn Ẓālim, and how he shattered his sword before he died. Heller drew attention to artificial birds made of metal, which sang in various tunes by means of bells and organ pipes. These are mentioned in the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and in French and German epics, though in the former Constantinople is their location. "Very remarkable is the parallel between the duel between Roland and Oliver and that of ᶜAntar and Rabīᶜa b. Muḳaddam; the sword of the one combatant breaks in two and his magnanimous opponent gets him another; the duellists are reconciled and become brothers-in-law. But such poetical developments have their origin in a similar chivalrous outlook, the relations of the knight to his sword, to his horse, to his overlord and to his opponent" (*ibid.*). Heller also draws

[8] al-Bakrī n.d.:34-35.

attention to the description of tourneys in both East and West. These had features in common: "On the one hand Delecluze saw in ᶜAntar the model of the European knight, in the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, the source from which Europe had obtained all its ideas of chivalry, while on the other hand Reinaud simply found European ideas, customs and institutions imitated in the *Sīra*" (*ibid*.).

We know that the Icelandic sagas owed a significant element of color and fantasy to the East. These Arabic borrowings reached the far North either through returning Crusaders, or else by the trade routes which came into Scandinavia by the westerly sea route or via Russia and the Baltic states. Margaret Schlauch has outlined some features of this eastern influence on Icelandic literature in her *Romance in Iceland* (1934:92-94):

> Some of the incidents in the *lygisögur* recall to a modern reader the *Arabian Nights* and other typical Eastern romances. Nichulás Leikari, in the saga named from him, disguises himself as a jewel merchant in order to win the haughty Princess Dorma of Constantinople, who has refused all wooers. The episode of the ring desired by two brothers, Helgi and Hróarr, in the *Hrólfs saga Kraka* (Chapter X), is almost identical with one of the *Arabian Nights*. In the *Gibbons saga ok Gregu*, the hero makes use of a flying cloth or carpet to transport himself from one place to another; there is a flying mantle also in the *Jóns saga Leikara*, in the *Sigrgarðs saga Froekna*, and the *Egils saga Einhenda*. We have already spoken of the use of a favorite motive, namely, the love between a prince and princess who have never met, but only beheld each other in dreams—a motive frequently used in the East. It is to be found in *Inclusa* (of *The Seven Sages of Rome*), and also in the *Vergilíus saga*. These features of our sagas are, however, too widely used and too banal to be definitely traced.

But Schlauch also makes an important observation about the quality and the character of this eastern material. Firstly, there is the vulgarity and banality of so much of the subject matter in such borrowings; secondly, it is the subsidiary nature of it all, its colorful, as opposed to its structurally thematic, character. Little, if any, of it can be seen to be embedded in the very foundation of the narrative itself and, where it occurs, it is a poor example of the ideals of the Orient. All this seems far removed from the chivalrous sentiments to which Heller refers, nor does it respond to the heroic exploits of ᶜAntar, or of the Caliph ᶜAlī in the Aljamiado versions of popular Arabic epic stories. For those who might too readily conclude that the *chansons* owe something to the *Sīras*, the remarks of Margaret Schlauch come as a sober reminder that local color is superficial and is of scant value in assessing any significant influence of one heroic tradition on another—that is, if there is no religious or cultural empathy between them.

If one examines the whole repertoire of the principal Arabic *Sīras*, whether recited or read in the Arabic-speaking world, whose origins can be traced back to the twelfth century or earlier, there are reasons for

believing that not one of these did, or even *could*, substantially influence the cycles of *chansons* or North European heroic literature which date from that period or later. While certain details may show points of resemblance, the goals of the heroes are often as remote from one another as "the earth is from the Pleiades." Not only is this, to a considerable degree, due to the bitter hostility between Crusader and Saracen, religious zealotry and distortion, differing taste and alien cultural and artistic values, but there are purely literary and genetic reasons for showing it to have been all but impossible.

The Evolved Form of the Arabic Sīra

All of the principal Arabic *Sīras* display an evolution in their form. While the "primitive" *Sīra* usually has few characters, is frequently of a plot which centers upon the activities and vicissitudes of a tribe and its chiefs, and is geographically circumscribed, the later versions of these *Sīras* stretch the narrative beyond the point of structural cohesion. The subject matter is embellished with fantasy, much of it derived from literary sources, some historical and some geographical, borrowings from the *Romance of Alexander* and manuals of weaponry. These later mutations of the *Sīra* pervade the whole work. While the earliest story is still discernible, though only just, later additions are so woven into the fabric as to make it difficult, at times, to identify an original story and its variations, and especially to conceive of its oral character.

If a romance were to have been "borrowed," it is reasonable to expect that some elements of the original "tribal story" would have survived. But this is not so. We are presented with literary parallels, borrowings from sources common to both East and West, possible borrowings of ideas which are "embellishments" to the story, no more. Much of this is of magical and fantastic elements which bear all the hallmarks of storytelling in Mamlūk Egypt, some considerably later, as late as the fifteenth if not the sixteenth century. By such a date the romances of the heroes in the western *chansons* had long been shaped in their definitive form. Leaving on one side the certain rejection of a Saracen hero, other than the converted, on religious grounds, there was little place for any conceivable theme from a *Sīra* which could have been borrowed to fashion the "medieval epic" and the "knight errantry" to which Lady Anne Blunt makes reference in her book. All the borrowings—if, indeed, such ever occurred from any of the Arabic *Sīra*—could only have been from the "stage properties" and "the *décor*." The "original tribal adventure" —whether the hero be of ᶜAbs, or a hero of the Banī Hilāl, or a hero of the Yemen—would have meant nothing, and would have been almost

incomprehensible to weavers of romances in the Christian West (Ranelagh 1979:85-89, 148-59).

The recent research which has taken place on the subject of popular *Sīra* has not revealed anything which might modify this overall assessment of its evolution. Danuta Madeyska, in an unpublished paper presented to a conference on popular folk epic among the Arabs held at Cairo University in January 1985, reaffirmed conclusions provisionally reached regarding the historical evolution of the *Sīras*:

> The old bedouin tales formed the nucleus of the early sirats, and mediaeval urban realities were later superimposed on these. These sirats betray a better acquaintance with the earlier epochs, the bedouin knightly spirit is clearer in them, and there is also at the same time a more literal observation of the precepts of Islam in the behaviour of their heroes. These works are marked by a considerable realism, mythical elements appear relatively rarely, and the heroes emerge unscathed from their trials mainly due to their own courage, and at the most their faith in God reinforces their strength. The main hero is always the leader of the tribe which is extolled in the sirat.
>
> In the sirats which were produced in the Mameluke period or later, the world of fairy tales begins to predominate, with all the accompaniments and themes that are well-known from the "Arabian Nights" (*Alf layla wa layla*). The hero is often a mediaeval ruler or a cunning cutpurse. The scale of values also changes: the characteristics most admired now are intelligence and astuteness, instead of the courage and physical strength that had previously been praised. The spirit of religious intolerance is also characteristic of these works. Those of other faiths are painted in the blackest colours, and concomitantly all means leading to the spreading of Islam are permissible, even if these involve breaking its own laws.
>
> Of course, it is possible in both groups of sirats to uncover older and newer layers: the difference consists mainly in the proportions represented.

An independent Arab view, yet one which arrives at a similar conclusion, is expressed in a book published in 1984 in Cairo by Dr. Maḥmūd Dhihnī, entitled *Sīrat ᶜAntara* (espec. 248-70). This is probably the most recent study of the exploits of ᶜAntar to appear in an Arab country. The author draws a distinct line between the early legendary tale built around the love of ᶜAntar for ᶜAbla and the fighting between ᶜAbs and the sister tribes of the Arabian penisula (*al-marḥala al-usṭriyya*, 248-57), and the late medieval "epic" (*al-marḥala al-malḥamiyya*, 258-71) which in turn led to the final evolution of the *Sīra*, principally the exploits of his daughter, ᶜUnaytara, the Amazon.

Dr. Dhihnī shows how some of the serpentine expansion relates to Arabia itself, other parts to Byzantium and its Emperor (Qayṣar), and one in particular to a northerner—a Frank, a German, or a Scandinavian —called King Līlamān or al-Laylamān or Līmān (l'Allemand?), who sends

a fleet of ships to capture Byzantium. Other adventures, with King Ṣāfāt, entail the exorcising of enchanted water. An encounter between ᶜAntar and a magic horse would seem to owe some of its material to *Pseudo-Callisthenes*; about this something more will be said. In all the fighting around Byzantium and the description of naval battles, ᶜAntar forsakes his horse, al-Abjar, and takes to the sea.[9] The color is laid on thickly by the storyteller. The exploits appear increasingly similar to those of Ḥasan of Basra in the *The Thousand and One Nights*. The expedition of ᶜAntar to Black Africa owes much to travellers' tales. I have suggested elsewhere that the medieval city of Great Zimbabwe is described in some detail.[10] Other parts of the *Sīra* which are concerned with battles in Egypt and Nubia draw on geographical data, and one battle in particular is taken in part from, or shares common sources with, a noted *pseudo-Maghāzī* or *Futūḥ* work, *Futūḥ al-Bahnasā*, which is attributed to Abū ᶜAbdallāh Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, possibly al-Muqurrī, who may have been of Nubian origin, but who certainly had access to Coptic legends which form a good deal of the substance in the early pages of his work (Norris 1980:200-5). Similar color and exoticism are featured in the battles between ᶜAntar, his allies, and relatives, in the parts of Arabia around Oman (*ibid*.:32, 60, 61, 76) and it is only the sequence of "the death of ᶜAntar" which stands apart as something special, something really heroic, and which warrants study and assessment. The *Sīra* of *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, one of the latest, is woven together almost *in toto* from the fabulous, the magical, and the erotic. Fascinating, in many respects, here the hero is hardly a heroic bedouin figure.

The Chronology of the Chansons *and the Oral Versions of the* Sīrat Banī Hilāl

The *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* is included by Madeyska among the earlier *Sīras*. It also happens to be the one selected by Lady Blunt to illustrate the hypothetical debt of the *chansons* to the Arabs. However, even more clearly than the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, it illustrates how this cannot possibly be so. Its heroes, Abū Zayd, Dhiyāb, Khalīfah al-Zanātī, and others from the *Ayyām al-ᶜArab*, who are introduced in the Yemenite prologues to the *Sīra*, are essentially folk heroes, told by the bedouin in the Empty Quarter and in the inner parts of Northern Africa. Their adventures center about tribal movements in pre-Islamic Arabia or during the eleventh century in

[9] Dhihnī 1984:263-64. I hope to undertake a special study of this part in the near future.

[10] Forthcoming in a commemorative volume for Professor T.M. Johnstone.

parts of Tunisia and Libya. At that time the West was challenged by the Almoravids, the Almohads, and their successors in Spain. Like ᶜAntar, Abū Zayd is a "crow," dark in color and mixed in race. Where such a person appears in the *chansons*, he bears little resemblance to ᶜAntar and even less to Abū Zayd.[11]

The close relationship between the form, manner of recitation, and life of the Egyptian folk-poet suggests neither common ground nor a plausible circumstance whereby poets and storytellers in medieval Europe could have conceivably heard of the Hilālī exploits, and if they had done so, could have made any sense of their content. The *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* lies at the opposite pole from the *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*. At its best the former is free from the gaudiness and thematic dross which mar the later *Sīras*. Professor G. Canova, in the notes which he has written to accompany his recordings on disc of Egyptian bards and their performance of the *Sīra*, has stressed the inseparability of the content of the *Sīra* itself from the performance of the *shāᶜir*, the text sung, the instruments which play with the singer, or which he himself plays, and the participation and the response of the audience.

*Towered Camelot and Paynim Sarras of the San Graal: The World of Late Medieval Chivalry (*muruwwa*) in the East and West*

If some direct borrowing by the Christian West of stories and heroic adventures from Arabic *Sīra* cannot be substantiated,[12] there remains the

[11] Compare the praise of the "Sons of Ḥām" in Norris 1980:189-90 with the following grotesque description from the *Sowdone of Babylone* (lines 2191-98):

> This geaunte hade a body longe
> And hede, like an libarde.
> Ther-to he was devely stronge,
> His skynne was blake and harde.
> Of Ethiope he was bore,
> Of the kinde of Ascopartes.
> He hade tuskes, like a bore,
> An hede, like a liberde.

[12] According to Scudder (1921:87-88):

The pilgrims made their way to the City of Sarras,—whither as Malory's readers know, Galahad is one day to return. In this Paynim city and its rulers centers the first part of the romance. It is the home land of all Saracens and we are carefully informed that the name is derived from the city and not from Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Here, where Mahomet, sent to save his people, has betrayed his trust and taught them the false worship of the Sun and Moon, the mysteries of God are to be made manifest. Joseph [of Arimathea] enters the great Temple of the Sun at the moment when King Evalach and his wise men are consulting how to repel the Egyptian invader Tholomes; he brings the promise of victory contingent on faith in the Most High. This is the signal for long conversion scenes, dull enough, yet full of quaint mediaeval reasoning and legendary lore,

decorative detail, color, and environment which pervade the later versions of the *Siras*, more especially in their printed texts—the *marḥala al- malḥamiyya*, to adopt Dhihnī's term.

Chanson de geste, Arthurian romance, *Sīra*, and *Maghāzī* share a certain geographical unity. Where an Arab or a Muslim hero engages in battle with the infidel (Crusader or Negus), the later the *Sīra* the more the scene is set in the Levant or deep within Africa and remoter Asia.

In the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, one of the hero's later foes is called Janṭāyīl, who is king of Spain and the Maghrib, and who is mounted on an elephant. Yet his father's empire stretched from Palestine to Tunisia, Sicily, and Upper Egypt. It bordered on two giant trees (in Kānim?) and beneath his sway were the Hamitic Beja and the Zaghāwa. The Copts and the Byzantines also figure prominently. Heller writes (1931): "As the romance of ᶜAntar knows nothing of Europe, but a good deal about Europeans, the author must have become acquainted with them outside of Europe."

Dorothee Metlitzki has also pointed out that towards the end of the Middle Ages the Western romances display a common interest in a Levant and Africa-centered milieu for the exploits of the heroes involved (1977:130-31):

> When Beues, disguised as a palmer, is questioned by his rival, King Yuor of Mombraunt, the Middle English version presents a significant shift and expansion of the range of countries which Beues has visited in the French tale. In the earlier versions, most of these countries are clearly imagined as lying in the traditional territory of Alexander the Great and in the western realm of Saracen power in Africa:
>
> "Sire," ceo dist Boeves, "jeo ai esté a Nubie
> e en Cartage e en Esclavie
> e a l'Arbre Sek e en Barbarie
> e a Macedoyne, par tut en Paenie,
> mes a chastel de Abilent, la ne fu ge mie."

---

to say nothing of true feeling. Vision, dream, and miracle come to the aid of the pilgrim, now comfortably settled in what is to be known as the *Palais Espirituel*. The earnest prayers of Joseph for *cette biele cité désconseillie* are answered, when Evalach, taken prisoner by the Egyptians, gazes in his moment of need at the red Cross which Joseph has traced on his shield, and seeing the Image of the Crucified, cries on Him for help:

> "O verray God that Sittest in Maieste,
> As it is told,—On God and personis thre,—
> Of which I bear the Sign of His passioun!
> So, Goode Lord, take me to salvacioun—
> So save me Goode Lord, in this grete schowre
> From Angwich deth and alle dolor."

A seemly knight at once appears, on a horse white as the lily flower, bearing a white shield with the red cross. There is some good fighting, well set in narrow mountain defiles picturesquely described. By help of the White Knight, the day is retrieved and the victory won, as surely as in the classic battle wherein the Great Twin brethren took part. Thus are converted Evalach, christened Mordrains, and his brother Seraphe, henceforth Nasciens.

> ["Sir," said Boeuve, "I was in Nubia and in Carthage and in the land of the Slavs and at the Dry Tree and in Barbary and in Macedonia, throughout all the lands of the Paynim but at the castle of Abilent, there I was never at all."]
>
> In the Middle English romance, about 1300, there is a distinct shift to the territory of the Crusades, the Saracen East, as the scene of romantic action.

In 1485, when Sir Thomas Malory's romances first appeared in print, this latter geographical heartland had maintained itself; witness the following passage from *The Noble Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius* (Vinaver 1967, I:193):

> Than the Emperour sente furth his messyngers of wyse olde knyghtes unto a contrey callyd Ambage, and Arrage, and unto Alysundir, to Ynde, to Ermony that the rever of Eufrate rennys by, and to Assy, Aufryke, and Europe the large, and to Ertayne, and Elamye, to the Oute Yles, to Arrabé, to Egypte, to Damaske, and to Damyake, and to noble deukis and erlys. Also the kynge of Capydos, and the kyng of Tars, and of Turké, and of Pounce, and of Pampoyle, and oute of Preter Johanes londe, also the sowdon of Surre. And frome Nero unto Nazareth, and frome Garese to Galely, there come Sarysyns and becom sudgettis unto Rome. So they come glyding in galyes.

"Prester John's kingdom" matches "the realms of the Negus" in the later Arabic *Sīras*. However, in the latter, there are also adventures in the remoter, spice-laden islands of the Indian Ocean and beyond, for example the island of Camphor (*Kāfūr*), which is mentioned in the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. A landscape not wholly dissimilar is sometimes introduced into those western romances which make the Grand San Graal the central quest of the story. Certain *Sīras* introduce kings whose lands are identified by a specific color, the Green King in *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, the Red City in *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* (*al-madīna al-ḥamrā'*). A Red City is to be found in the *Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones*. In the Arab story it is built in the Yemen or Africa, whereas in the Arthurian Romance it is somewhere out to sea beyond the Humber ruled by King Harmaunce and at a short distance from the Delectable Ile. Shared lore, eastern and western, appears in these images. Vida D. Scudder remarks (1921:87-88, 92):

> Through long stretches, humanity and human interest in the ordinary sense disappear. Severe symbolic disciplines accompany the many conversions that form the staple of the tale. In terror the natural world passes away. Quakings and fearsome sounds shake the *Palais Espirituel*. Burning brands appear, a wondrous darkness falls, and a Voice is heard crying, "Here is the beginning of Dread!" We are in full romantic air, but romance is subdued to purposes of edification. For this is the beginning of that training of the great Kings, Mordrains and Nasciens, which shall fit them to take part in the conversion of England. They are transported to

> "unsuspected isles in far-off seas," where miracle-ships, holy men borne over the water on the wings of birds, strange storms and healing calms, form the setting. These waves wash no mortal shore. These are the waters over which St. Brandan sailed; perhaps they flow around the fields of Paradise; surely Dante's bark propelled by angels' wings and laden with blessed singing souls, sailed over them; and one surmises that the terraces of the Purgatorial Mount rise not remote from the bleak rocks on which Mordrains and Nasciens, beset with spiritual ordeals, observe their fast and vigil.
>
> Delightful stories about these rocks remind one of the *Arabian Nights*; stories of Forcairs the Pirate, of Pompey the Great, of Hippocras and others. Oriental elements mingle with ecclesiastical legend, to produce a treasure-house of mediaeval lore.

Weaponry, particularly common ideas about the sword of the hero and its frequently magical power, are shared by *Sīra* and western romances of chivalry. Ḍāmī, the sword of ᶜAntar, and the circumstances whereby it came into his possession, are recounted in an extended passage in that *Sīra*. The following translation by Hamilton concludes the story of its origin as a thunderbolt, its forging by a smith, its encasement in gold, and its concealment among treasure. He describes ᶜAntar's discovery of the sword in the sand (Ranelagh 1979:100):

> But Antar fixed his spear in the ground, and dismounted from Abjer, and sat down to rest himself; and as he was moving the sand with his fingers, he touched a stone; on removing what was about it, behold! the sword the youth had been seeking! He still cleared away, and drew it forth, and seized hold of it, and it was a sword two cubits in length, and two spans wide, of the metal of Almalec, like a thunderbolt. And Antar was convinced of his good fortune, and that everything began and ended in the most high God.

It is interesting to compare this story with King Arthur's drawing of Excalibur from a stone, and even more so with those passages in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* where Sir Galahad enters a ship and claims his sword. For in the following passage not only is this sword associated with a converted Saracen named Hurlaine, but the description of the sword itself has some oriental inspiration. Its power to cleave rider and horse may be matched by innumerable combats in the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, more so in this *Sīra* than in any of the others (Vinaver 1967, II:985-86):

> And the swerde was of dyverse fassions; and the pomell was of stoone, and there was in hym all maner of coloures that ony man myght fynde, and every of the coloures had dyverse vertues. And the scalis of the hauffte were of two rybbis of two dyverse bestis; that one was a serpente whych ys coversaunte in Calydone and ys calle there the serpente of the fynde, and the boone of hym ys of such vertu that there ys no hande that handelith hym shall never be wery nother hurte; and the other bone ys of a fyssh whych ys nat ryght grete, and hauntith the floode of Eufrate, and that

> fyssh ys called Ertanax. And the bonys be of such maner of kynde that who that handelyth hym shall have so muche wyll that he shall never be wery, and he shall nat thynke on joy nother sorow that he hath had, but only that thynge that he beholdith before hym.

There are also passages in the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* where weaponry is catalogued in the greatest detail. In the western romances, swords and other weapons, both Christian and Saracen, are given names. The list of Dorothy L. Sayers in her introduction to her translation of *The Song of Roland* furnishes some typical examples (1975:38).

In the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* such names, even armorer's technical terms, are introduced on a scale unparalleled in the western romances. In one part of the *Sīra*, ᶜAntar the warrior-poet is examined by the fellow poet, Imru'l-Qays. This episode is wholly imaginary and ᶜAntar is asked to cite the names and epithets of topics which occur frequently in Arabic verse. First is the sword. There are references to several well-known makes of straight sword: *al-Ṣamṣām*, *al-Yamānī*, *al-Hindawānī*, *al-Hindī*, and *al-Mashrafī*. This is followed by the spear, again with noted makes, like *al-Rudaynī* and *al-Samharī*. Names for horses, she-camels, wine, and serpents are also extensively listed. One section is about the hauberk (*al-dirᶜ*). The passage reads:

> Imru'l-Qays said to him, "What a courageous knight you are. How elegant your speech is! But, knight of ᶜAdnān, I want you to enlighten us. Clarify for us the names which are used to describe hauberks, and the titles they bear." ᶜAntar replied, "Rejoice, oh, Imru'l-Qays, here are the principal names of the hauberk—*al-dirᶜ*, *al-marāniya* [the name of a tree like jasmine?], *al-zaradiyya* [mail-coat from *zarad*]; *al-'amsad* [the strongly and solidly woven]; *al-ṭāmma* [the catastrophe or last judgement]; *al-dilāṣ* [the shiny]; *al-māniᶜ* [the impenetrable]; *al-sāṭiᶜ* [the shining], *al-baṣṣāṣ, al-baṣṣāṣ* [the shiny and glowing?]; *al-khāṣṣ* [the renowned or superfine]; *al-mansūj* [the woven]; *al-sābigha* [the long and flowing]; *al-ḥāfiẓ* [the preserver]; *al-mubirr* [the surpasser or overcomer]; *al-mashhūr* [the renowned]; *al-muwarrad* [the saffron-dyed]; *al-mubarrad* [the cooled or refreshed]; *al-munaḍḍad* [the layered]; *al-ṣaldam* [*ṣildim*?, the hard]; *al-jalmad* [the rock-like]; *al-khuld* [eternity]; *al-ḥadīd* [iron]; *al-ṣuffa* [the stone-bench], [or *al-ṣifa*, quality?]; *al-labūs* [the breast-plate]; *al-muḥṣin* [the fortifier]; *al-ba's* [the strength]; *al-shadīd* [the tough]; *al-naṣīḥ* [the sincere advisor]; *al-ikhjījī*? [a toponym?; *khajja* means to split wood, the spear-cleaver?]; *al-nasīj* [the weave]; *al-bahīj* [the fine]; *al-nasīm* [the breeze]; *al-qarīn* [the comrade]; *al-āthār* [the marks]; and *dhāt al-mawāshī* [the possessor of adornments]." ᶜAntar concluded, "This is the sum total of the names of the hauberk." "Truly you have spoken," Imru'l-Qays replied.

The Taming of the Magic Horse by the Hero in East and West

A common link between *Sīra* and *chanson* is to be found in the

Alexander Romance, *Pseudo-Callisthenes*. Many of its episodes and fantastic exploits were borrowed and retold in order to add a prestige and majesty to the hero in question. The Story of "Alisaunder" contains Alexander's taming of Bucephalus, the horse branded with a mark like a bull's head. It is described in the Old High German poem, written in the twelfth century, by a priest named Lamprecht. The Rev. Walter W. Skeat translates it as follows (1867:248):

> His nostrils were wide opened,
> his ears were to him long,
> his head meagre and lank,
> his eyes were to him of-all-colours
> like (those of a) flying eagle.
> His neck was to him covered-with-locks,
> I ween he was of a lion's kind.
> On his shanks had he heifer's hair,
> on his sides leopards' spots:
> like Saracen, so-also Christian man
> never a better horse won.

The chained and fettered animal is described in *Alisaunder* thus (*ibid.*:214):

> Hee was byglich ybownde • on bothe twoo halues,
> Bothe h*is* chaul & h*is* chynne • w*ith* chaynes of yren;
> Many lock*es* wer laft • h*is* legg*es* aboute,
> That hee nas loose in no lime • lud*es* to greeue,
> To byte, ne to braundise • ne o break no wow*es*,
> For hee so myghty was made • in all manner thyng*es*,
> Of such a body as hee bore • þe blonke so sterne,
> Was neu*e*r steede in no stede • þ*a*t stynt upon erth.

The horse fed on men, it was always kept chained, and Philip had a cave built for it. Whoever tamed the horse would be king of Macedon. Alexander befriends the horse which licks his hands. He unfastens its bonds and he goes forth upon it. In the medieval romance he rides to Byzantium. Some details of this seem to have been borrowed for insertion in the story of King Ebroun's horse, in *William of Palerne*, the romance of "William and the Werwolf," translated from the French at the command of Sir Humphrey deBohun, about 1350. It should be noted that the knight rides the horse after he has given it its liberty (*ibid.*:107):

> u as sone as þe kniȝt kud ° kome to þe stabul,
> þat þe stede him of-saw ° sone he vp-leped,
> u faire wiþ his fore fet ° kneled doun to grounde,
> u made him þe most ioye ° þat [man] miȝt deuise,
> u alle frekes þat him folwed ° gret ferli hade.
> þe stede stod ful stille ° þouȝh he sterne were,
> while þe kniȝt him sadeled ° & clanli him greiþed;

u wan vp wiȝtli him-self ° whan he was ȝare,
u schuft his scheld on is schulder ° a scharp sp*er*e on honde,
u gerd him wiþ a god swerd ° for any man in erþe.

The ninety-seventh part of the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* introduces a number of borrowings from the *Alexander Romance*. ᶜAntar's mulatto son, al-Jufrān, visits a palace in Alexandria. Several details here seem to be derived from the story of the visit of the "two-horned king" to the shrine of Ammon in the oasis of Siwa. Also, several parts of the *Sīra* at this juncture are particularly associated with characters who have Crusading, or at least Frankish, names. But in the ninety-third part it is ᶜAntar himself who assumes the role of Alexander. To a greater degree than in *William of Palerne*, the author of the *Sīra* bases his story on Alexander's taming and release of Bucephalus, to which is added all the rich fantasy of oriental, and, in particular Egyptian, tales (Norris 1980: pt. 93).

> The narrator said: Then it was that Shaybūb called ᶜAntar, his brother "Woe to thee, O maternal brother, come to us and save us from these severities." So he advanced to take the keys. The people beheld them. All of them rose up to him and delivered themselves into his hand without his laying hold upon them. They [the people] were greatly amazed. ᶜAntar was exceedingly joyful. His heart and chest were relaxed and he was happy. He approached the locks. They were opened by the permission of the Merciful and Exalted. He gazed hard at that house and he saw a black horse, like the darkest night. It was attached by an iron chain and upon its feet were four shackles. There were names written upon these and there were inscribed talismans. The horse's eyes were as glowing torches. In front of him there was a feeding trough of crystal, full of husked sesame. Antar said, "Woe to you, O Shaybūb, verily this steed is one of the Baḥrī horses.[13] I want to ride it for it is fit to go to the wars. I shall let al-Abjar rest from these concerns for it has grown old and is tired on account of the dangers it has encountered." When ᶜAntar had finished speaking, the horse said to him, "O father of knights, I am a steed which is not suitable for riding in the battlefield. I am one of the kings of the *jinn* and am named Salhab ibn Ghayhab. I was taken captive by the pious master al-Khaḍir Abū'l-ᶜAbbās during the day of our battle with Alexander Dhū'l-Qarnayn. He had met me at the fortress of Dhāt al-ᶜAlam, after we had experienced from him something which would dismay those who were beholders and we were nigh unto drinking the cup of perdition. Al-Khaḍir came to me and said to me, "Remain here imprisoned in this place until ᶜAntar ibn Shaddād the knight of Banū ᶜAbs and ᶜAdnān appears. He will conquer this island and sit upon this throne and will open these locks and he will loosen these shackles and manacles from you and he will march you to the king and to the deserted encampments." So all this has been fulfilled due to the concern of the Creator of existence the Adored King. All this

[13] [On these fabulous horses of remarkable speed see Lane 1963: ch. 20, n.10 where al-Qazwīnī is quoted, and, more especially, Saada 1985:247-48. This latter work is probably the best introduction to the *Sīrāt Banī Hilāl* to have been published in recent years.]

period I have been suffering hurt and pains. Know that only you can end my captivity, O hero of battles. Set me free O son of noble lords, for I am not one upon whom a good deed is wasted. You cannot do without me at these times." ᶜAntar said to him, full of wonder and perplexity, "By Him who causes the planets to revolve, if you are of the *jinn* then you are from among my greatest foes. I must needs torment you in a manner more grievous than any other which you have yet suffered. I shall indeed increase one affliction upon you with another." The *jinnī* said, "What have I done with you, O son of Shaddād, and in what way have I done an evil to you so that you seek to destroy me. I, having been in this imprisonment from the time of Alexander Dhū'l-Qarnayn. Before that no injury did I do you, I killed not your mother nor your father, I, who have been waiting for you to come in order to save me." ᶜAntar said, "You killed my knightly and rash son, al-Ghaḍbān." Salhab said, "God forbid that you be hostile, O mighty hero. God forbid that your good qualities should be changed, the sound for the sick. Know that those who killed your son, al-Ghaḍbān, were *jinn* from the Wādī Ṣārikh. They are the worst of all my enemies whom I wish to destroy utterly. I swear to you by the One, the Bestower of good, the Creator of men and *jinn*, if you release me from my captivity and send me forth from this place I shall help you to obtain your revenge for the death of your son. I shall slay the one who slew him so your heart will be assuaged of its sorrow." Then ᶜAntar was tender towards him and he made him agree to his covenants and said to him, "O brother of the *jinn* how can I find a way to open these shackles and set you free from this place?" Salhab said, "O guardian of ᶜAbs, the keys are beneath this feeding trough which stands before me." So ᶜAntar looked to the spot to which he indicated and he saw a slab in which there was a ring. He raised it and the keys appeared from beneath it. He opened the shackles and said to Salhab, "Journey forth in the way you wish to go and remember me on account of this act." The *jinn* said to ᶜAntar, "Above all else I desire to have in mind the taking of revenge for the death of your son, al-Ghaḍbān, and also that I may fulfill the promise and assurance made betwixt us upon the top of the fortress of the column which is known as Dhāt al-ᶜAlam."[14]

The Quest for the Head

A theme shared by both *Sīra* and *chanson* is that of the decapitation of a giant, or a foe, or a marvelous creature. This is one of the quests of the hero; in the case of *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* the head of Saᶜdūn al-Zanjī is what is demanded of Waḥsh al-Falā/Sayf in order to gain the hand of Queen Shāma, his beloved.

The head of the Green Knight must, I think, be totally excluded from this discussion, but there are other lesser known examples. The beheaded

[14] Dhāt al-ᶜAlam may refer to the *Ṣanam* erected on the round island of Masfāhan in the Canaries by Dhū'l-Qarnayan Asᶜad Abū Karib al-Ḥimyarī. These landmarks were at the borders of the world and were a guide to mariners. They occur in Yemenite epic stories; see Dozy and De Goeje 1866:28, 54. For comparative material see Ross 1978:302-3.

foe is prominent in the popular, fourteenth-century *Romance of Guy of Warwick*. According to Laura Hibbard (1960:136-37):

> The Eastern elements in the story are commonplace. Guy goes to the relief of Constantinople when it is besieged by a cruel Sultan; inevitably Guy defeats the heathen hordes; the Sultan rails upon his gods and breaks his idols; Guy is sent on a message of death to the Sultan but beheads him as he sits in his splendid pavilion. Guy's last eastern fight is at Alexandria where he serves as champion of King Triamour whose son has killed the son of another Sultan at a game of chess. In all this the setting and the abuse of the Saracens are characteristic of the Crusading spirit in romance, but the episodes have nothing of Eastern character.

Even so, the presentation of the Sultan's head to the Emperor followed by Guy's marriage to his daughter, and especially the encasing of the head in brass, suggest an oriental source (Zupitza 1966:235):

> Thoo Guye and heraude and their meyne
> Thanked god fast of their fair iourne.
> The hede on a spere they haue doo,
> And ryde faste to the Citee thoo.
> Whan they of the Citee wiste of his comynge
> For ioye they ganne all the belles rynge.
> Whan Guy to the Empero*ur* come is
> The hede he p*re*sented with ioye and blis.
> The Empero*ur* with ioye of Guy is hent,
> And thanked him gretly of that present.
> In the Citee he lete make anone
> A piler of grey marbelstone:
> The hede therupon sette was,
> And in eche side an hede of bras.

Among the most unusual ways in which such a subject is handled in Arabic literature is the encounter of Waḥsh al-Falā/Sayf and Saᶜdūn in *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*. Sayf is told by King Afrāḥ, at the behest of his evil counsellor, Saqardiyyūn, that to secure the hand of Shāma, his daughter, he must bring the head of the African warrior giant, Saᶜdūn. This will be the bride price. Sayf sets out and after adventures in Saᶜdūn's castle, during which he is helped by Shāma, now an Amazon warrior, he encounters Saᶜdūn in a final hand-to-hand engagement. To cite the summary of the *Sīra*, at this point, by Fārūq Khūrshīd:

> Hardly had the two of them gone forth to the outer court when each of them attacked the other. Saᶜdūn hurried to catch hold of Waḥsh al-Falā by his flanks, raising him from the ground and then casting him with all his power. Waḥsh al-Falā fell though standing upright on both feet. He attacked Saᶜdūn and wrapped his hand about his neck. He tightened his fingers upon his ears and exerted pressure with all his strength. Saᶜdūn fell to the ground, motionless. Quickly, Waḥsh al-Falā knelt on his shoulders,

> drew his dagger and sought to sever his head. Saᶜdūn said, "Raise your hand lest you regret it... this is one (round), two are left."

The battle resumes. In the end, tired, Waḥsh al-Falā/Sayf seeks to finish off his opponent. He fells him and again draws his dagger. Saᶜdūn says, "O heroic knight do you wish to slaughter me like an ox?" The giant bows his head, with his hands behind his back, to enable Sayf to easily decapitate him. He asks for a blow speedy and sharp. The Yemenite hero repents. He casts aside his sword and kisses the head of Saᶜdūn: "One like you does not die in this manner, O knight of valor."[15]

The African Giant and the Chained Toll Bridge of Mantrabile

Though two of the greatest heroes in *Sīra*, ᶜAntar and Abū Zayd al-Hilālī, claimed half-African birth—among the warrior "crows," the black heroes of Islam—neither the romances of the Arab East nor the *chansons* of the West viewed the Ethiopian with favor. More commonly he, and she, were described as giants with hideous features. Both in the East and in the West these Africans were equipped with chains which were used either to shackle or to unseat their mounted opponents, or else to bar the way to a town or a territory which they were entrusted to guard.

Saracen giants appear in the fourteenth-century *Rouland and Vernagu*, Ascopart in *Beues of Hamtoun*, and Estragot, the giantess Barrok, and Alagolofer in the *Sowdone of Babylone*. Such giants are said to come from Ethiopia, Egypt, or India. Mantrabile bridge is barred by twenty-four chains. Alagolofer in the *Sowdone* and Gulfagor in *Sir Ferumbras* are Saracen bridge wardens armed with axes or clubs.

Emil Hausknecht, in his summary of the plot of the *Sowdone of Babylone* (1881:lxv-lxvii), indicates the role played by the African giants in the plot:

> Charles, vowing vengeance on Genelyn, turned and marched to Agremore. Richard informed him of the giant who kept the bridge, and how he passed the river by a miracle. He proposed a plan that twelve knights, disguised as merchants, with their arms hidden under their clothes, should pay the toll, and the bridge being let down, they should blow a horn as a signal for the others to approach. They start and arrive at Mantrible. Alagolofer asks whither they are going. Richard says they are merchants on their way to the Soudan, and they are willing to pay the toll. Alagolofer refuses to let them pass, and tells them about the ten knights, who had passed there and done so much mischief to the Soudan; therefore he will arrest them all. Sir

[15] Khūrshīd 1982:54-56. For its place in the full-length text of the *Sīra* see ᶜAbd al-Farrāh n.d.:62-63. Decapitation is the climax of the story about how Basat killed Goggle Eye in the Turkish epic of Dede Korkut (see Lewis 1974:147-50 and Sumer et al. 1972:132-33).

> Focard draws his sword and smites at him, Richard blows his horn, and Charles advances. Alagolofer fights them with a great oak club. Richard seizes the bar of brass and knocks him down. Four men get hold of him and throw him into the river. They loosened the chains; but the Saracens assembling on the walls of the city, many Christians were slain. Alagolofer's wife, Barrock the giantess, comes on with her scythe and mows down all whom she meets. Charles dashes out her brains, and with fifteen knights enters the outer gate of the town, thinking his army would follow him. But the gate was instantly closed upon him, and his men came too late. Charles was in great danger; but Genelyn, seeing him shut in, exclaimed that the king and the twelve peers were dead, and proposed to retire, as he wished to be king himself. They were going to return, but Ferumbras calls him a traitor; he rallies the French, and with his axe bursts open the gate. He chased the Saracens and rescued the king. Mantrible is taken with all its engines and treasures.

The *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, in sections 93 and 94, those most like the *chansons*, has its negro giants armed with chains, who fight the ᶜAbsī hero and who have strayed onto its pages from descriptions of the Zanj of East Africa and from the story of the capture of the Upper Egyptian city of al-Bahnasā.[16] The latter reads:

> The elephant men numbered 2000 Sūdānese. They hailed from the desert upland (*al-barr al-aᶜlā*) overlooking Sawākin. They were called the *Quwwād*. Each one had his upper lip pierced. In it was a copper ring. When the hour of battle came those *Quwwād* would not advance into the fray save when the battle was fierce. Then, forth they went, and they were black in hue and tall, up to ten cubits. When they sought to do battle, they (the Berber army) would fix a chain in that ring of each of them. It was pierced in two parts. Each part would be clutched by a man (?). When they advanced, the *Quwwād* would go ahead and would display the chains and press them (the enemy?) with the iron [cudgels?] and they would smite and slay the rider and his mount. There were others who rode on the backs of the elephants and who fought on top of them. When both parties engaged, those *Quwwād* were brought forth, clad in the skins of panthers which were tied over their shoulders and also around their waists. Otherwise, they were naked from head to toe, and in their hands they held clubs. The men from the Nubians and the Beja and from others would take those chains. Amidst the army they were observant to see when they would be given the order to attack. When the Muslims beheld this, some were firm in their hearts, whilst others were filled with anxiety.

The Saracen Amazon

[16] I have discussed parts of this text at length in the paper submitted to the Cairo Conference, January 1985, on Arabic Folk Epic. The full title of the work is *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Bahnasā wamā waqaᶜa lil-Ṣaḥāba maᶜa'al-Baṭlūs (The Book of the Conquest of Bahnasā and What Befell the Companions of the Prophet with the Patrician, Baṭlūs)*. See also Norris 1980:200-5 and Friedman 1981:64-66.

Several of the principal *Sīras* introduce Amazon warriors and queens into the heart of their narrative. Foremost among them are Jaydā in *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, Queen Shāma in *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, Princess Ibrīza in *ᶜUmar al-Nuᶜmān* (in the *One Thousand and One Nights*) and, most important of all, Dhāt al-Himma in the *Sīra* of that name. Other heroines in other *Sīras* share many of the qualities of these warrior women.

The latter are by no means unmentioned in medieval *chanson de geste*, and Beatrice White draws attention to them (1969:184-85):

> Romance writers show the most perverse ignorance of Muslim life. They seem almost totally unaware of the careful seclusion of Muslim women. Saracen maidens in the romances, beautiful, susceptible, and in respect of birth and beauty eligible mates for Christian heroes, are curiously forthright and likely to share the most bloodthirsty characteristics of their men. While conforming to an established convention of physical allurement they impose upon it another pattern—resolution and independence—thus creating a new one. Floripas ("Pasque Flower," a most inappropriate name for so dangerous a character), the Saracen heroine of both *Sir Firumbras* and *The Sowdone of Babylone*, must be one of the most redoubtable figures in fiction. If she has a prototype it is not Potiphar's wife, a Celtic fée, nor any of the more forceful ladies of Islam so admiringly alluded to by Ousâma, but Medea.

She adds:

> It was the conversion and baptism of beauteous Saracen girls enamoured of Christian heroes which provided the romancers with scope for purely aesthetic effects. These accounts of strip-tease acts revealing female charms were, as might be expected, considerably truncated in English versions of French poems, and in *The Sowdone of Babylone* the interesting and exotic ceremony is tersely dismissed in a couple of lines:
>
> Dame Floryp was Baptysed than
> And her maydens alle.
>
> (ll. 3191-92)
>
> But in *Sir Firumbras* the scene is more theatrical:
>
> She kest of her Clothys, all folke a-forne,
> And stode ther naked as sche was borne.
> The good byschope that was of grete pryse
> Crystenede the mayde & dude the seruise.
>
> (ll. 1735-38)

However, none of the above conveys the eroticism and sensuality of certain parts of *Sayf al-Tījān* or in *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, for example, where Sayf is all but seduced by his mother, Qamariyya, when she challenges him to wrestle naked with her in single combat.[17] The concession of princesses

---

[17] Countess of Cromartie 1910:92-93:

Between the kiosks was a dwelling with thirty marble columns, with doors of ivory and ebony, and blinds of silk woven with gold. The hangings and furniture coverings were of silken tissue.

The Prince entered the dwelling, sword in hand. He reached a room with a bed in

who become co-wives of Sayf is also a feature of this *Sīra*. The implicit, if not explicit, sexuality in the later *Sīras* is a pointer to the literature of the Renaissance, rather than to that of the Middle Ages.

Conclusion

Examples of parallelism and borrowing of detail from the East could be discussed indefinitely. Both *Sīra* and *chanson* have substance in common. There are also differences: the barrier of religious hates and prejudices, the bedouin background of a number of the *Sīras*, and the close connection between the content of the *Sīra* and the reciters of Upper Egypt and North Africa. Only in the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and the sister *Sīras* of the Crusading era do influences from Europe of a more substantial kind make themselves apparent. In the West the borrowed content relates to detail and to fantasy rather than to the appropriation of the frame of a story or the plot of a heroic narrative. As the end of the medieval era drew nigh so, it would seem, Arab folk epics and *chansons* manifested a far greater similitude. The later parts of the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and much of *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* illustrate this convergence. By 1500 the mutual relationship

---

it, but he found nobody. He went on to another room, then a third, and found no living soul.

"My God!" murmured the Prince, "this is extraordinary. Where does the warrior sleep who fought so well with me?" He was going out when he found a door; he opened it and found himself in front of a stairway. He went up and reached a dome of glass supported by columns of splendid marble. In the middle of the dome of glass a bed of the finest gold was raised.

"It seems to me," said the Prince to himself, "my warrior must be here." He opened the curtain with the point of his sword, and saw at the head of the bed a little lamp of pure gold; another lamp shone at the foot of the bed. The prince came nearer and saw someone asleep, apparently of the blackest colour. "A black slave!" muttered Sword-of-the-Crowns. "A black slave, who has kept me in the lists for ten whole days!"

The sleeper turned and the Prince saw something white appear. He stretched his hand out gently towards the sleeper's head and touched tresses of long black hair, from which escaped the perfume of musk and amber. Sword-of-the-Crowns looked closer and beheld a lovely young maiden, beautiful as the moon. She had had made for her a skin of black leather, with which she covered herself when she slept, as a precaution against any who might attempt to carry her off in the night.

"A maiden," thought Sword-of-the-Crowns, "and she has held me in check for ten days!" And a fire that the seven seas of the world could not extinguish swept into his heart as he gazed.

The beautiful unknown opened her eyes and awoke with a great cry. Seizing a handle that was by her side she turned it, and before the Prince had time to notice anything, he found himself in a dark gallery where no one could distinguish day from night. Suddenly the head of the beautiful lady appeared above him.

"What do you think of your position now, Sword-of-the-Crowns?" she asked.

Armand Abel (1970) has discussed this theme.

may more easily be demonstrated. In Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*[18] one is aware of these similarities as never before. By the middle of the sixteenth century the literary impact of the Crusades, which marked the *Sīras* at an earlier date, had become so pervasive that it shaped numerous details, much of it oriental fantasy, in Western "epic" literature.

Assessing the impact of Torquato Tasso on English literature, C. P. Brand remarks (1965:87):

> A good deal of historical research therefore went into the *Liberata*. Tasso made use of William of Tyre, Paolo Emilio, Roberto Monaco, indeed any historical information that came his way, without distinguishing the more reliable sources from the derivative. The crusade of 1096-99 organized by Urban II is then an historical fact, and from the chronicles Tasso draws many of his characters: Goffredo and his brothers Eustazio and Baldovino, Tancredi, Pietro the hermit, Dudone, Odoardo, Ottone Visconti, Guglielmo Embriaco and others; and many details and episodes are also taken from historical sources: the expulsion of the Christians from Jerusalem, the geographical descriptions of the city, the underground tunnel, the death of Sveno, the Arab attack, the drought, and many details of the battles—the dove-messenger intercepted by the Christians, the use of siege-towers, of deception, smoke, even the weather of the day of the final battle. More often hints in the chronicles are the basis for Tasso's own inventions. Clorinda, an invented character, is justified by a statement in an anonymous chronicle that the Saracen women fought against the Crusaders. Ottone's duel with the invented Argante is based on a duel between Ottone and a pagan mentioned by William of Tyre.

The genuinely oriental influence, that of the Muslim storyteller, on Tasso has yet to be assessed.[19]

University of London

References

ᶜAbd al-Badīᶜ 1964 — Luṭfi ᶜAbd al-Badīᶜ. *La épica árabe y su influencia en la épica castellana*. Santiago.

ᶜAbd al-Farrāḥ n.d. — ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd Murād ᶜAbd al-Farrāḥ. *Sīrat Fārīs al-Yaman, Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ᶜArabiyya.

Abel 1970 — Armand Abel. "Formation et construction du Roman d'Antar." In *La Poesia épica e la sua formazione*. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. pp. 723-30.

---

[18] See Lea and Gang 1981: espec. books 12, 17.

[19] This will be the subject of a projected study.

Abnoudy 1978 — Abderrahman Abnoudy. *La Geste hilalienne*. Translated by Tahar Guiga. Cairo: L'Organisation Egyptienne Générale du Livre.

Ahmed 1978 — Leila Ahmed. *Edward W. Lane*. London: Longman.

al-Bakrī n.d. — Muḥammad ibn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bakrī. *Futūḥ al-Yaman*. Cairo.

Bancourt 1982 — Paul Bancourt. *Les Musulmans dans les chansons de geste du cycle du roi*. Aix: University of Provence. 2 vols.

Blunt 1892 — Lady Anne Blunt. *The Celebrated Romance of the Stealing of the Mare*. London: Reeves and Turner.

Brand 1965 — C. P. Brand. *Torquato Tasso*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Canova 1977 — Giovanni Canova. "Gli studi sull'epica popolare araba." *Oriente Moderno*, 5-6:211-26.

Chejne 1983 — Anwar G. Chejne. *Islam and the West: The Moriscos*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Connelly 1973 — Bridget Connelly. "The Structure of Four Bani Hilal Tales." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 4:18-47.

Countess of Cromartie 1910 — Countess of Cromartie, trans. *Sword-of-the-Crowns*. London: E. Mathews.

Daniel 1984 — Norman Daniel. *Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of the Chansons de Geste*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

de Fuentes 1970 — Alvaro Galmes de Fuentes. "'Epica árabe y épica castellana' (Proglegomena Crítico de sus Posibles Relaciones)." In *La Poesia épica e la sua formazione*. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. pp. 195-261.

de Fuentes 1978 — _____. *Épica árabe y épica castellana*. Barcelona: Editorial Ariel.

Dhihnī 1984 — Maḥmūd Dhihnī. *Sīrat ᶜAntara*. Cairo: Dār al-Maᶜārif.

Dozy and de Goeje 1866 — R. Dozy and M. J. de Goeje, trans. *Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne*. Leiden: Brill.

Duval 1970 — Paulette Duval. *Revue de l'occident musulman et de la méditerranée*, 9:125-39.

EI — *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New ed. Leiden: Brill. 1960-.

Friedman 1981 — John Block Friedman. *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Galley and Ayoub 1983 — Micheline Galley and Abderrahman Ayoub. *Histoire des Beni Hilal et de ce qui leur advint dans leur marche vers l'Ouest*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Hausknecht 1881 — Emil Hausknecht, ed. *Sowdone of Babylone*. London: N. Trubner.

Heath 1984 — Peter Heath. "A Critical Review of Modern Scholarship on *Sīrat ᶜAntar Ibn Shaddād* and the Popular *Sīra*." *Journal of Arabic Literature,* 15:19-44.

Heller 1931 — Bernhard Heller. *Die Bedeutung des arabischen ᶜAntar-Romans für die vergleichende Literaturkunde*. Leipzig: H. Eichblatt.

Hibbard 1960 — Laura A. Hibbard. *Medieval Romance in England.* New York: Burt Franklin.

Ibrāhīm n.d. — Nabīla Ibrāhīm. *Sīrat al-Amīra Dhāt al-Himma*. Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-ᶜArabī.

Khūrshīd 1982 — Fārūq Khūrshīd. *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*. vol. 1. Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq.

Lane 1963 — E. W. Lane. *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. London: Dent. Orig. ed. 1836.

Lea and Gang 1981 — Kathleen M. Lea and T. M. Gang, eds. Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, trans. Edward Fairfax. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lewis 1974 — Geoffrey Lewis, trans. *The Book of Dede Korkut*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Madeyska 1985 — Danuta Madeyska. Unpublished paper. Cairo University, January 1985.

Metlitzki 1977 — Dorothee Metlitzki. *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Miquel 1977 — André Miquel. *Un Conte des mille et une nuits: ᶜAjīb et Gharīb*. Paris: Flammarion.

Norris 1980 — H. T. Norris. *The Adventures of Antar*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.

Paret 1924 — Rudi Paret. *Sīrat Saif ibn Dhī Jazan, ein arabischer Volksroman*. Hanover: H. Lafaire.

Poncet 1979 — J. Poncet. *Revue de l'occident musulman et de la méditerranée*, 25:25-47.

Ranelagh 1979 — E. L. Ranelagh. *The Past We Share*. London: Quartet Books.

Ross 1978 — J. A. Ross. “A Funny Name for a Horse: Bucephalus in Antiquity and the Middle Ages in Literature and Visual Art.” In *Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages: Ten Studies on the Last Days of Alexander in Literary and Historical Writing*. Ed. by W. J. Aerts et al. Nijmegen: Alfa Nijmegen. pp. 302-3.

Saada 1985 — Lucienne Saada. *La Geste hilalienne*. Paris: Gallimard.

Sayers 1975 — Dorothy L. Sayers, trans. *The Song of Roland*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Schlauch 1934 — Margaret Schlauch. *Romance in Iceland*. New York: American Scandinavian Foundation.

Scudder 1921 — Vida D. Scudder. *Le Morte d’Arthur of Sir Thomas Malory*. London: Dent.

Skeat 1867 — Walter W. Skeat, ed. *The Romance of William of Palerne*. Early English Text Society, Extra Series, 1. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, and Trübner.

Sumer et al. 1972 — F. Sumer et al., trans. and ed. *The Book of Dede Korkut*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Vinaver 1967 — Eugene Vinaver, ed. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

White 1969 — Beatrice White. “Saracens and Crusaders: From Fact to Allegory.” In *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*. Ed. by D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron. London: Athlone Press. pp. 170-91.

Zupitza 1966 — Julius Zupitza, ed. *The Romance of Guy of Warwick*. Early English Text Society. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 151-73

"Tonight My Gun Is Loaded": Poetic Dueling In Arabia

Saad Abdullah Sowayan

Introduction

Although folk traditions are rapidly disappearing in Arabia as it is suddenly transformed from an illiterate society to a modern state, poetic dueling remains one of the most popular and spectacular folk performances. Oral poets are paid handsomely at weddings, festivals, and similar public occasions to entertain spectators with their verbal jousts. Encouraged by eager audiences and by an accompanying chorus that repeats their improvised verses, the competing poets can stay up singing and playing until the call to the morning prayer.

Poetic dueling is part of a larger poetic tradition locally called *Nabaṭī* (i.e. vernacular) poetry, the direct continuation and living representative of classical Arabic poetry, the poetry of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia (Sowayan 1985). It should be remembered that even though the classical poetic tradition of Arabia survives today in written form and has become the ultimate model in Arabic written literature, it was originally a popular oral tradition. In its gradual movement to become truly written literature, depending strictly on pen and paper in its composition and transmission, Arabic poetry lost its oral features. These oral features survive today in *Nabaṭī* poetry, which, linguistic differences apart, mirrors its classical predecessor in form, content, and function as well as in the process of its composition, transmission, and performance (*ibid.*). This fact offers us new possibilities for comparative research. No longer can we look at one of these poetic traditions in isolation from the other, and whatever scientific progress we make in our study of one will have direct bearing on our understanding of the other. Therefore, our study of the performative art of poetic dueling as a living tradition will not only deepen our understanding of the *Nabaṭī* poetic tradition as a whole but it will also provide us with a wider comparative scope and a deeper

conceptual framework to deal with questions relating to classical Arabic poetry in particular and oral poetry in general.

The poets seated with the audience behind

Stepping into the Field of Action

Poetic dueling is called *galṭih* (from *galaṭ* "to step forward," "to answer the challenge") *riddiyyih*/*mrādd* (from *radd* "to respond," "to answer back"), *mbāda*ᶜ (from *bad*ᶜ "poetic composition"), and *mḥāwirih* (from *ḥiwār* "dialogue," "discussion"); the last term is recent and it is used by educated people. The term *mbāda*ᶜ is used mainly in Ḥijāz. The terms *galṭih* and *riddiyyih*/*mrādd* are the most commonly used. These are general terms used in reference to poetic dueling as a performative activity. An individual match between two dueling poets is called *ṭārūg*, *miḥrāf*, or *gāf*. A dueling match involves two poets and consists of a few rounds of exchanges between them, each round consisting usually of two verses. The first poet steps forward and improvises two verses in which he greets the assembled audience and singing participants, and at the same time asks a challenger to step forward and face him. These opening verses are called *wisīmih* (from *wasm* "brand," "mark") because they mark or establish the pattern of rhyme and meter to be followed throughout the match. The second poet steps forward, "*yagliṭ*," returns the greetings, and answers the challenge, "*yiridd*," with two verses of his own, strictly

following the rhyme and meter established by the first poet. The first poet in turn retorts with two more verses, the second poet answers back with two new verses, and so on until the end of the match. A *riddiyyih*, thus, is actually the work of two poets, but it is one piece and all its verses have the same rhyme and meter.

The group of singers (chorus) repeat the verses of the dueling poets as they deliver them. The singers arrange themselves in two lines standing and facing each other with some space in between for the dueling poets to move in. This space is called *mēdān*, "field of action," or *malᶜabah* (literally "playground"). Among the many terms used in reference to poetry is *liᶜb,* a word also used in reference to playing, singing, dancing, and fighting on horseback. Singing is accompanied by hand-clapping only, with no drums or any other musical instruments. This makes it easy for anyone present to join in the singing.

The singers

In his opening lines the poet may call out the name of the opponent with whom he wishes to play. A champion is usually too proud to play with a poet of a lesser rank while a beginner is always anxious to play with a recognized champion in order to learn new tricks from him. Taking on an experienced poet is in itself to the credit of the lesser poet, who can later boast about the event. The reputation of a poet may reach so far and wide that other poets from distant places come and challenge him.

To be recognized as a good dueling poet, it is not enough to have a good voice and the ability to versify. One must also have a wide

knowledge, deep understanding, quick mind, sharp wits, and the ability to twist words and turn phrases, say the same thing in different ways, and express ideas in veiled metaphors and figurative language. In the final analysis, poetic dueling is a match of wits and an exhibition of knowledge. In the match, dueling poets view themselves as lawyers or litigants in a legal dispute, "*daʿwa sharʿiyyih*," each being the opposing party, "*khaṣm*," of the other. Every verse from either one of them must be to the point. It must hit the mark, score. A stray verse or one that is void of significance is called a mere rhyme, "*ġārʿih*." It is compared to an empty cartridge, "*ʿibrūd*," which cannot fire. A verse which is not the lid, "*ġaṭa*," or rebuttal, "*khiṣmah*," of the one passed by the opponent is useless, no matter how beautiful it is. Shlēwīḥ Ibn Shallāḥ al-Mṭēri explained it to me this way: "A poet may deliver good verses with beautiful imagery and embellished language, but all this is of no avail if his opponent cannot figure out which direction he is heading for, if he is not good at arguing and refuting [*yaftil w-yangiẓ*]."

The concept of *fatl w-nagẓ* is crucial in poetic dueling. The word *fatl* means to plait, to twine, and it refers to the tightly argued case advanced by one contending poet to his opponent. The opponent's refutation or rebuttal is called *nagẓ*, literally meaning to untwine, to unplait (cf. *naqā'iḍ jarīr wa-l-farazdaq*). In its apparent structure, a dueling match seems to be strands of argumentation and refutation plaited together and woven into an integrated whole.

A dueling match, "*riddiyyih*," is frequently compared to a wrestling match or a football game. The contestants should pass the "poetic dialogue" between them like a ball in a football field. The opponents start by courteously greeting each other. They scrupulously observe the rules of the game, but each tries his best to score the highest points and win the match. Even if they should happen to be the best of friends, they try to create some friction in the match, build tension and warm up the *malʿabah*, so as to have an exciting show and give the audience a good time.

To reach a high status and maintain it, the poet must start early in life and continue to practice and attend as many performances as possible. He must watch and listen carefully how good poets play their matches. In the beginning the poet may start practicing alone in private, or with another beginning poet while they are sitting around or driving, or in small friendly gatherings. Before the poet steps into the *malʿabah* to meet a reputable poet and face a large public audience, he must be quite sure of his poetic genius so that he can avoid the ridicule and embarrassment which would be his fate should he fail the test for any reason. Poets speak of themselves metaphorically as real heroes and of poetic dueling as real dueling with sword and spear. They say that only daring poets with stout hearts can step into the *malʿabah*, exchange verbal blows with tenacious

opponents, and deal with the unexpected in a battle witnessed by a large multitude of spectators. When the two contestants in the *malᶜabah* are real antagonists who have personal differences or who belong to two unfriendly groups or different tribes, the contest between them could turn into a real battle, each trying to debilitate, "*yᶜajjiz*," the other by squeezing him into a tight corner, "*yaḥashruh*," and causing him to quit the *malᶜabah* and leave the whole assembly, "*ysarrīh*." People will talk for many years afterwards about how the poet so-and-so was driven out of the *malᶜabah* by the poet so-and-so.

It is not possible for a poet to prepare himself for a match beforehand. This is because he does not always know which opponent will be playing against him, what rhyme and meter will be used, what subjects will be discussed in the match, which direction the match will take, or any other dueling elements that cannot be predicted and planned. Such matters can be decided only when the match is underway. The most a poet can do is to prepare the two opening lines "*al-wisīmih*," but even these lines can be rejected if the singers do not like their melody. Also, the opponent reserves the right to reject the *wisīmih* should he suspect that it was prepared beforehand.

A poet delivers his line

The topic and general tone of the *riddiyyih* are determined by the performance context and by whether the contestants are friends or antagonists. On public occasions and in the presence of high government officials, the *riddiyyih* is likely to be restrained and decorous. On other

occasions, especially late in the evening, the performance may become riotous and vulgar. In many cases, the poets are from different tribes or different districts, or one may be from the desert and one from the settled country. In such cases, each poet becomes the champion of his group and expresses pride in belonging to it while attacking his opponent and the other group. Each poet draws on his vast repertory of historical and genealogical information in formulating his attack or defense. The contest often turns into a match of wits. If the dueling poets are friends, they exchange compliments with a touch of humor. They may try to work out a misunderstanding between them in their *riddiyyih*, or, if they have not seen each other for some time, may inquire of each other about some private affair, or one may ask the other whether a rumor that has been spread about him is true, and so on. All this, however, must be handled in a veiled and oblique way that only a discerning poet can understand. In many cases only the poets themselves know what the verses really mean; hence they say, *maᶜna ash-shiᶜr b-baṭn ash-shāᶜir*, "the meaning is in the belly of the poet." The very singers who repeat the verses of the dueling poets may not know their meaning.

The length of a dueling match varies significantly. Generally it ranges from six to ten rounds (twelve to twenty verses) of exchange divided equally between the contesting poets, the whole taking about an hour to finish. When one match is finished either the two contestants start a new one or they leave the *malᶜabah* and a fresh team steps forward. It is not infrequent for a match to fizzle out as soon as it is started because the melody is too hard to sing, singers lose heart, the rhyme and meter are too difficult, or the words of one poet make the other angry and cause him to quit.

The duration and quality of a dueling match is determined by several factors: the enthusiasm of singers and audience, the mental and emotional state of the poet at the time of the match, time limitation, and the matter of whether there are other poets who wish to play. It is preferable that the two poets are comparable in skill. A master poet cannot perform well with a weak opponent. If the two poets are of the same caliber, it is possible that they could go on dueling for up to two hours in a single match. The poets themselves say it is like a conversation. Sometimes you feel like talking, sometimes you don't. Some people you feel comfortable with and can converse with for hours. With others you can hardly find a word to pass in conversation. A seasoned poet, especially when he plays with an opponent he feels comfortable with, will construct the rhyme and meter of his *wisīmih*, "opening lines," in such a way that many words can be used for rhymes. Through this device the poet opens up many roads for his opponent, "*ysammiḥ luh aṭ-ṭirīg*," so as to facilitate composition and enjoy a long duel.

As in regular *giṣīdih*, "lyrical ode," the *riddiyyih* has at least two rhymes, one for the first hemistich and another for the second hemistich. The same word cannot be used more than once in a rhyming position. When the contestants play until they deplete the good rhyming words, they say "*shāb al-gāf*," "the rhyme has become gray, old," and they end the match. One poet told me that he cannot use a word just because it rhymes. Some rhyming words are like coffee dregs, useless. Mḥammad Ibn Twēm ath-Thbētī told me that "rhyming words are like bank notes. Some are worth a hundred, some are worth fifty, others are worth ten, five, and even one riyal [Saudi currency]. A poet should use only those of the high value."

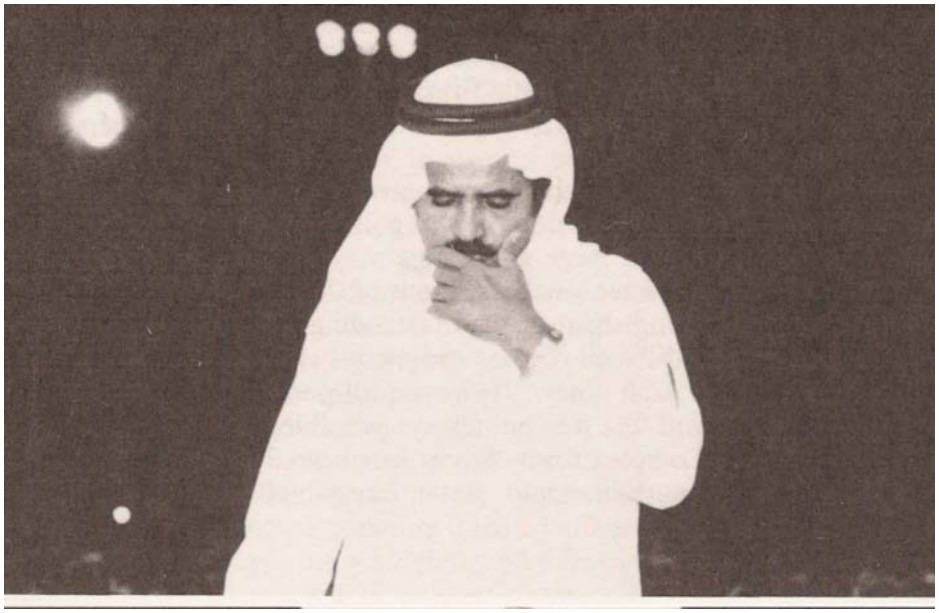
I have mentioned that the contestants would usually avoid difficult rhymes and meters in order to make the going easy for each other. But sometimes good poets in large gatherings may resort to difficult rhymes and meters in order to drive weak poets out of the *malᶜabah* and screen out beginners. Even among themselves, outstanding poets may feel the urge sometimes to try out difficult rhymes and meters when they want to exhibit their skills and defy each other. However, all poets agree that this slows down composition and that it is not always possible to have complex form and good content. Complex form, "*al-mᶜōsar*," would force the poet to use words which fit the rhyme and meter but which may not serve the meaning.

Strategies of Composition

The pressure of performance and the constraints of rhyme and meter check the speed of composition. Dueling poets do not come up with their verses one right after the other. It takes a few minutes for a duelist to decipher the meaning of his opponent's verses and form the proper response to them. Each verse, therefore, is repeated several times by the singers, until one of the poets comes up with the next verse. Each new verse is received enthusiastically by the singers with cheers or jeers, depending on its content.

The poet should not take too long to come up with his verses. The singers and audience might lose interest. The poet who takes too long to come up with a verse loses the match. I asked the poets what strategies they use to speed up composition. Ṣayyāf al-Ḥarbi explained it to me this way: "Each poet must deliver two lines each time it is his turn. Therefore, when it is my opponent's turn and he delivers his first line and gets busy designing his second line, I myself start in the meantime composing a retort to his first line, the line he has already given to the singers to sing. By the time he comes up with his second line, I have already finished composing

my retort to his first line. I let the singers sing his second line a few times before I give them the line which I have already composed." This strategy is not foolproof. The line readied by the poet could be nullified by his opponent if the opponent in his second line should happen to come upon the same rhyming word or same meaning or image.



Muṭlag ath-Thubayti pondering a line

Singing in the *riddiyyih* functions not only to fill the void while the poets think up their verses; it is also necessary for the compositional process. All poets I have talked to agree that without the singers they would not be able to compose. One poet compared dueling without singers to fighting without a weapon. Mḥammad al-Jabarti puts it this way: "Without the singers no inspiration [*ẓamīr*] comes upon me. The chorus for me is like tires for the car. To have long lines of good singers is like having full tires. No singers is like having flat tires." Shlēwī Ibn Shallāḥ al-Mṭēri says: "The chorus is the spirit of it all. The thoughts, feelings, and jinnis of the poet do not come to him unless he sees the singers sing and clap enthusiastically and harmoniously. The motion and zeal of the play are totally dependent on the enthusiasm and zeal of singers and audience. When the poet sees the audience talking and paying no attention to him, he loses interest [*yintiziᶜ wāhsuh*]. When he sees them devoting their total attention to what he says, then playing becomes wonderful."

al-Jabarty delivering his line

The question of composition, transmission, and performance leads us to the discussion of the differences between poetic dueling and other poetic forms. It has been a common practice among specialists to lump the whole vernacular poetry of Arabia together as one single undifferentiated tradition. But the native audience and the vernacular poets consider poetic dueling to be a poetic genre *sui generis,* different from other poetic genres. Each poetic genre has its own enthusiasts and a poet who excels in one genre does not necessarily excel in the other. In fact, when a dueling poet is defeated by his opponent, it is considered unfair for him to compose and use a satiric ode against the opponent. This is violating the rules of the game by mixing genres.

A close inspection of the vernacular poetic tradition of Arabia reveals that within this vast tradition there exist subgenres. There is the lyrical ode, "*giṣīdih*," which is usually long and which is composed to be chanted or, in most cases, recited. Then there are short ditties and poems which are composed to be sung to the accompaniment of drums or *ribābih* (a one-stringed bowed instrument) or while traveling on camel mounts. A poem sung while traveling on camel mounts is called *hjēni* (from *hijin*, "mounted camels"), and it deals usually with description of camel mounts, desert travel, or separation from the beloved. Short love poems sung at night to the accompaniment of drums are called *sāmri* (from *samar* "to stay

up at night"). Rousing poetry sung to the accompaniment of drums on the occasion of war is called *ᶜarẓih* (from *ᶜaraẓ* "to exhibit strength"). Short poems or parts of long poems can be sung in different melodies with the accompaniment of *ribābih*. In Ḥijāz, there is a special genre called *Kasrah* (pl. *Kasrāt*) which is very similar to the Somali *balwo* ("calamity"; cf. Andrzejewski 1967, Johnson 1972). A *kasrah* consists of two or three lines to be sung, usually to the accompaniment of *samsimiyyih*.

We see, then, that the *giṣīdih* is composed mainly to be recited while the other sub-categories are composed to be sung. The *riddiyyih* resembles these sub-categories in that it is composed to be sung, but it is different from them and from the *giṣīdih* in that it is always composed in performance and never before. On rare occasions, composition in performance could happen in *sāmri*, *ᶜarẓih*, *hjēni*, and on the *ribābih*. This means that when singing is the primary purpose of composition, composition may take place during performance.

In the *giṣīdih* and the other sub-categories of sung poems, the patterns of rhyme and meter are limited. Invention of new patterns, though not ruled out, is rare. But in the *riddiyyih* the form can be quite complex and invention of new patterns of rhyme and meter is not infrequent. The meter, as is well known, is determined by the number of long and short syllables to each hemistich and the manner of their combination (Sowayan 1985:148-63). The meter, in turn, determines the melody (or vice versa). The connection between singing and meter makes sung poetry generally more diversified in metrical structure. This is more so when performance involves exhibition of skill in a face-to-face challenge, as in poetic competition. In dueling poetry, poets with musical ears and good singing voices are the most creative in inventing new meters and also in finding new melodies for old meters.

Rhyming words are called *ǵawāriᶜ* and the rhyme is called *ǵārᶜah*, "rhyme," or *māgaf*, "stop." A formally complex verse in dueling poetry may have up to five, six, seven, or even eight stops, in which case it would be called *mkhōmas*, *msōdas*, *msōbaᶜ*, or *mthōman*, accordingly. It is perhaps inaccurate to call such a long unit a verse, so we will call it a stanza for lack of a better term. Each of such super-verses will have several sub-segments, each with its own rhyme and meter. The rhyme and meter of every sub-segment will be the same as that of the corresponding sub-segment in the other stanza of the poem. Here is an example:

1. a. khiṭṭārina l-lēlih mn arbaᶜ garāya
   b. ya-ẓēfina lli giṣarna fi wajūbak
   c. yāsāki minna l-ᶜidhir ma hi bekhālih
   d. lākinn ᶜayya z-zimān ysāᶜid an-nās
   e. ḥatta nidhabbiḥ kibūsh mgarḥanāti.
2. a. lina allah akram risamt arbaᶜ garāya

b. dugg az-ziyārāt w-izhamni w-ajūbak
c. ᶜazīz abu zēd yitᶜazwa be-khālih
d. w-an-nāfir mn al-jarād yrāᶜi an-nās
e. ya-shāribin min ᶜidūd mgarḥanāti.

3. a. yah la lah lah la lah lah yah la lah lah lah
b. ᶜind zahrāni ẓilᶜ ismih garāgurra.

4. a. yah la lah lah la lah lah yah la lah lah lah
b. lin tidaghthart ya-l-ma fi garāgurra

The length and complex melodies of super-verses like the above example make it hard for the singers to remember the words and melodies. Therefore, the poet sings the entire super-verse but the singers pick up only the last sub-segment (3ab and 4ab in the above example). This last sub-segment repeated by the singers is called *taḥnīshah*. Among the formal constraints which the poets resort to, sometimes in order to make composition more difficult, is *shagir* (literally "to split"), which is the same as *jināS* in literary Arabic. If we take a second look at the above example we will notice that the rhyming final word in 1a is the same as the rhyming final word in 2a. The two words are the same in form and sound but different in meaning. The same thing applies to the other sub-segments in our example. Also, as a formal constraint, the poet may choose to close the verse with the same word used in the opening of the verse. This is called *mardūd*. Although we are talking here of an oral tradition, these formal constraints and complexities we are discussing remind us of *zajal*, *muwashshaḥ*, and other post-classical literary forms in Arabic poetry.

It should be pointed out that spontaneous improvisation is an infrequent feature of *Nabaṭī* poetic tradition. In poetic dueling, composition in performance is a totally different procedure from that in epic poetry. The epic is an exceedingly long poem composed quickly at the rate of "from ten to twenty ten-syllable lines a minute" (Lord 1960:17). In poetic dueling, the purpose of the performance along with the rigid constraints of rhyme and meter make composition in performance a slow process; it takes a few minutes to compose each verse. Moreover, these constraints make it impossible for a dueling poet to compose more than a few verses in a performance.

In the fifth chapter of my book *Nabaṭī Poetry* I have dealt with the question of composition in *Nabaṭī* lyrical poetry from the poets' viewpoint. I have analyzed the poets' views and conceptions concerning composition as expressed in their poems. By watching dueling poets in performance, it has become clear to me that what the poets say in the introductions of their poems about the pains and labor of composition is what actually happens. We can learn a great deal about composition in lyrical poetry by watching dueling poets in action. The composer in poetic dueling appears indifferent to his surroundings and totally engrossed in the labor of composition. He

paces around twisting his rattan cane or worry beads, pulls on his mustache or beard, murmurs to himself, moves his lips constantly, and makes all kinds of gestures and movements that indicate the difficulty of his task, not to mention the incredible amounts of tea and cigarettes he consumes. Mḥammad al-Jabarti describes composition as follows: "When you see the poet absorbed in composition he is like one building a house. He is constructing and demolishing [his verses] and the audience does not know this. That brick [i.e. "word, expression"] is too small, the other too large, this one fits perfectly."

The differences in composition between *riddiyyih* and *giṣīdih* lead to differences in transmission. In the *giṣīdih* composition is a slow, difficult process which precedes performance or delivery (Sowayan 1985:91-100). The following observation by Alois Musil vividly illustrates how a poet goes about composing his *giṣīdih* (1927:236-37):

> Our omnivorous poet Mizᶜel aḫu Zaᶜêla was composing a poem in my honor. Since a roving versifier must earn his living by his art, he apparently thought I would pay him well for a poem I liked. It was interesting to watch his procedure. He would ponder for several minutes and then recite two verses twenty or thirty times, substituting for some of the expressions new and better ones—*azjan*, as he called them: Then he would bid Ṭâreš· pay attention and remember these verses. After Ṭâreš had learned them, Mizᶜel would be absorbed and silent again, and after a while would sing the first two verses and add the third to them. Having sung them to Ṭâreš innumerable times in his shrill voice, he would ask me to write them down while he composed the rest.

It is not difficult to see from the above observation that what is taking place is not merely composition but memorization as well. One may even draw the general conclusion that in an oral poetic tradition whenever composition comes before performance, memory plays an important role in transmission. In Arabic poetry, whether classical or vernacular, once the composition of an excellent lyrical ode is finished, it is preserved in the poet's mind, then in public memory, and it may survive in a relatively fixed form for many generations to come.

In a *riddiyyih*, the minute a verse takes shape on the lips of the poet, he throws it at the singers and gets busy composing the other verse. The pressure of performance does not allow for memorization. Composition takes up the poet's entire concentration, and he cannot spend any effort to memorize what he is composing. After the *riddiyyih,* poets can rarely remember the verses they just finished exchanging. Perhaps there will be among the audience or singers someone with a good memory who might remember some of the savory and provocative verses, but not all of them. Only with the introduction of tape recorders has it become possible to memorize an entire *riddiyyih* by taping it and repeating it until it becomes

fixed in memory.

Another reason why a *riddiyyih* does not survive in memory (without special aids such as tape recorders or writing) is that it is composed to be performed and enjoyed on the spot. Its primary function is entertainment. The *giṣīdih* on the other hand is a much more serious affair. It contains maxims, "*amthāl*," which are the guiding principles for individual action and social conduct. Its primary function is edification and elevation of mind and spirit. It is an expression of a world view and vision of life. Tribal histories and genealogies, as well as all significant social and political events, are recorded in the *giṣīdih*. The *giṣīdih* is a tradition associated with a vested public interest of the same type that Jan Vansina describes as having control over its recital and a guarantee against distortion through failure of memory (1961:42).

Poetic Dueling Through Time

The fact that the survival of *riddiyyih* poetry is not guaranteed through preservation in public memory makes it impossible to determine the early beginnings of this performative art, impossible to trace its development through history. The task is made yet more difficult by the absence of written records. We have to base our assumptions concerning the history of poetic dueling on mutilated and scanty samples that do not date back very far historically.

When did poetic dueling start? I posed this question to all the poets I interviewed and the answer was always the same: *gidīm*, "it is ancient." When I asked them to name the most famous of the ancient poets, they named someone who is still living or someone who died only twenty or, at the most, thirty years ago.

The only reference to this poetic genre we find in ancient sources dealing with classical Arabic poetry is a text of a duel between ʿUbeid Ibn al-Abraṣ and Imru'u l-Qays in the latter's *Dīwān* (1969:461-62). There is a likelihood that the text is forged. Nevertheless, it at least indicates that at the time of its possible forgery, poetic dueling was known, for it must have been forged after an existing model, or at least a concept. Unfortunately, the sources that recorded this early sample give the text but not the performance context. We find no mention, for example, of singers or audience. From the way the text is presented it seems that the two poets simply met and decided to compete with each other. In fact, this does happen occasionally in the vernacular tradition. What is worth noting in this classical sample is that it bears some resemblance to more primitive vernacular samples surviving from earlier times. First, each poet in the classical example delivers one line at a time, instead of two. Second, the

whole duel consists of riddles and their solutions; ᶜUbeid Ibn al-Abraṣ poses the riddles and Imru'u l-Qays gives the answers to them. Riddling was once fashionable in the dueling of vernacular poets, but at that time the whole attitude towards poetic dueling was different from what it is today. It was an attitude of overt expressions of antagonism, aggression, and verbal insult, and insistence on knowing who wins and who loses. This is the reason that ᶜAbdullāh al-ᶜUtaybī calls poetic dueling *fannu l-mufākharah adh-dhātiyyah*, "the art of individual boasting" (1984). Today, poets say verbal abuse disrupts performance and riddling slows down composition. Before I say more on this point I shall first turn to the discussion of performance context and occasions for poetic dueling in the past.

The lack of sources makes it difficult to know how widespread poetic dueling is outside peninsular Arabia. But what I have heard of the Lebanese *Zajal* sounds close to poetic dueling. Poetic dueling is also found in Palestine (Sirḥān 1979:97-113, 281-83.) In the Arabian Peninsula, poetic dueling seems to have originated in Ḥijāz and the Ḥijāzi nomads are still the most famous in this art which of late has become so widespread in the Peninsula that it has reached the Gulf states. Some of the most outstanding dueling poets come from the Western tribe of Sulaym, Hudhayl, Banū Mālik, Bal-Ḥārith, Ḥarb, and ᶜUtaybah. This is not to say that poetic dueling has not been known in Najd for a long time. Yet, it is worth noting that the most famous dueling poets in Najd, e.g. Lwēhān, Slēmān Ibn Shrēm, ᶜAli Abu Mājid, and Aḥmad an-Nāṣir ash-Shāyiᶜ, spent a good part of their lives in Ḥijāz.

When we compare poetic dueling past and present we notice that tremendous changes have taken place not only in the attitudes toward poetic dueling, as mentioned above, but also in the mode and context of performance as well as in the thematic content and contest strategy. In the old days, before the introduction of modern means of entertainment such as radio and television, people also loved to have a good time, and they of course used to find any excuse to get together and sing, especially on summer nights when the moon was full. Men would stay up all night singing and playing. Only at the break of dawn would they disperse and go directly to their fields to work. This, according to my informants, proves how rugged and enduring people used to be. As of late, the most preferable time for such gatherings is Wednesday night and Thursday night because people do not have to go to work the next morning. (Thursday and Friday are sabbath days in the Muslim calendar.)

Some informants told me the following. In the past when someone was bitten by a snake he would not go to sleep before the snake that bit him went to sleep, that is, when the morning star appeared, lest the poison should flow into his blood. In order to prevent him from going to sleep,

men of the village, or tribe, would gather together at his bedside dueling and singing all night long. If the bitten man was not cured the next day, they would say the snake turned over on its back. In such a critical case, they needed to stay up and sing every night for seven days. Later on, when the Wahhabi movement gained strength in Arabia, religious authorities prevented people from singing. When the poets could no longer contain their urge and yearned to play, they would pretend that one of their people was bitten by a snake. Through this ruse, religious authorities could not prevent them from performing.

In wintertime, social activities are curbed because the nomads split up and disperse in the desert while the farmers are busy plowing their fields, not to mention the influence of the extremely cold weather at night. But in the summertime, the season of grain and date harvests, it is time for reunions and get-togethers. Tribal lineages converge at their tribal wells near the settled country. Nomads and villagers come together to renew their economic relationships and resume their social activities. Communication between these two groups becomes very intense and visitation very frequent. Poets from both sides arrange to meet almost nightly to exchange news and newly-composed poems, and to engage in poetic dueling.

It is during the summertime, when people come together, that marriages, circumcisions, and similar activities which call for public celebrations are performed. Such festive occasions are called "*mzayyan*," "*mṣanna*^{c}." Starting early in the morning, the host of the night's *mzayyan* would hoist a banner, "*yighizz ar-rāyiḥ*," as declaration to everyone that they are all welcome to his place at sunset. Before sunset, the women gather a high heap of wood and a large bonfire is lighted which can be seen from a great distance. Dueling may start in the late afternoon, before sunset; this is called *ar-rāyiḥ*.

In the early days the rules of poetic dueling were not as formalized as they are today. For example, there was no clear beginning and end for each match, "*miḥrāf*," and the match was not so much between two poets as between two opposing groups. Anyone who had a fitting line ready might step forward into the playground and sing it out. Contributions of this sort might range from one single line to ten lines in an interrupted sequence, not only two lines at a time as is the case today.

During the past times of political anarchy in Arabia, when poets were the voice of their people, dueling poets were in most cases real antagonists, each representing his own tribe or district. In this case, the two groups of singers were usually divided between the two poets, each one having his own group of singers and supporters. Yet, according to the rules of the game, each group of singers was obliged to sing the lines of the two poets with equal enthusiasm. For example, if one poet belonged to the

tribe of Slēm and his opponent to the tribe of Ḥarb, one line of singers would be from Slēm and the other line would be from Ḥarb. But the singers from Ḥarb would sing the lines of the poet from Slēm just as they would sing the lines of the poet from Ḥarb, and vice versa.

During these days, when the poet stepped into the *malᶜabah* he was putting his life on the line, figuratively speaking, and he was betting on his resourcefulness and ability to return fire, no matter what verbal guns his opponent could muster. The tone of poetic dueling was overtly aggressive. Every poet would try to be "on top" by praising his own people and boasting of his poetic genius while at the same time mocking his opponent and taunting his opponent's group (al-ᶜUtaybī 1984). The poetic argument might have gone something like this:

A. We are the fire that will burn you up.
B. We are the torrent that will wipe you out.
A. We are the mountain that cannot be moved.
B. We are the thunderbolt that will split you in two.

To prevent any fight that might result from such sharp exchanges of words, a distinguished man of prestige and honor was chosen from every group to guarantee that no harm would be inflicted by any member of his group upon the opposing poet, and he would give his headdress as a token of countenance, "*wajh*," and sincerity. Yet squabbles, even serious fights, could not be avoided on some occasions. A duel might unearth an old feud, or remind someone of a forgotten revenge to be taken upon one of the people present, or one of the poets and his group might not be able to swallow all the insults heaped upon them by the other poet.

Some of the poets I interviewed said they remembered in their young days when men and women used to sing and play together in poetic dueling. This is called *al-khlēṭi*, "mixed play." When the dueling gets going, "*ila ᶜamar al-liᶜb*," a beautiful lass steps into the playground and starts dancing, her hair unplaited and holding a rattan cane. After she gets tired another one steps in, and so on. Dancing girls are referred to as *sammānāt*/*as-samin*. In some regions the dancing girl is called *al-ḥāshi* (literally "young camel") or *al-jilūbah* (literally "a camel driven to the market for sale," perhaps because she is of a marriageable age. Actually, before she steps into the *malᶜabah* a fictitous price is paid to her father or brother to let her dance). A poet of reputation could refuse to step into the *malᶜabah* before a *ḥāshi* is brought in. The *ḥāshi* herself may become the topic of poetic exchange (cf. Sirḥān 1979:227, and al-ᶜUzayzī 1981:248-49).

Among the Northern tribes poetic dueling is not known, and the *ḥāshi* dances in the *daḥḥih*, a collective performance resembling the *Ṣaḥjih* in Palestine. The *daḥḥih* resembles the *riddiyyih* in that men of the tribe

get together to sing and dance with a poet improvising lines for them to sing in their midst. But it is different in that there is no competition involved.

It is worth noting that *riddiyyih* and *daḥḥih* are not the only ritualized occasions where women were allowed to unveil and dance in public. In major tribal battles maidens used to loosen their tresses and bare their breasts and yell shouts of encouragement to the fighting men of their tribe with the daughter of their chief ahead of them riding her camel (Sowayan 1985:36-37). Such a ritualized behavior deserves further investigation, but for our purpose here it is sufficient to note that it occurred only in combat, actual or verbal.

Verbal obscenities are another institutionalized license indulged in under the context of *riddiyyih* performance but not allowed under normal conditions. In their attacks and counter-attacks, the poets may resort to verbal obscenities, a strategy much favored by the audience because it is entertaining and it can turn the performance into a hilarious show. In content, this practice reminds us somewhat of "playing the dozens," a verbal dueling game played by American Blacks (Abrahams 1962). The purpose of this strategy is to ridicule and disparage the poet's opponent and smear his honor. This is somewhat similar to the strategy followed by Turkish boys in their verbal duels (Dundes et al. 1978:73):

> One of the most important goals is to force one's opponent into a female, passive role. This may be done by defining the opponent or his mother or sister as a wanton sexual receptacle. If the male opponent is thus defined, it is usually by means of casting him as a submissive anus, an anus which must accept the brunt of the verbal duelist's attacking phallus. A more indirect technique is to disparage or threaten the opponent's mother or sister, which is a serious attack upon his male honor. Thus the victim either has to submit to phallic aggression himself or else watch helplessly as phallic aggression is carried out upon his female extensions, his mother or sister. Of course, the victim normally does not simply remain passive. Rather he tries in turn to place his attacker in a passive, female role. Much of the skill in the dueling process consists of parrying phallic thrusts such that the would-be attacking penis is frustrated and the would-be attacker is accused of receiving a penis instead.

One cannot but wonder how the Arabians, especially the nomads, who are so courteous and decorous in their conversation and interpersonal relations and who guard their honor jealously, could allow such obscenities. Of course, we cannot understand such forms of behavior by merely looking at their surface manifestations. We must have recourse to the subconscious and attempt deep structure analysis. The psychological interpretation offered by Dundes et al. for the Turkish boys' verbal dueling, though it may not be quite valid in its finer details, offers good directions for dealing with this issue.

After the unification of Saudi Arabia under the late King ᶜAbdulazīz Ibn Saᶜūd and the discovery of oil later on, tremendous and rapid political, economic, social, and cultural changes have been taking place. Consequently, gradual changes are taking place with regard to the form, content, and context of poetic dueling. More and more, it is becoming, as mentioned above, strictly a form of entertainment. Dueling poets are shifting their roles from spokesmen of their tribes or districts to a "semi-professional" class who are paid highly for their services and who vie with each other for wages and economic gains. Even the audience no longer chooses its favorite poets according to tribal or regional affiliation, but rather according to "professional" criteria. I am speaking here only of trends, and the old values and themes have not died out, surviving in atrophied forms.

Nowadays, poetic dueling has become strictly a form of entertainment and poets are highly paid for their performances. This is considered shameful by the old-timers. They have told me that such a practice is suitable only for night-club dancers and singers. In the old days poets were prouder and more dignified; they say, if dueling were to be performed at weddings or circumcisions, some poets would make it a point to come late after supper so as not to partake of the public feast and thus expose themselves to the accusation that they had come to fill their bellies.

It has always been the case that dueling poetry is more symbolic and figurative than lyrical poetry, but lately it is becoming more so. Concealing poetic meaning is called *ghishsh*, *ghaṭuw*, *dafin*, i.e. "diluting, covering, burying (the meaning)." A verse with a hidden meaning is called *mlaghgham*, *mrahham*, i.e. "mined, loaded (with meaning)." This mechanism resembles hidden messages and veiled speech practiced by Somali poets (Andrzejewski and Galaal 1966, Andrzejewski 1967, Johnson 1972). Concealing the meaning is considered very clever and highly desirable because it challenges the intellect of the opponent and the audience. Through this means, the dueling poets can pass verbal messages back and forth between them with an intended hidden meaning which is understood only by them and perhaps by a few of the people present. The rest of the audience is distracted by the apparent signification, which is not the real meaning. It is verses of this sort that usually survive. They become delightful topics of conversation and people repeat them frequently in an attempt to figure out their meanings. Everyone argues that his interpretation is the correct one. A verse that can be interpreted in so many ways is called *wisīᶜ*, "vast, extended" and *malyān*, "full." The more one attends performances of poetic dueling and associates with dueling poets, the more one is able to understand and enjoy their verses.

In order to understand a poetic duel fully it is not enough to decode its figurative language and symbolic allusions. It is also necessary to know

the background events which are dealt with in the duel. In the past those events were mostly personal or tribal. For example, the two poets might work out a misunderstanding between them, or discuss a rumor that has been spread about one of them, or any similar topic. But nowadays the emphasis has shifted to social and political issues. Poets are beginning to draw their themes from world events and television shows. This is due to the rise of the level of awareness among the poets, thanks to literacy and modern means of communications. One of the most famous dueling poets of this age is a young man by the name of Muṭlaq ibn Ḥamīd ath-Thubayti. He has a master's degree in literature from the University of Manchester. Most dueling poets agree that Muṭlaq is playing a very influential and leading role in transforming poetic dueling from petty tribal and personal squabbles to the treatment of modern issues and current events. Muṭlaq told me that the theme of a duel should be relevant to the modern age and the verses should be constructed in such a vague and ambiguous way that their aesthetic value lies in that everyone can impose on them his own interpretation and find in them some sort of relief and fulfillment. In this way, the verses of a duel can serve as a projection device through which we can gauge individual as well as national anxieties and concerns.

There are other university graduates besides Muṭlaq ath-Thubayti who have gained popularity and established names for themselves as excellent performers in poetic dueling. In addition to these highly educated people, there are very prominent social figures and notables who engage in poetic dueling, not the least of whom was the late King Faiṣal Ibn Saᶜūd. I mention this not merely to prove how popular poetic dueling is, but also to show that in the Middle East (and perhaps in all cultures with ancient histories) it is very difficult to separate the literate from the oral, the folk from the non-folk, the popular from the elite. All these sociocultural aspects interact and blend together in terms of form, content, context, performers, and manners of performance.

Cultural and Literary Context of Poetic Dueling

In his book *The Presence of the Word* (1967:192-222), Walter Ong argues that poetic rivalry is a manifestation of the polemic world view. Because of the prevalence of personal tensions, fliting—the concerted exchange of personal abuse combined with boast and challenge—is a staple of oral performance and forms a characteristic verbal institution in pre-literate societies (197):

> The reasons for the overt hostilities of early man's life world were of course complex. One evident reason was the lack of mastery over environment. An economy of scarcity prevailed everywhere, as it still prevails over much

> of our globe. With a limited supply even of necessities, abundance for one automatically spelled scarcity for others or—what came to the same thing— was thought to do so.

How does this statement apply to poetic dueling in Arabia?

One of the most characteristic features of traditional Arabic poetry, whether classical or vernacular, is that it is an engaging poetry. A poet composes to stir audible and perceptible reaction not only from his public audience but, more importantly, from other poets. Many poets address their verses as a direct appeal or threat or challenge to another poet. Following the same strict rules of rhyme and meter employed by the first poet, the respondent answers his challenger, either emulating him or returning his friendly words or refuting his claims and accusations. The Arabic language abounds with technical terms describing this literary state of affairs; e.g. *naqā'iḍ*, *muᶜāraḍāt*, *musājalāt*, etc. Another aspect of this engaging characteristic of Arabic traditional poetry is that the poet under certain circumstances may hide his intentions and veil the meaning of his verses, thus challenging the intelligence of the audience and the respondent. Again, the Arabic language abounds with technical terms referring to this practice; e.g. *laḥn*, *taᶜrīḍ*, etc. These facts about Arabic poetry are common knowledge and I need not dwell on them here. My purpose is only to indicate that poetic dueling is in a sense the encapsulation in a highly condensed and highly charged public performance of literary phenomena which are widespread and have a long history in Arab culture.

Poetic dueling is also the manifestation of well entrenched cultural values and social norms which, in one way or another, are echoed in the metaphoric language of dueling poets and which influence the context and mechanism of their performance. From ancient times until a few decades ago, the arms of the Bedouins—such as the lance, the saber, and the coat of mail, along with the horse—allowed full scope for the display of bravery with little loss of life. The Bedouins were fond of single combat because it was spectacular and gave the individual warrior an opportunity to distinguish himself. When two knights met in a duel on the battlefield, it was part of the ritual for one of them to gallop his horse around brandishing his arms and shouting vociferously his war cry and two or three verses which he composed on the spot and in which he praised himself and mocked his adversary. The adversary answered likewise. The verbal combat accentuated and highlighted the actual combat. The two parties of the dueling knights formed two halting lines opposite each other and watched the fight.

Because of the constant struggle against nature and against other men, desert life puts a premium on manly courage and the combative traits of character. The nomads live in perpetual conflict with each other, not only armed conflict but more commonly legal conflict. The *lex non scripta*

of the desert is very complex. To cope with the volatile and potentially explosive politics of the desert in the absence of central authority, the nomads devised complex codes and lengthy procedures of litigation which served to minimize danger and mitigate the shedding of blood. To win these legal proceedings, one must be alert, shrewd, astute, perceptive, quick-witted, and endowed with verbal skills. These legal procedures sharpen the wit and the tongue. Articulate orators and eloquent poets are masters in presenting their cases. They try to silence their adversaries with cogent arguments and irrefutable testimonies employing formulaic verse and rhymed prose. Should legal channels fail to establish peace and armed conflict become inevitable, poets of feuding tribes unleash their tongues at each other, each boasting of himself and his tribe while mocking the enemy tribe and its poets.

Furthermore, when one group wishes to sue for peace, ask for assistance, or propose an alliance with another group, it sends a delegation to that group for that purpose. On the way, a poet from the delegation composes a ditty, "*ḥdāt*," pointing out the purpose of the mission. Members of the delegation sing the ditty as they drive their camel mounts. When they reach the vicinity of the host group and their singing becomes audible, the latter sends the children of the camp to go pick up the ditty and bring it back so that the host poets can compose a suitable answer. When the delegation reaches the camp, its members remain seated on their mounts singing their ditty and they do not dismount before they hear the answer of the hosts.

We see then that the engaging character of the Arabian poetry is an echo of the engaging nature of the structure of a feuding tribal society which is organized around the well-known system of fission and fusion. In this system, particularly since it is characterized by constant feuding, neutrality is hard to maintain. Every individual is either with or against, an ally or a rival, close or distant. From the sociological point of view, poetry serves to reinforce and elucidate the social structure; and from the psychological point of view, it shows how social realities color the individual's worldview, attitude towards others, and perception of himself. This is nowhere more evident than in dueling poetry.

King Saud University, Riyadh

[Field research for this paper has been partly financed by the Research Center of the College of Arts of King Saud University. The paper is based on extended interviews with the following poets: Jārallāh aṣ-Ṣwāṭ, Reshīd az-Zlāmi, Sᶜūd as-Seᶜīdi, Shlēwīh ibn Shallāḥ, Ṣayyāf al-Ḥarbi, Ṭalag al-Hudhayli, ᶜAbdalᶜazīz al-Migḥim (Suhayl), ᶜAli al-Gari, ᶜUẓallāh as-Slemi, Mḥammad ibn Twēm, Mḥammad al-Jabarti, Mḥammad Seᶜīd adh-Dhwēbi, Mḥammad al-Miḥsin (ad-Dirm), Mḥammad ibn Shallāḥ, Mastūr al-ᶜṢēmi, and Miṭlag ath-Thbēti. To every one of these poets I owe a debt of gratitude. During the process of writing this paper I had many fruitful discussions with Dr. Marzūg ibn Tunbāk

and Dr. ᶜAbdullah al-Miᶜtāni. The first draft was read and commented upon by Dr. ᶜIzzat Khattāb, Dr. ᶜAli Jād, Dr. ᶜAbdulwahhāb al-Masīri, Dr. Nazeer al-ᶜAzmah, and Paul Majkut. I am grateful to all of them for their suggestions, and I may yet regret having not always followed their advice.]

References

Abrahams 1962 — Roger D. Abrahams. "Playing the Dozens." *Journal of American Folklore*, 75:209-20.

Andrzejewski 1967 — B. W. Andrzejewski. "The Art of the Miniature in Somali Poetry." *African Language Review*, 6:5-16.

Andrzejewski and Galaal 1966 — _____ and Musa H. I. Galaal. "The Art of the Verbal Message in Somali Poetry." *Hamburger Beiträge zur Afrika-Kunde*, 5:29-39.

Dundes et al. 1978 — Alan Dundes, Jerry W. Leach, and Bora Özkök. "The Strategy of Turkish Boys' Verbal Dueling." In *Essays in Folkloristics*. Ed. by Alan Dundes. Folklore Institute, 34/1, Kailash Puri, Meerut, India (First published in *Journal of American Folklore* 83[1970]: 325-49).

Imru' al-Qays 1969 — *Dīwān Imru' al-Qays*. Ed. by Muḥammad abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. 3rd edition. Dār al-Maᶜārif bi-Miṣr.

Johnson 1972 — John William Johnson. *Heelloy Heelleelloy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*. Bloomington: The Research Center for the Language Sciences.

Lord 1960 — Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1968 et seq.

Musil 1927 — Alois Musil. *Arabia Deserta*. New York: C.R. Crane.

Ong 1967 — Walter J. Ong. *The Presence of the Word*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sirḥān 1979 — Nimr Sirḥān. *aghānīna ash-shaᶜbiyyah fi ḍ-ḍiffah al-gharbiyyah*. 2nd edition. Kuwait: Kazmah.

Sowayan 1985 — Saad ᶜAbdullah Sowayan. *Nabaṭi Poetry: The Oral Poetry of Arabia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

al-ᶜUtaybī 1984 — ᶜAbdullāh al-ᶜUtaybī. "al-galtih: fann al-mufākharah adh-dhātiyyah." In *dirāsāt fī ash-shiᶜr ash-shaᶜbī al-Kuwaytī*. Kuwait: Mu'assasat al-Khalīj li-ṭ-ṭibāᶜah wa-n-nashr. (First published in *al-Bayān*, no. 183, June 1981.)

al-ᶜUzayzī 1981 Rōkos Ibn Zā'id al-ᶜUzayzī. *gāmūs al-ᶜādāt wa-l-lahajāt wa-l-'a wābid al'urduniyyah*. vol. 2. 2nd ed. Jordan: Mudīriyyat al-Maṭābiᶜ al-ᶜAskariyyah.

Vansina 1961 Jan Vansina. *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*. Trans. by H. M. Wright. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 174-88

Sung Poetry in the Oral Tradition of the Gulf Region and the Arabian Peninsula

Simon Jargy

Historical Background

As far back as we can go in the past history of the Arabs and Arabia, we find poetry present as a huge memorial to their real and imaginary heroic exploits, as a witness to their way of life and feelings, and most of all as an expression of the deepest roots of their soul. Being essentially oral in its origins and developments, this poetry, with its rhythms, intonations, accents, and long or short syllables fitted in quite naturally with music. In the old classical Arabic terminology, poetry (*Shiᶜr*) identifies with song (*Nashīd*): reciting it is synonymous with singing it (*Anshada al-Shiᶜr*). This bond between *Shiᶜr* (poetry) and *Inshād* (chant or recitative) still has the same meaning in the spoken Arabic of the Peninsula and the Gulf region where *Nishīda* (song) is synonymous with *Giṣīda* (poem).

In pre-Islamic Arabia, *Inshād* likely had a dual function: religious and social. Both stem from the rhythmical syllables of the Arabic language (rhymed prose: *Sajᶜ*, and metrical poetry: *Shiᶜr*), as well as from rhythmical movements of camels. Coming from ancient times, this is the *Ḥidā'* (literally "stimulating the camel's step") that the Bedouin sings following the steps of his camel and for his own entertainment. It has survived in the actual form we call "recitative" or "cantilena," as the common *Ḥadwā* still designates, in the spoken Bedouin dialect of the Gulf, the folk songs of both the desert and the sea.

With the creation of the enormous Arab-Islamic empire, the classical culture, including its musical expression, came under various influences, making the gap deeper between "literary poetry" and the original Bedouin poetry that survived through oral tradition and came to be known, in modern times, under the generic name of *Nabaṭī* poetry. Paradoxically, scholarly discovery of this rich legacy of Peninsula *Nabaṭī* poetry is relatively recent. In fact, until the nineteenth century, literary and musical

historians, philologists, and other Orientalists concentrated almost exclusively on the classical poetry, considered as an object of real interest. And here one could dare to say that European scholars who started to pay attention to the popular poetry and music since the nineteenth century, collecting and studying it, were the first to give a real impetus to folk and oral tradition researches and studies, and created a new consciousness of their value even inside the concerned Arab countries themselves.

In this respect, one should honestly emphasize the role of precursors played by the Western travelers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries in this field. When the Swiss Arabist J. L. Burckhardt (1748-1817) reached Arabia for the first time, well acquainted as he was with the Arabic classical poetry and haunted by the beauty of great poems such as the *Muᶜallaqāt* of Imru' al-Qais, *Labīd*, *ᶜAntara*, and other Golden Age poetry, he was expecting to find it living in all memories and recited everywhere. Quite the contrary, the great Orientalist tells us of his surprise on hearing poetry more commonly recited and sung not in the *Fuṣḥā,* but in the spoken Arabic very familiar to everyone. This discovery is that of *Nabaṭī* poetry, and its cradle is still, as in olden times, the Najd Province.

One cannot believe that this poetry came into existence suddenly and so late. If we refer to older Arab authors, such as Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī and many others, we find some references to this kind of literature being aimed at popular classes and using vernacular language and metrical verses different from those of classical poetry. We discover this developed expression through the actual traditions performed in the *Sāmrī*, *Mawwāl*, *ṣawt*, and so on. This article, however, will be restricted chiefly to the sung poetry of Bedouin origins called *Nabaṭī,* leaving aside the extremely valuable sea-folk tradition, which deserves a long dissertation of its own.

Structures and Characteristics

Excluding the useless and sterile discussions on the etymology of the term *Nabaṭī*—which, by the way, is almost unknown to Bedouin poets themselves[1]—we come first to a very interesting testimony from one of the few European travelers who first underlined the distinct characteristics of this poetry from both metrical and rhythmical aspects. Being at al-Ḥufūf (al-Ḥasā province) in 1862, W. G. Palgrave noticed first the "passionate love" of the people there for poetry: "They are passionately fond of

[1] Sowayan (1982:72-73) makes this remark based upon his research on the field: "*Nabaṭī* poets rarely use the term *nabaṭī* in reference to themselves or to their poetry and many of them do not even know this sense of the word." The use of this term, applying to the Bedouin poetry in colloquial Arabic, originated relatively recently.

literature and poetry, whether it be according to the known Arabic rules and metre, or whether it follow the *Nabtee*, that is, the Nabathean versification." Then he analyzes basic structures of this sung poetry:

> This latter form of composition, occasionally met with even in Nejed, but rare, becomes here common, more so indeed that the Arabic scansion goes by accent, not by quantity; the metre is variable, even in the same piece, and the rhyme, instead of being continuous, is alternate. In a word, this class of poetry presents in form a strong resemblance to the ordinary English ballad, and, like it, is the popular style of the country (1865:II, 158).

This analysis gives us precious elements of the fundamental characteristics of *Nabaṭī* poetry. Palgrave's notation about scansion deserves an initial and brief expansion: the tonic accent is certainly essential to the *Nabaṭī* poetry. But it is not different basically from the classical Arabic tonic accent, in that it also combines pitch and intensity (as in Italian and English). However, its place is not identical to the one assigned to classical Arabic by the tradition.[2] As to the quantitative rhythm, which *Nabaṭī* poetry does not follow, according to Palgrave, one should make a distinction between recited or declaimed *Nabaṭī* poetry, and sung verse based upon measured rhythm. One can hardly agree, in the first place, that *Nabaṭī* poetry does not follow quantitative rhythm;[3] as for the latter, this poetry is syllabically structured to follow the rhythmical tune attached to it. One can, however, agree with Palgrave about the metrical differences between classical and *Nabaṭī* poetry. This same observation is made by contemporary Arab authors themselves, such as ᶜAbdullāh B. Khamīs and, most strikingly, Saad ᶜAbdullah Sowayan.[4]

The conclusion of the British traveler touches a more interesting point: bringing together *Nabaṭī* song and English ballad—this latter being originally divided into stanzas of four verses each and sung on an invariable melody—is more significant for our subject. In Palgrave's nineteenth-century milieu, the term ballad designated love songs of popular origins (Honegger 1976:I, 67). Even if we exclude a complete identification of the European model ballad with sung *Nabaṭī* poetry of the same period, we can still say that the division into stanzas and verses, indefinitely repeated, characterizes Bedouin and even sedentary folk sung

[2] We still need deeper comparative phonological research of both classical and *Nabaṭī* poetry. Such research could take advantage of electronic measuring instruments which contemporary technology has made available.

[3] Cf. Sowayan (1982:79): "Like that of the classical Arabic poetry, the metre of *Nabaṭī* poetry is quantitative."

[4] When they try to establish a parallel between classical meters (*Buḥūr*) and those of *Nabaṭī* poetry, Arab authors end in a deadlock (Sowayan 1982:79).

poetry today.

Popular in its meaning and forms, *Nabaṭī* poetry underwent sociological dichotomy through its long evolution. This phenomenon should be briefly recalled in order to apprehend adequately the essential character of oral traditions of sung poetry. As a general poetic expression, *Nabaṭī* poetry benefited partly from the high admiration Arabs have always had for poetry: like war, this activity was considered as man's noble art. Even when Islam came to reprove poets and poetry as a pagan secular expression—according to some Qur'anic verses (XXVI:224)—still this expression remained privileged as the highest literary form within Arab civilization.

This position is different when we consider the same poetry associated with music, and worse with dance. Even before Islam, music was somehow despised and even feared because of its supposed relations with devil magic. Islam, as early Christianity before it, was hostile to the musical art, even if such hostility varied in tone from one theologian to another.[5] Consequently, musico-poetical traditions were almost monopolized by slaves and outcast tribes. The most famous of those nomadic lower classes were the *Ṣuluba*, who became the most qualified professionals of singing, playing *Rabāba*, and dancing. The same traditions also became the art of another professional social group: the Tziganes, ethnically non-Arabs but arabized by language; named *Kawliyya*, they are wonderful singers and dancers and are spread all over the eastern Mediterranean area. When we go more deeply into this subject, we find that the religious anathemas have not been very effective. The Arabian Peninsula has kept alive its musico-poetical traditions, mostly sung poetry, in the eastern and southern provinces as well as in the Gulf area.

The expansion of the Wahhābī religious doctrine (eighteenth through twentieth centuries) has, as in early Islam, brought some new restrictions. But despite this modern prohibition—which has surely obliterated part of those venerable musico-poetical oral traditions—a sort of Renaissance beginning in the 1950's has initiated a new consciousness among Arab folklorists, and official institutions materialized with the creation of several folk groups of tale-tellers, musicians, and dancers as well as specialized centers. Most strikingly, the *Nabaṭī* literature has finally been introduced into the University of Wahhābī, Saudi Arabia.[6]

---

[5] The Prophet's traditions (*Ḥadīth*) referring to music include texts condemning it as well as others admitting it; hence one cannot find a well-defined position among Muslim doctors of religious law.

[6] We have, for another example, the Department of Oral Literature in the Arabian Peninsula, at the University of King Saᶜūd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Genre Analysis

Nabaṭī poetry has functioned as a basis for the Bedouin cantilena, with or without *Rabāba* accompaniment, in its three principal forms: *Hjīnī*, belonging to the *Ḥadū* traditional genre, *ᶜArḍa* (war-song), and *Sāmrī*, which designated a cycle of syllabic songs performed by sedentarized Bedouins at their weddings or other occasions of entertainment and rejoicing at feasts. These genres deserve more detailed analysis.

1) *Ḥadū* (classical: *Ḥidā'*): After having been applied originally to the camel-driver's chant—the ancient Arab chronicles suggest its triple-measured rhythm—the term *Ḥadū* was used for various war-songs, as testified at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the Swiss Arabist J. L. Burckhardt, who observed (1831:86-87):

> The war-song of the Arabs is called Hadou[. . .]. If a tribe march against an enemy, the first line is composed of horsemen, whom camel-riders follow, and the Bedous on foot bring up the rear, armed with sticks, lances, kolongs, etc. If the enemy be near, the foot-soldiers accelerate their pace, and often run to come up with the advanced columns. On this occasion, they sing the famous hadou . . ..

Yet Burckhardt underlines the social function of *Ḥadū* as being sung by the camel-driver in order to stimulate the step of his camel, giving a short example which attests that the war theme is valid in modern times.

This primitive camel-driver's song has kept its original character in another genre familiar to the Bedouins—the *Hjīnī*. Under the transcription "Hodjeiny," Burckhardt presents it as the Bedouin's national love song. In fact, its themes variously deal with love and war, depending on circumstances of the *Shāᶜir*'s own inspiration. The essential characteristic of *Hjīnī* still remains its rhythm—frequently that of triple time—associated with syllabic poetry. It is usually accompanied by an old string-instrument, the *Rabāba*, and presents numerous variants depending on localities or traditions belonging to different tribes.

I had the opportunity to record interesting examples of those variants, named *Freisnī*,[7] in Jahrah, a Bedouin village west of Kuwait City. The example under consideration is a choral song on the general theme of *Ghazal* (love poetry), based on a syllabic and measured rhythm, and performed by two choirs singing alternately. The metrical structures make up two verses with double-rhyme, composing what is called *Bait* (literally

[7] The term *Hjīnī* or *Hujaynī* obviously refers to a dromedary (classical: *Hujūn-Hijān*) and to its driver, while *Freisnī* (classical: *Faras*) indicates a mare and its rider, a favorite theme of Arabic poetry. We notice a variant of this term, *Freinsī* (by metathesis), used in Kuwait.

"dwelling, home," and here "stanza"). Each verse is repeated as a solo, then sung five or six times by one chorus or the other. A special dance underlines the rhythm, the strong time being beaten by the feet of the dancers, knocking on the ground as in the well-known *Dabka* of the Middle and Near East area; one difference here is that men, hand in hand, are facing each other, sometimes advancing, sometimes going back according to rhythmical movements.

Both recorded examples below, performed by folk groups of Fanṭās and Jahrah, give us interesting information on variants existing within the principal genre and its fundamental and invariable characteristics. So the song itself differs according to the text; in the second example it follows the *Sāmrī*. In the same way, the metrical structure of the poem is not identical over the texts, the only invariable element being the double-rhyme pattern constituting the distich (*Bait Shiᶜr*). Although dealing with *Ghazal* (love), the theme itself does not seem to involve any determined function implied by the sub-genre appellation. Finally, the theme remains invariable all over the pattern songs. Accordingly we may have love (*Ghazal*) or panegyric (*Madīḥ*) or even religious poems sung with melodies belonging to war-songs, while some wedding or religious melodies may be associated with war poems. So there is no set of absolute rules or any systematic codification for genre nomenclature. The only classification should be an empirical one.

Here is the first example of *Bait* pattern:

ᶜĀ/ra/ḍhat/nī Wa/-nam/shī (7 syllables)
Fā/yi/tin Bīṭ/-Ṭirīj (6 syllables)[8]

I met her, going my way,
Wearing her crepe ᶜ*Abā* (veil).

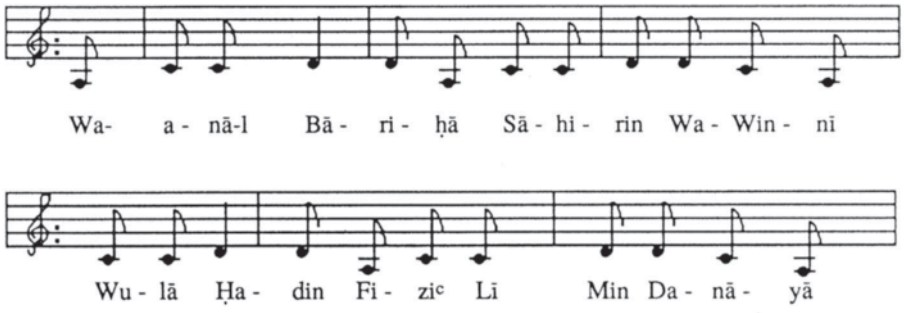
* * * * *

I said: hello . . . dost thou not need a companion?
Give me the "ᶜ*Id*'s" kiss; this will be thy present.
Fine are her lips, luminous her smile.
The fringes of her robe wrinkle with her hip movements.
I am exhausted, walking all the day around her tent.
Seeing her breaks my heart;
My spirit is dried, like an herb to be consumed,
I am hung up on her lips. Don't blame my soul.

[8] For the long and short vowels, we follow the conventional classical Arabic transcription in order to make the text more easily intelligible. But it is obvious that, when applied to *Nabaṭī* sung poetry, those vowels follow essentially melodic and syllabic rhythm, and not that of classical meter. One can also note that the last verse forms a sort of refrain, the last rhyme being "*īj*."

As for most of those songs, the same pattern goes with other syllabic poetry on the basis of various metrical schemes and melodies, as in this second example of *Freisnī*: (Pattern-stanza: double-rhyme [*Winnī-'Āyā*]: this is a model from Dūbeit of eleven syllables for each verse, repeated five to six times):

Wa-nā l-Bāriḥā Sāhirin Wa-Winnī (11 syllables)
Wu-lā Ḥadin Fiziᶜ Lī Min Danāyā (11 syllables)



Yesterday, sitting up and groaning
Without help coming from anyone.

* * * * *

I saw her eyes enveloping me
Like a goatskin bottle's folds wrap the thirsty,
Burning my heart like a spark,
While her veil waved in the wind.
Welcome to the waving veil
Giving brightness to the universe and the star constellation.[9]

2) *ᶜArḍa*: *ᶜArḍa* is one of the most important genres of folk musical-poetry known all over the Peninsula. It certainly belongs to the Bedouin *Ḥadū* cycle, as J. L. Burckhardt observes, but it has in fact become an essential part of the popular traditions of both Bedouins and sedentaries.

By origins, *ᶜArḍa* is unanimously considered to be preeminently the Arab's war-song. This classification originates from the movements, gestures, and weapons which accompany *ᶜArḍa* performance: singers, in two groups supposed to represent vanquishers and vanquished, hold up

[9] Because of the metaphors and alluding procedure very frequently used by the Bedouin poets, the meaning of this last verse is difficult to understand. One could posit a different interpretation.

swords and bucklers, sometimes guns, and move in simulated war operations.

This warlike function may be traced back to the important pre-Islamic poetic genre, both classical and popular, that was named *al-Ḥamās*. But still the terminology remains an enigma for its etymological meaning as well as for its historical context. The ᶜARḌ root indicates both "to counter," "to be opposed to," and "to show," "to parade." But the feminine form of ᶜARḌA, "parade," seems more consistent with the modern function of this song, as is suggested as well by the performances, under the same word, of similar songs and dances in other Arab Near East areas, such as Syria for example.[10]

Western travelers of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries refer sporadically to this poetry of war-songs performed in Arabia. So Richard F. Burton gives us, in 1855, this short notice (1924:I, 418-19):

> A well-mounted party of fine old Arab Shaykhs of the Hamidah clan, preceded by their varlets, performing the Arzah or war dance,—compared with which the Pyrenean bear's performance is grace itself,—firing their duck-guns upwards, or blowing the powder into the calves of those before them, brandishing their swords, leaping frantically the while, with their bright coloured rags floating in the wind, tossing their long spears tufted with ostrich feathers high in the air, reckless where they fall; servants seeking their masters, and masters their tents, with vain cries of Ya Mohammed . . ..

More recently, in the twenties of this century, another very reliable witness, H. R. P. Dickson, a British resident in Kuwait for many years, describes performance of the *ᶜArḍa* in great detail; the warlike character is still present (1967:222-23). However, the actual performance of the *ᶜArḍa* does not correspond completely to those descriptions, in that we can no more classify it as a pure war-song. More precisely, we note for example that sticks have replaced swords, bucklers, or guns. We see them no more, other than in some very few official *ᶜArḍa*, performed on certain formal days by high personalities of royal families. Sometimes a young man, raising a sword, stands in the middle of folk singers, simulating some warlike symbolic movements. That demonstration is just for show. In the same way, the gestures of vanquishers and vanquished have been replaced by dance movements which singers perform, divided in two ranks and moving forward and then backward.

If we consider melodies or texts, again we do not find the specific

[10] Cf. chiefly Lecerf and Tresse n.d. Although the authors link Syrian *ᶜArāḍa* to war-song, they prefer not to give a clear etymological meaning for the term itself. One regrets the absence of musical notation that would give more accuracy and permit better scholarly comparison with the *ᶜArḍa* of the Arabian Peninsula.

characteristics of a war-song. The rhythm is rather slow and quiet, sounding more religious than martial. The poetry itself, apart from brief allusions to the chieftain's or the prince's warlike exploits, expresses mostly the performer's distress appeased by invocations and prayers to God.

Here the problem of criteria again arises: what essentially characterizes *ᶜArḍa*? One of the first characteristics is the conjunction of measured melody with metrical poetry divided into strophes, together with dance movements—though we can find those three elements in other Bedouin songs also. However, the original rhythm that underlines dance movements remains the most typical characteristic of the *ᶜArḍa* beyond its variants. Such variants can give different names to the same cycle as in the case of *ᶜAyyāla* and *Razḥa*, two song-dances known mostly in southeastern Arabia, United Arab Emirates for the former and Oman for the latter. According to the Gulf authors, they too belong to the *ᶜArḍa* genre.

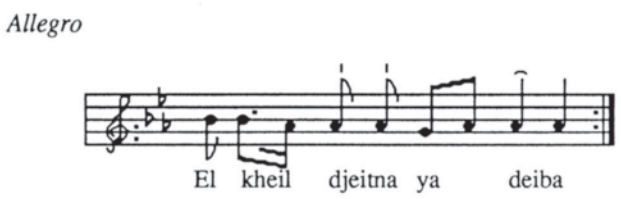
3) *Sāmrī*: More specific to the oral Bedouin heritage is the genre named *Sāmrī*. The etymology of the term itself refers most likely to the classical root SMR, literally "to converse with, to recite poetry or tales during vigils."[11] Hence, the name *Sāmir* designating a poet or singer entertaining those nightly assemblies is very common in the desert.

Early travelers to Arabia who visited Bedouin tribes and knew much about their customs talk of those nightly assemblies gathered around a chief or notable of the desert. Even though we do not have a very old testimony dealing with the specific genre of songs performed during those assemblies, historical documents of early Arabia and of the beginning of the Islamic era do mention those assemblies of singing poetry. This tradition became progressively the prince's, governor's, or tribal chief's privilege all over the Islamic empire. The most valuable and detailed information about this tradition is given by J. L. Burckhardt, with his perfect knowledge of Arabic and good musical learning added to his varied education (a combination of abilities which was not typical of other Western travelers who specialized in geography, archaeology, ethnology, anthropology or were simply merchants or businessmen). Burckhardt's precious information can be found in the first volume of his *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys* (1831:I, 83); so also this following notice:

> Besides the "kaszíde," the Arabs have different national songs. Those of the Arab women are called "Asámer." On the occasion of feasts and rejoicings, the women retire in the evening to a place at some small distance behind the tents. They divide themselves into choruses of six, eight, or ten women: one party begins the song, and the other in turn repeats it; this is called "el benát yelaboua el asámer." The song is always in praise

[11] *Al-Samar:* literally "nightly talks, tales, or reciting poetry in the moonlight," hence *Al-Samra*: "nightly legend telling" (*Al-Muᶜjam al-Wasīṭ,* 1960:I, 450).

of valour and generosity, and its never-varying tune is as follows:



The movement is quick or slow, according to the pleasure of the singer.

Then Burckhardt gives us this specimen:

El kheil djeitna ya deiba
(The warrior, O Deiba, advances)

El kheil djeitna hheteiba
(The intrepid warrior advances)

El kheil Dhouhy ya deiba
(Dhouhy, the warrior, O Deiba).

Another interesting point noted by our traveler is the "responsorial" character of the song, a procedure whereby each verse is repeated five to six times by the first chorus, then resumed by the second chorus, the last verse being sung as a refrain. This final verse includes the name of a chief or hero according to the special circumstances.

One should point out another element: *Mesāmer* (pl. of *Sāmer*) appear to be the most widespread folk songs within the desert area, and belong to the Bedouins, starting from the Sinai to eastern and southern Arabia. Burckhardt notes *Mesāmer* coming even from the Maghrib (*ibid*.:I, 257-58), indicating their large diffusion all over the Bedouin area. The various forms of this folk song genre, as well as its melodies and rhythms, depend on its geographical or social area. Here again we have a valuable remark from Burckhardt (*ibid*.:I, 257):

> The mesámer are general throughout the Desert, but almost every tribe differs in the mode of singing them. The song is often composed extempore, and relates to the beauty and qualities of the girl who dances: if the young men are at home in the camp, they continue to like mesámer, for months together, every night. Married men and women sometimes join; young men often walk at night a distance of some hours, and back again, that they may enjoy the mesámer of a neighbouring camp.

Although not using the terms of *Sāmer* or *Mesāmer* as precisely as Burckhardt, other Western travelers, beginning in the eighteenth century,

provided sporadic information about them. One could deduce from those indications that, beside *Shāᶜir* sung poetry or recitative with the accompaniment of the *Rabāba*—a permanent and general practice in the Bedouin desert—there is a collegial sung poetry that the Bedouins perform nightly for their entertainment or that of their audience. These poems are composed of measured rhythms with dance, the theme being war exploits or praise of the tribe's chief. The pattern is basically identical; that is, it consists of a responsorial song performed by two choruses alternating with each other. The text itself is composed of one verse of syllabic meter and repeated several times according to the chief conductor's wish.

Today oral tradition assigns the *Sāmrī*'s origins to Saudi Arabia. Some Arab authors even certify that this tradition came to the Gulf through migrations of Bedouins belonging to the Dawāsir tribe (inhabitants of Wādī al-Dawāsir) who lived a sedentary life all along the coasts of the Gulf. But we may see this tradition rather as a group of songs, designated by the very far-reaching title of *Sāmrī*. Consequently, we have today, as in Burckhardt's nineteenth century, a great variety of *Sāmrī* whose specifications depend on the geographical, social, or ethnic origins of the poets and singers. Some of those latter have even created a very modern genre of *Sāmrī* more in tune with urban audiences. These popular songs are called *muṭawwara* ("evolved"). One should accordingly confess that today *Sāmrī* has but a few similarities to the old Arabian tradition, even if we refer to the information going back only as far as the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. Hence the difficulty of analyzing this song in order to underline its specific characteristics. Here again we should distinguish between basic and, as such, invariable elements on the one hand, and changing and variable ones on the other.

One of the fundamental characteristics of *Sāmrī* is its language: this is constant in *Nabaṭī* sung poetry. But still the problem remains as to whether this poetry is based on a quantitative meter as in classical *Qaṣīda*, or on strophic poetry with syllabic meter. It would be tedious and unuseful for this article to go into details about the different views expressed on this problem by contemporary Arab authors. One could summarize by saying that prosodic construction of *Sāmrī* follows two patterns, according to the singing form: one is similar to classical *Qaṣīda* with quantitative meter and uniform rhythm; the other is structured syllabically and composed of two to four strophes that repeat the last verse as refrain. The latter form is illustrated in the following short example:

Shi/rāy/ Yāh/li l/-Ha/wā/ Shi/rāy
Esh/-Shōg/ ᶜAz/zam ᶜA/lā/Ghir/bā/lī
Shi/rāy/ Yāh/li l/-Ha/wā /Shi/rāy

This process of repetition which is typical of *Sāmrī* song as it is

performed today is quite an interesting element of this oral tradition in general. Its function seems obviously to facilitate memorization, but also to give rhythm its predominance and color. This observation could be applied to most rhythmic songs associated with individual or group dances: the poetic text and thematic content seem to have a minor role in this respect. The author of this article, for example, has been struck by the fact that when he asked chief conductors of folk groups to recite the poetic text without melody and rhythm, they could hardly proceed beyond the first verse, although when singing with their groups they could go for hours reciting those verses they memorized easily.[12]

The minor function of the literary text in this song genre has another consequence: the frequent use of short meaningless syllables or onomatopoeia comprising sometimes a complete stanza. Those syllables are repeated by the chorus even when the chief singer introduces new verses, as we notice in this following example of women's *Sāmrī* recorded in Qaṭar:

Yā Lā Lā-Yā Lā Yā Lī	(twice)
Lā Lā Yā Lī	(twice)

Finally, one could consider the fundamental characteristics of the *Sāmrī* as being essentially those of choral song, with a specific collective execution mode and dance movements. That attribution means that it would be hypothetical to classify this genre in fixed or synthesized patterns. In such an evolving field, one should be very careful not to formulate absolute rules or to present as an authoritative synthesis what is essentially changeable. More modestly, we should limit observation and analysis to the samples recorded and studied on their own, but also compare them to other samples so diversified in this area of the Peninsula.

Orality and the Living Magisterium

This approach could be applied to the more general field of oral traditions in the Arab area at large: firstly, we should recognize that the sung poetry of the Peninsula is part of a wider Arab-Islamic heritage; secondly, we should never omit the essence of this heritage, that is, orality based on the living magisterium. In the heart of this orality we find the *Shāᶜir*, at once poet, rhapsodist, singer, and musician, sometimes even composer. He is an integral part of the collective popular spirit and it

[12] According to a Qaṭari television interview given by Muḥammad al-Musulmānī, in "Funūn Shaᶜbiyyā min Qaṭar" ("Folk Arts from Qaṭar," 1983).

matters little if those who contribute to it are well known or not, because the *Shāᶜir* receives this inheritance as a sacred trust from a master who precedes him. Certainly, he may add his own creative and adaptational talent, but only if he does not transgress the oral tradition which was given to him. Thus he will not be allowed to modify the archetypes constituting the essence of sung poetry.

Those archetypes, shaped according to paradigms or schemas transmitted by tradition but based on certain fixed rules, nevertheless give free scope to the *Shāᶜir*'s own adaptation and improvisation. This tension underlines the importance of the living magisterium expressed through relations from master to disciple, the essential channel of transmitting oral traditions to new generations. When one interrogates any popular *Shāᶜir* about his knowledge, he will reply that he inherited it from a father, mother, uncle, aunt, grandfather or grandmother, or simply from an old master, sometimes even from a sort of divine inspiration: "*Min Allāh*" ("From God"), as is often spontaneously said.[13] A *Shāᶜir* may accordingly be as distinguished a transmitter of oral tradition as he is a talented poet or singer. In his turn, he will become an authorized transmitter or master attracting young disciples and a public audience. The consequence will be a kind of selection of the most qualified masters, this hierarchy being ratified by tacit consensus.[14]

As another consequence, oral transmission hardly fits in with any kind of written transcription or musical notation. The major reason is that there is no system of transcription or musical notation able to reproduce adequately the phonetic or morphological particularities of *Nabaṭī* poetry, not to mention the complexity of musical sounds and intervals. Paradoxically, classical Arabic writing used by Arab authors to transcribe folk sung poetry seems much more inadequate than the Latin alphabet itself. The Arabic system, perfectly adapted to the literary language, has no consonants and vowels able to reproduce the most complex sounds of the spoken or colloquial Arabic, mostly Bedouin in the case of sung poetry.[15] Until now, the transliteration system adopted by western Orientalists, going back to the nineteenth century, is a more or less

[13] Muḥammad al-Musulmānī, basing his conclusion on his research in the field, asserts that all poet-singers were previously educated in their art by an old master ("Funūn Shaᶜbiyyā min Qaṭar").

[14] In each town, village or country, the public audience knows its most qualified poets or singers. Elders who die become reference points, renowned masters imitated by their disciples.

[15] The problem of transliterating folk poetry has been lengthily discussed at an international symposium gathered in Doḥa (Qaṭar) and sponsored by the Arab Gulf States Folklore Centre (November 4-8, 1984). A final resolution called for an expert commission to study this problem and give its conclusions.

adequate reproducing method, short, of course, of the new possibilities of sound-recording available through modern technology. This latter should receive priority over all other means of transmission.

The transmission phenomenon has another corollary: the popular sung poetry of the Peninsula and the Gulf Region still remains alive. As such, it plays, or rather until recently has played, a social, cultural, and spiritual role, a basic characteristic of oral traditions in general. One could say, by the way, that this characteristic is often lacking when we consider the folk songs of modern industrialized countries, such as children's and workers' songs; or those of birthday, circumcision, marriage; as well as war-songs, or specific songs by women, religious songs, and so forth. Of course, this essential function, which has remained unchanged for centuries, is disappearing under the impact which modern industrialization created in this area during the oil era. As many economic or social activities have disappeared, the corresponding sung poetry cycles are heading into oblivion, or if still performed, it is mostly through official channels for entertainment, in order to keep alive some old traditions.

Here appears another phenomenon which may be called "transfer." The popular genius is so strongly rooted in the souls of these peoples that the musico-poetical traditions have progressively assumed another function: one of keeping their spirit alive through the link to an old and permanent tradition to avoid losing all the roots threatened by the turmoil of modern technology. Having left divers' boats, cultivated fields, Qur'anic schools, caravans, and *Ghazū* operations, makers or transmitters of those oral traditions sense now an imperative to gather in the *Dūr*—a sort of patio-house—in order to sing and dance, maintaining their folk heritage. On days of festivities such as *Ramaḍān*, *Mawlid*, or *Aḍḥā* feasts, they assemble, for the same purpose, in public places, or at governors' or princes' palaces, singing and dancing for several days and nights. All those having the opportunity to visit this area may enjoy such very colorful gatherings, which continue to stand as living testimony to an ancestral legacy.

Translated from French by the author

Université de Genève

References

Burckhardt 1831 J. L. Burckhardt. *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys*. London: Coburn and Bentley. 2 vols.

Burton 1924 — Richard F. Burton. *A Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El Medinah and Meccah*, 3rd ed. London: G. Bell and Sons.

Dickson 1967 — H. R. P. Dickson. *The Arab of the Dersert*, 4th ed. London: Allen and Unwin.

Honegger 1976 — Marc Honegger, ed. *Sciences de la musique*. Paris: Bordas. 2 vols.

Lecerf and Tresse n.d. — J. Lecerf and R. Tresse. "Les ʿArāḍa de Damas." *Bulletin d'études orientales de l'Institut français de Damas*. 7-8:237-64.

Al-Muʿjam 1960 — *Al Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ*. Cairo.

Palgrave 1865 — William Gifford Palgrave. *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia (1862-63)*. London: Macmillan. 2 vols.

Sowayan 1982 — Saad Abdullah Sowayan. "The Prosodic Relationship of Nabaṭī Poetry to Classical Arabic Poetry." *Journal of Arabic Linguistics*, 8.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 189-212

The Development of Lebanese *Zajal*: Genre, Meter, and Verbal Duel

Adnan Haydar

Few oral poetic traditions have attained the sophistication, formal virtuosity and popularity of Lebanese *zajal*[1] poetry, and fewer traditions have cultivated the art of poetic dueling into a national pastime as the *zajal* poets have done. Even today in war-torn Lebanon more than twenty groups of itinerant poets stage regular contests in various parts of the country and attract thousands of *zajal* aficionados. Despite the presence of many contending political ideologies and religious affiliations, these poets, who span the political and religious strata of Lebanese society, have remained largely impervious to factional strife and political wrangling. Within the medium of verbal dueling, radical statements, political dissent, and social criticism are sanctioned, encouraged, and held up as models for corrective social and political measures. The general sentiment seems to be that anything is fair in the medium of art.

Perhaps one important reason for the continued popularity of Lebanese and other Arab traditions[2] is the diglossic nature of the Arabic language itself. The fact that people in the Arab world use the dialect in most daily routines and reserve the *fuṣḥā* for more formal communications, has, in my opinion, had an important effect on the development of vernacular[3] poetry in the Arab world. As to why the Lebanese poets in particular were able to attain such richness and

[1] For a thorough definition of Lebanese *zajal* poetry, see below.

[2] See, for example, Sowayan 1985 for an account of oral poetry among the Bedouins of Saudi Arabia.

[3] "Vernacular" is used here to designate colloquial language as it is spoken today in the various Arab countries. Vernacular Lebanese shares many characteristics with the dialects spoken in Syria, Jordan, and Palestine.

sophistication in their compositions, it is most likely due to the fact that Lebanese literary critics have attached less of a paradigmatic value to compositions in *fuṣḥā*[4] than have other Arab critics. Many Lebanese *fuṣḥā* poets have tried their hands at *zajal* and several have relinquished *fuṣḥā* altogether in favor of *zajal*.

Indeed, since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the general critical atmosphere has favored serious considerations of literary compositions in the vernacular. Western critics such as Jean Lecerf led the way by highlighting the importance of dialectal studies, and Lebanese critics began to take stock of *zajal* poetics. Today in Lebanon oral poetry has become an important source for M.A. theses, doctoral dissertations, and comparative studies. The early impressionistic and descriptive accounts of *zajal* have recently given way to analytical studies, though methodological problems at times confound the picture and give rise to untenable conclusions.[5]

In what follows, I shall define some of the critical terms to be used in this study, offer an account of the existing scholarship on *zajal*, and comment on its genres and metrical features. Then I shall discuss the origins of the verbal duel, analyze some of the rhetorical strategies used by duelers, and assess the role of improvisation and audience participation. Throughout, I shall relate Lebanese *zajal* to other Arab *zajal* traditions, both ancient and modern.

In its Hispano-Arabic context the term *zajal* describes a strophic form entirely in the vernacular idiom, which bears a close structural relationship to that of the *muwashshaḥa*.[6] In the Lebanese tradition it means primarily oral vernacular poetry in general, a discourse in many forms, composed in or for performance, declaimed or sung to the accompaniment of music. It is also used to characterize a written tradition which attains high literary value and high formal virtuosity in the compositions of famous Lebanese poets writing either exclusively in the vernacular or in both the vernacular and the literary *fuṣḥā*. Critics have only recently begun to assess the influence of *zajal* poetics on major modern Lebanese poets and consequently on the form and content of

[4] *Fuṣḥā* refers both to classical Arabic and modern standard Arabic.

[5] Much of the problem had to do with the critics' lack of discrimination between oral and written poetry. The implications of orality are hardly taken into consideration and analyses of poetic meter rarely account for the important roles of stress and musical meter.

[6] The *muwashshaḥa* (pl. *muwashshaḥāt*) is a strophic poem attributed to al-Andalus (Arab Spain) consisting of several divisions with particular rhyme schemes that differ from author to author and ending with a *kharja*, a concluding *bayt* (or verse), mostly in colloquial diction, often expressing a love theme.

modern Lebanese and Arabic poetry in *fuṣḥā*.[7]

The etymology of *zajal* points clearly to song and music. The verb *zajala* means "to raise the voice in singing, to produce a sweet pleasing melody" (Manẓūr n.d.:II, 13). As a genre of poetry *zajal* is closely associated with *muᶜannā* (or *maᶜannā*), a term predating *zajal* but often used interchangeably with it to designate vernacular Lebanese poetry (*al-shiᶜr al-ᶜāmmī*, *al-shiᶜr al-shaᶜbī*, *al-shiᶜr al-qawmī*, or *al-Lubnānī*) in its entirety. Anīs Frayḥah derives *maᶜannā* from the Syriac root *ᶜannī*,[8] which means "to sing," the term itself being a passive participial form of the root. Others disagree with Frayḥah's etymology, though they still relate the term to Syriac origin[9] despite the fact that its derivation from the second form of the Arabic verb *ᶜanaya* is quite legitimate linguistically. At any rate, the Syriac derivation associates the term *maᶜannā* with singing, while the Arabic emphasizes the semantic meaning of *ᶜannā*: to cause to be emaciated as a result of love.[10] This, in the opinion of Amīn Nakhleh (1945:39), for example, accounts for the preponderance of love themes in early manifestations of Lebanese vernacular poetry. Whatever the case, during the past fifty years *zajal* has replaced *maᶜannā* as the term for this poetry. *Maᶜannā* has reverted to the designation of a particular subgenre and a particular meter (Nakhleh 1945:37-39) used extensively, though not exclusively, in verbal duels, while *zajal* seems to have acquired, at least until the late 1940's in the little-known but numerous compositions of Lebanese immigrants in the United States,[11] the name of a specific meter that differentiated it from *maᶜannā* and other meters.

The poet of *zajal* is called *zajjāl*, *qawwāl*, or *shāᶜir zajal*. While the three terms are often used interchangeably, there are clear and basic

---

[7] For a good account of the use of vernacular diction in modern Arabic poetry, see al-Jayyūsī 1977:II, 663-65 and 671-72.

[8] See Whaybeh 1952:63, where the author quotes from a letter sent to him by Frayḥah. Also see Frayḥah 1947:173 and 1957:273. Note that *ᶜannī* derives from the proto-Semitic *ghanaya*, "to sing."

[9] "The term *maᶜannā* is derived from the Syriac word *maᶜanīshū* (or song)" (Whaybeh l952:63, where he quotes from a letter dated December 28, 1950, sent to him by ᶜIsā Iskandar al-Maᶜlūf). Syriac experts see this etymology as unlikely, and instead argue for the possible derivation of *maᶜannā* from the Syriac word *maᶜnīthā*, meaning chant or antiphon. See Brockelmann 1928:533.

[10] See ᶜAwwād 1930:441, quoting an unpublished book manuscript by ᶜIsā Iskandar al-Maᶜlūf, *Nayl al-mutamannā fī fann al-maᶜannā*.

[11] See, for example, Kfarkaddī 1942:II, 71,105,115,121 et seq.

differences among their meanings. *Zajjāl* is strictly speaking a composer of *zajal* who may or may not be capable of improvisation or extemporization, and who may or may not attain in his compositions a level of literary excellence to merit the name of a *shāᶜir* (or poet). Like the *qawwāl*, the *zajjāl'*s main function is *iṣābat al-maᶜnā*, a phrase best translated as "doing justice to the meaning" or "treating a subject in the most efficient way possible in order to convey an intended message." The emphasis in the word *qawwāl* is on *qawl*, i.e., "uttering, declaiming, or singing," on improvisation or extemporization in particular social functions. The *qawwāl* is also referred to as *ibn al-kār* ("man of the trade"), *ibn al-fann* ("master of the art"), or *ibn al-dhakā* ("*bel-esprit*"),[12] all of which are clearly value-laden terms. Mostly uneducated, though in many cases literate, the *qawwāls* are highly respected by the people of their villages and towns and are sought out to recite *zajals* on religious holidays, political celebrations, births, christenings, marriages, and funerals. Those whose fame reaches beyond their immediate region are called upon to duel other *qawwāls* or suffer loss of prestige among their critical public.[13] The term *shāᶜir zajal* is principally reserved for the written vernacular which in the hands of poets such as Michel Ṭrād, William Ṣaᶜb, and Asᶜad Sābā has preserved this predominantly oral tradition in literary masterpieces. *Shāᶜir* is not, however, exclusively the provenance of the written vernacular, for the better *qawwāls* and *zajjāls* have, while observing their main function of *iṣābat al-maᶜnā*, produced highly sophisticated poetry.

The most quoted account of *zajal* poetry is Nakhleh's introduction to *Maᶜannā Rashīd Nakhleh* (1945) Both Amīn and his father Rashīd were accomplished *fuṣḥā* poets, the latter having totally abandoned *fuṣḥā* poetry in favor of *zajal* and earned himself the title of "Prince of *Maᶜannā*," *Amīr al-Maᶜannā*, for the many *zajal* forms that he invented. This introduction makes it clear that the history of the various Arabic *zajal* traditions is fragmentary, usually consisting of classifications based on subject matter and form. Nowhere in the previous scholarship he cites is an attempt made to attribute to poetic meter or poetic structure a semantic value or a role in the classifications. An account of some of these is in order here.

Al-Muḥibbī (1873:I, 108), for example, divides vernacular poetry into five *aqsām* (parts or divisions), one of which is termed *zajal* because it treats of *ghazal* (love poetry), uses flower and wine imagery, and dwells on personal emotions. The other four are *balīq*, which employs jests and licentious topics; *ḥamāq*, which uses satire and jokes; *muzaylij*, which

[12] Cf. Nakhleh 1945:39 and Lecerf 1932:219.

[13] On the prestige accorded to the *qawwāls* and the critical audience involved in verbal duels, see Lecerf 1932:219-20 and Frayḥah 1957:274-77.

mixes *fuṣḥā* with colloquialism; and *mukaffir*, which contains aphorisms and sermons (*idem*). Clearly, the classification here depends totally on content. Al-Ibshīhī (n.d.:II, 267 et seq.), on the other hand, lists seven *funūn* (genres; constituent arts?): *al-shiᶜr al-qarīḍ* (*fuṣḥā* poetry), *al-muwashshaḥ*, *al-dūbayt*,[14] *al-zajal*, *al–mawāliyyāt*,[15] *al-kān wa kān*,[16] and *al-qūmā*,[17] the last four of which are in the vernacular idiom. In addition, he recognizes *al-ḥaramāq* and *al-mūsījān* which he does not define. Whether these vernacular genres are characterized by particular metrical configurations or are differentiated according to form and content is not made clear. In a similar vein, Ṣafiyy al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (n.d.:5) speaks of four *funūn* without much elaboration. Only Ibn Khaldūn (1958:III, 460) views *zajal* as a method of composition which, according to him, predates the *muwashshaḥ* and uses the vernacular in all the fifteen Khalilian meters. Though admitting that these vernacular genres have specific *awzān* (metrical forms), most of the critics are content to leave it at that or specify that most of these *awzān* are different from those used by the Arabs in *fuṣḥā* poetry. Even those who see a close relationship between vernacular and *fuṣḥā* meters merely gloss over the fact or avoid close analysis.

The situation is not much different with Amīn Nakhleh. Despite his thoroughness, he too avoids metrical analysis and involves the reader in a terminological jungle erasing the distinction between *zajal* structures and *zajal* meters. According to him, Lebanese *zajal*, "one of the many extant old *zajal* traditions," *farᶜun min tilka al-ṭarā'iq al-qadīma*, is none other than Lebanese *maᶜannā* (1945:44). Having said that, he divides *maᶜannā* into four *anwāᶜ* (kinds, genres?): *al-maṭlaᶜ* (lit., the opening), also called *al-maᶜannā al-ᶜādī* (the usual *maᶜannā*); *al-badālī* (the alternate one) which differs from *al-maṭlaᶜ* in meter; *al-muwashshaḥ*, which again differs in meter from *al-maṭlaᶜ,* and *al-qaṣīd* (the ode?), which employs either the

[14] *Al-Dūbayt* consists of two verses (four hemistichs) with the rhyme scheme aaba. See al-Ibshīhī n.d.:II, 261.

[15] For an etymology of *mawāliyā* (pl. *mawāliyyāt*) see Cachia 1977.

[16] See al-Ibshīhī n.d. for examples of this genre. Also see al-Muḥibbī 1873:I, 108-110. The name *Al-kān wa kān* suggests that the content of poems in this genre relate an anecdote, or give a sermon. In other words, a *kān wa kān* poem relates what was (or *mā kān*). See Whaybeh 1952:61.

[17] It is said that al-qūmā derived its name from the call of Baghdādī singers: "Qūmā li nasḥur qūmā." ("Rise and let us have a light meal before daybreak"). The reference is to *al-saḥūr* (the light meal before daybreak) during the fasting month of Ramaḍān. See al-Muḥibbī 1873:I, 108.

wāfir meter of al-Khalīl (presumably without modification), or the meter of *al-maṭlaᶜ*, or that of *al-badālī*. What the meters of *al-maṭlaᶜ* and *al-badālī* are, we are not told. Nakhleh instead devotes his effort to the various rhyme patterns in which each of the four *anwāᶜ* appears in the written traditions, especially in the *dīwān* of Rashīd Nakhleh, who is credited with the invention of most of these patterns (see, for example, *ibid*.:45-51). Only one meter, *al-wāfir*, is spelled out and that with a specific reference to *al-badālī* from *Maᶜannā Rashīd Nakhleh*.

Al-zajal, he continues, consists of six *funūn*: *al-muhmal* (which is totally without diacritical marks), *al-marṣūd* (in which the first hemistich starts with a particular obligatory letter), *al-mujazzam* (where every line in the successive stanzas rhymes with the others, except for the last line whose rhyme is a *rujūᶜ* or "return" to the rhyme of the opening line or lines), and, finally, *al-alifiyyāt* (in which the first letter of every line follows the order of the Arabic alphabet; see Whaybeh 1952:72). In this context, the word *funūn* means something totally different from genre as al-Ibshīhī's usage indicates. It describes, rather, a written style characterized by *badīᶜ* (figurative language), formal idiosyncrasies, and verbal virtuosity.

Nakhleh then identifies several methods, *ᶜiddat ṭarā'iq* (1945:52). The first one of these is *al-qarrādī*[18] (also pronounced *al-qirrādī*), which in turn subsumes a number of *funūn* such as *karj-ḥajal* (the gait of partridge), *mashy al-sitt* (the gait of ladies), *daqq al-miṭraqah* (the pounding of the hammer), *al-murabbaᶜ* (the quatrain), *al-mijwiz* (the couplet), *naqlet al-ᶜarūs* (the movement of the young bride), *al-shūfāī* (related to the Shūf area in Lebanon), *al-ᶜādī*, *al-muwashshaḥ*, *al-mukhammas al-mardūd*,[19] *al-muhmal*, and *al-munaqqaṭ* (in which each letter is dotted with diacritics). These *funūn*, this time around, suggest not only rhyme patterns and verbal tricks, but also styles of oral delivery and singing, as is made quite clear by the etymology of the first four. Moreover, among the *ṭarā'iq* of *zajal*, Nakhleh lists four kinds of *ḥidā*[20] with various rhyme patterns: *al-ḥawrabeh* or *al-hawbarah*, a term derived from the refrain of a

[18] Amīn Nakhleh calls it *al-qurrādī*, but he could be alone among *zajal* critics. *Qarrādī* and *qirrādī* are used interchangeably in Lebanon today.

[19] This refers to one of the main rhyme schemes of *qarrādī*. *Al-Mukhammas al-mardūd* usually consists of four-line stanzas (8 hemistichs) that rhyme abababac, this last rhyme being used throughout the poem. At times a *kharja* is added to the four lines and the rhyme scheme changes to abababadc, "d" being an independent rhyme in every one of the stanzas in the poem. See Nakhleh 1945:54. Note that Whaybeh (1952:73-74) gives an example of *mardūd* which differs significantly from that of Nakhleh. His example consists of a *maṭlaᶜ* and a *dawr* that rhyme as follows: *maṭlaᶜ*, abab; *dawr*, cdcdcdcb.

[20] For a definition of *ḥidā*, see Nakhleh 1945:56-57.

ḥawrabeh poem (*ibid*.:57-58); *al-zalāghīṭ* or *al-zaghālīd*, a form specifically used in wedding celebrations; *al-nadb* (or elegiac verse); and *jalwet al-ᶜarūs*, a strophic composition sung or recited by women when welcoming a new bride.

In addition to these *anwāᶜ*, *funūn*, and *ṭārā'iq*, Nakhleh (*ibid*.:60) lists what he terms *ṭarā'iq ᶜāmmīyah qadīma* (or old vernacular methods): *ᶜatābā*, *mījanā*, and *abū al-zuluf*, which he treats under *bāb al-aghānī*, or sung compositions, and in which, according to him, *naẓm* (ordered beat) rather than *nagham* (melody) plays the central role. Also included under Lebanese *zajal* is *al-shrūqī* (or *al-shurūqī*), known too as *al-qaṣīd al-badawī* (the bedouin *qaṣīd*), and *al-mawwāl al-Baghdādī*" (*ibid*.:65-66), two *ṭarā'iq*, one may surmise, which are still in vogue.

Reading Nakhleh's introduction leaves one with the strong impression that Lebanese *zajal* is extremely rich in form and structure, but little is said of whether these *ṭarā'iq*, *funūn*, *anwāᶜ*, and *aqsām* are further distinguished in terms of meter or whether meter plays any significant role at all. The arbitrary identification of only some genres with music and singing and the apparent exclusion of other genres, as we shall see, gives an imperfect picture of the reality of Lebanese *zajal*.

The space that Nakhleh allows for meter in his introduction is a mere paragraph stating categorically that

> Lebanese vernacular poetry in its various *ṭarā'iq* is predicated upon an aural rhythm, not upon restricted feet. It [i.e. *zajal*] is in its rhythm (*wazn*), in the articulation of sound, the position of vowels (*ḥarakāt*), the structures of words and phrases (*tarākīb al-alfāẓ*), their pronunciation and writing [*sic*], dependent on melody (*nagham*). *Some* [my emphasis] of its melodies (or rhythms) may be related to the Khalilian meters. (*ibid*.:67-68)

Important and authoritative as this statement is, it tells us precious little about *zajal* meters and seems to contradict Nakhleh's statements concerning the partial role of music. Moreover, we are not told which "melodies may be related to the Khalilian meters." The rest of his account of meter consists simply of quoted statements by Lebanese critics taken at face value, without discussion.

Other critics are no less circumspect. In *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* under the root *ᶜanaya,* al-Bustānī states that *zajal* poets "depend mostly on rhyme such that they do not care for the appropriateness of language or meter" (1870:II, 1489). This opinion is shared by others. Dozy, for example, claims that *zajal* composition requires "unity of rhyme, not unity of meter, and that it [*zajal*] has a number of meters" (1967:I, 581). Zaydān (1957:IV, 206) sees a relationship between some meters of *zajal* and those of al-Khalīl, but others bear no relationship at all to the known meters in *fuṣḥā*. Zaydān agrees with al-Ḥūrānī (1906:XLI, 602-4) that the *rajaz*,

wāfir, and *al-sarīᶜ* are the only Khalilian meters found in Lebanese *zajal*. Al-Ḥūrānī, however, qualifies his statement by observing that these three meters undergo changes which are not permissible in *fuṣḥā* poetry.

Influenced by al-Ḥūrānī, whom he cites, Zaydān then states more emphatically that "the vernacular meters which have no counterpart in *fuṣḥā* meters are most probably taken from Syriac metrics" (*ibid*.:603). This view has several proponents such as ᶜAbbūd (1968:103-12) and Frayḥah (1973:173), who see *qarrādī*, in particular, as a development from a Syriac seven-syllable meter used exclusively in church services by the early Maronite church fathers, first in Syriac, then in *Karshūnī*[21] and then in Arabic.[22] Voicing a similar opinion, ᶜAwwād, in a frequently quoted essay entitled "al-Shiᶜr al-ᶜāmmī," sees all of *maᶜannā* as scanning according to the *sarīᶜ*, *rajaz*, and *wāfir* meters, excluding *qarrādī*, which he believes has unlimited meters that vary with the different forms of the genre.

The existence of two metrical systems in Lebanese *zajal* is suggested by Lecerf in his important "Littérature dialectale et renaissance arabe moderne" (1932:239), a lengthy historical bibliographical survey which also devotes several pages to the genres and meters of Lebanese *zajal*. Lecerf distinguishes two genres: "les genres chantés" and "les genres dits," listing under the former the *mawwāl*, *ᶜatābā*, *mījanā*, *dalᶜūnā*, and *shurūqī*, and under the latter *qaṣīd*, *maṭlaᶜ* (*maᶜannā*), *qarrādī*, and *jannāz* (*ibid*.:234-37), with a short definition of each one of them.[23] Only *qarrādī* is described metrically: "It is composed of seven long syllables in principle but may admit a supplementary short syllable which does not count in the measure" (1932:237). As for the metrical systems of *zajal*, Lecerf has the following to say, despite, as he puts it, "the difficulties of the subject" (239):

> Le point le plus original de la prosodie libanaise est l'existence apparante de deux systèmes aussi différents que le vers "mesuré" (*mawzūn*), dont le rythme repose sur la quantité des syllabes, et le vers à nombre fixe de syllabes. Nous avons dit que ce dernier rythme est celui du *qarrādī*. Le problème qui se pose est d'abord celui de la réalité de ce double système. En second lieu vient celui de son origine, et de la possibilité d'une influence de la poésie syriaque. Il est très remarquable en effet que le vers "nombré" (non-mesuré), de sept syllabes soit précisément celui des hymnes de saint

[21] *Karshūnī* is the term used for Lebanese *zajal* compositions written in the Syriac script. See al-Nūr 1966:19-20.

[22] Bishop Jibrā'īl al-Qilāᶜī is credited with the first serious *zajal* poems in the Lebanese dialect. See cAbbūd 1968:78-81.

[23] The definitions leave out questions of meters and concentrate instead on rhyme schemes and a brief account of content.

Ephrem.

Lecerf identifies "Le vers mesuré" with *maᶜannā*, citing the aforementioned statements of al-Ḥūrānī, Zaydān, and ᶜAwwād, among others, as clear indication of the workings of a quantitative system. He himself does not offer any examples, although he senses that "le principe paraît indiscutable"(237), and that despite the difficulty of scanning, as soon as the quantity of syllables enters the picture, one must end up with something resembling the metrics of al-Khalīl. The second system, "le vers à nombre fixe de syllabes," is that of *qarrādī*, which Lecerf insists is composed of seven syllables and resembles the verse used in the hymns of Saint Ephram or Ephraem. A question poses itself here: Is *qarrādī* the only meter in this system? If it is, then it contradicts the available data on *zajal* where poems of four, five, six, seven, eight, or more syllables are found. If, on the other hand, *qarrādī* is the general name of a syllabic system composed of more than one meter, then Lecerf does not mention these. It is remarkable that Lecerf cites an old *qarrādiyya* which according to his own reading consists of an unequal number of syllables, and yet he blames such inconsistency on uncertainty in the pronunciation of the lines. He also cites examples of *dalᶜūnā*[24] to which other critics attribute a five-syllable scansion (for example, al-Nūr 1966:106), but he neither clearly treats it as part of his second system nor indicates whether it is quantitatively scanned. Interestingly enough, he does mention the possible role of accent in his citing of Dalmann,[25] though he leaves his position unclear, and opts instead for number of syllables as the most important formal characteristic of *qarrādī*.

There is no question that Lecerf has touched on the problems involved in scanning *zajal*, that he has been conscious of dialectal problems, and that he has observed the presence of two metrical systems, but, by and large, his study rests on the authority of preceding critics and on impressions rarely supported by metrical analysis. He is more concerned with the forms of *zajal* and its history, development, and content.

Two more critics, Whaybeh (see above, note 8) and al-Nūr (1966:106), contribute little substance to the preceding scholarship. Both repeat most of the arguments of the other critics, but both are perhaps more emphatic than most about the characteristics of *zajal* meters. Whaybeh categorically posits a simple syllabic basis for these meters, while al-Nūr opts for the quantitative system of *fuṣḥā* with slight modifications. Yet the *qarrādī* presents the main problem for al-Nūr, and, as we have

[24] *Ibid*:245. "Dalᶜūnā" is a popular genre in Lebanese *zajal* sung to the refrain ᶜalā dalᶜūnā / ᶜalā dalᶜūnā.

[25] The reference is to Dalmann 1901. See Lecerf 1932:240.

seen, to most of the critics before him. "Beaucoup d'éléments," he writes (*idem*), "font croire que le *qarrādī* échappe au principe général des mètres quantitatifs adoptés en dialectes." These "éléments" are not enumerated, but one main reason emerges from his ensuing argument. Because the syllabic meters lend themselves more than the quantitative meters to "coupures, omissions et additions," and because all the syllables in *qarrādī* are long, it is most likely, he says, that we are dealing with a variety of *al-khabab* meter. Although he does admit the frequent presence of short syllables in *qarrādī*, he dismisses their importance because, as he puts it, they are necessarily elongated "pour être assimilées aux longues" (*idem*). While my research seems to support al-Nūr's observation concerning the elongation of one or more short syllables, there is also the more important observation that *qarrādī* may contain more than seven syllables, be they long or short, and that such an occurrence will not affect the meter. The principle involved here concerns a pattern of stress which levels out the effect of uneven numbers of syllables, and a musical meter superimposed upon the poetic one. The possibility that *al-khabab* may be the meter of *qarrādī* notwithstanding, the reasons for that seem to be in the province of music, not metrics. I shall return to this important point later on.

It seems to me that most of these contradictory statements on *zajal* metrics result from the critics' inability to admit stress and music into their studies. Without exception, all the genres of Lebanese *zajal* are either declaimed or sung, which clearly suggests to me that a consideration of poetic stress and musical meter is essential for the proper description of the formal metrical characteristics of these genres.[26] In a completed, soon to be published manuscript on *zajal* metrics, I prepared close to sixty musical transcriptions of the known genres of Lebanese *zajal*,[27] studied the relationship of poetic stress to musical accents, and arrived at a convincing proof of the quantitative tendency of some meters and the stress-syllabic basis of others. There is no room here to study these transcriptions, but some conclusions might be in order.

Careful analysis of the descriptive musical notations mentioned above showed that the poets of *zajal* render their lines in two musical styles, one characterized by a free rhythm, the other by a regularly rhythmed underlay. They divide, in other words, along the two traditional styles of Arabic music: *nathr al-naghamāt* and *naẓm al-naghamāt*. The

[26] The importance of music in a sung poetic tradition can hardly be overemphasized. Without a full analysis of musical rhythm and poetic stress, metrical description remains tentative at best. For an excellent account of poetic stress in *fuṣḥā* poetry see Dīb 1974.

[27] The musical transcriptions were prepared for this study by the two musicologists Lois Ibsen Fārūqī and Israel Katz.

former (literally, "musical prose") refers to "a vocal or instrumental performance without regularly recurring rhythmic patterns." The latter, or "ordering of tones," defines a musical style based on a "traditional melody" and characterized by regular beats (Fārūqī 1981:233, 239).

The *zajal* meters used in the *nathr* style are mostly those of genres which require sophisticated arguments (as in verbal duels) or formal statements about social and political occasions, as well as formal *nasībs* (amatory preludes), panegyrics, satirical sketches, boasting, elegiac verse, and other sorts of occasional poems. In brief, longer poems with longer meters concerned with various degrees of *iṣābat al-maᶜnā* seem to be associated closely with the *nathr* style, and most of their meters bear close resemblance to those of *fuṣḥā* poetry, with frequent licenses for which al-Khalīl's system cannot account. Informal, lighter, and shorter poems, such as jokes, some popular songs, counting rhymes (*ᶜaddiyyāt*), and verbal tricks, abound in the *naẓm* style, though neither style is differentiated exclusively in terms of genre.

As might be expected, stress in *maᶜannā* (and all genres rendered in the *nathr* style) is irregular, since the poet freely manipulates it to accord with semantic considerations. Of course it may, at times, coincide with an underlying metrical stress, but it is neither mechanical nor characterized by regularity. Its orientation is towards the message, because the content (i.e., poetry) is more important than the formal structure (i.e., music). Conversely, the meters rendered in *naẓm*, such as *qarrādī*, have a strict rhythmic pattern imposed by a musical meter. While singing *qarrādī*, the poet is in effect producing a neutral realization of the following trochaic pattern:

The appearance of short syllables, as we shall see momentarily, is not infrequent in *qarrādī*, and they always count in the measure.

The scansion of the following stanza from a well-known *Afrāmiyya*,[28] a modern version in both *fuṣḥā* and Syriac, illustrates the adaptation that the poetic meter goes through when made to fit the musical meter:

1) Yā ṣāliḥan abdā li-l-wujūd
/ˊ_ _u/ˊ_ _/ˊ_ _ u/ˊo//[29]
(O virtuous one, who has made manifest to the world)

[28] The term "*Afrāmiyyah*" (pl. *Aframiyyāt*) refers to a Maronite homily or hymn composed after the poetic meter introduced in Syriac by the famous fourth-century St. Ephram (Ephraem).

[29] The symbol (_o) designates an extra-long syllable.

2) Min lā shay'in kulla mawjūd
/´_ _/´ _ /´u _/ ´o/
(From naught all that exists)

3) Wa aqāma li khidmati-hi junūd
/u´ u _/úu _ / ú u u u/´o//
(And put hosts at his service)

4) Min rūḥin wa jismin maḥdūd
/´ _/´ u _ / ´ _/´o/
(Spirit and defined body [mortal body?])

5) [S] Sārūfīn wi-l-kārūbīn
/´ _/´ _ /´ _/´o//
(The Seraphin and the Cherubim)

6) Wa-l-jullās wa sādāt-un-naᶜīm
/´ _/´o u _/´ _ u/_´o/
(And the crowds (lit. participants) and the blessed ones [in paradise?])

7) Wa maṣāf-un-nār bit-tanghīm
/ú u_ /´_ _o/_ ´ _ / ´o//
(And those in the fire [of hell], with tunes [and songs])

8) Yumajjidūna-hū ᶜan ḥubbin ḥamim
/ú _ u_u/u´ _ /´_ _ ū/o/
(Glorify Him out of earnest love)

9) Ābū wibruw–rūḥ qudshū
/´ _ /´ _ /´ _/ ´//
(Father and Son and Holy Spirit)

10) Hā dā lū hū shā rī rū
/´ _ /´ _ /´ _/´/
(One everlasting God)

The number of syllables differs from one hemistich to another. There are 9 in the first, 8 in the second, 11 in the third, and 8, 7, 9, 8, 11, 7, and 7 in the rest of them. Only three hemistichs—5, 9, and 10—have the number and quantity of syllables (7 long) that characterize modern *qarrādī*. The stress pattern makes it clear that stresses fall on long syllables (´_), on the first of two short syllables (ú u), the second of two shorts (u ú), or on a short syllable followed by a long (ú _) as in hemistich number 8. When the lines are sung, the musical rhythm and time duration are the same in all the hemistichs. The division into feet is determined by stress boundary, in all cases molding poetic quantity to obtain equal beat intervals. We could speak of *qarrādī*, therefore, as a stress-based meter with uniform quantity.

In order to prove that syllable number is not a formal characteristic

of *qarrādī*, I made spectrograms of this *Afrāmiyyah*, using a sona-graph, 7029A, which was run at a 40- to 4000-hertz scale. It recorded slightly under five seconds of speech at one time. A calibration tone which had nominally 200-millisecond duration and which measured a 1/2 inch on the spectrogram was used. After deciding where each hemistich began (the onset of the nasal resonance interval) and where its closure was, every one of the hemistichs turned out to have the exact duration of 3.2 seconds despite the significant difference in the number of syllables.

The last two hemistichs, which are transliterations of a Syriac line, are like modern *qarrādī* characterized by much more syllabic stability. This is so because Syriac exhibits the same erosion of inflections and internal voweling as does the Lebanese dialect. One conclusion is clear. The trend in *qarrādī* has been towards more syllabic uniformity as its modern manifestations clearly suggest. The early translations of the *Afrāmiyyāt*—with their mixture of *fuṣḥā* and dialect—have, in the course of the development of the genre, given way to pure dialect and consequently to poetic features influenced by the morphology and the syntax of the dialect. Again there is no room here to discuss the metrical characteristics of the other genres, but one point is manifest: musical meter and musical accent are essential for the proper description of *zajal* metrics.

*****

There is a great deal of conjecture over the history of Arabic vernacular poetry in general, and Lebanese *zajal* in particular. Most critics concur that the first important manifestations of vernacular poetry were in Arab Spain in the late twelfth century (cf. Khaldūn 1958:454-80 and Nakhleh 1945:16-32), though a number of historians, philologists, and critics trace the beginnings of this poetry to pre-Islamic and early Islamic times (see Nakhleh 1945:16-26). In the Lebanese context, there seems to be a general consensus that the early *zajal* prototypes first appeared in the writings of the Maronite church fathers, who were directly influenced by Syriac liturgical material (see, for example, Nakhleh 1945:37-44 and ᶜAbbūd 1968:78-86). The early church fathers, who were versed in Aramaic, deemed it necessary to translate Syriac hymns into the dialect of the faithful in Lebanon, retaining as they did many of the original Syriac metrical features of these hymns (ᶜAbbūd 1968:77-86). There is ample evidence to suggest that this reconstruction is partly true, since the absolute majority of these hymns are in the *qarrādī* meter which has a clear musical basis. It is equally true, however, that the secular poets (and indeed some of the church fathers) had, in addition to using the *qarrādī* meter, produced a large number of poems in quantitatively based meters, quite similar to

the meters of *fuṣḥā*. In my opinion, this suggests quite plausibly that the quantitative metrical compositions had *fuṣḥā* metrics as their inspiration. Formal considerations, such as rhyme schemes, nomenclature, and the use of homonyms in *ᶜatābā* and *mījanā*[30] point to direct influence from the Arabic *fuṣḥā* tradition. How far back all of this goes is not certain. What is clear, however, is that the first recorded *zajal* poem dates back to 1289, the year of the destruction of Tripoli, Lebanon, by the Mamluks.[31] After that date, most of the manuscripts record the hymns of the early Maronite fathers from the early part of the fifteenth century until late in the seventeenth century. From then on, Lebanese *zajal* became part of Lebanese folk culture. By the early part of the twentieth century its idiom changed slowly from a mixture of dialect and *fuṣḥā* to pure dialect.[32]

It is in the Lebanese mountains that the major developments in *zajal* have taken place. Besides its aesthetic value, *zajal* has filled an important entertainment vacuum in villages, where in the evenings every house becomes a meeting place for the hard-working peasants, their families, and friends (ᶜAwwād 1930:501-4). During the winter especially, people gather around a brazier placed in the center of the living room, drinking coffee and eating dried fruits. The evening starts with well-known songs in the vernacular in which everyone participates. Part of the time is spent listening to a raconteur reciting and singing parts of a story from Lebanese or Arab folklore. The audience may then assume the various roles of the story's characters, adding new anecdotes and embellishments. On more formal occasions, such as weddings, births, christenings, and saints' holidays, the meetings take place in the homes of the rich, the village club, or the churchyard. One or more *qawwāls* are invited to the celebration, which soon becomes a *muḥāwarah* (disputation, dialogue, argumentation) in verse between the *qawwāls* themselves or between them and some of the guests. The host then rewards the winners with money or presents (*ibid.*:501).

The most fertile ground for the verbal duel is the occasion of a saint's day. The *qawwāls* and *zajjāls* travel from village to village, seeking celebrations of these holidays, accompanied by a group of their supporters called *al-raddādah* or the chorus. Besides giving the poet the support and encouragement he needs while dueling, the chorus fulfills the important

[30] For a complete definition of *ᶜataābā* and *mījanā*, see Whaybeh 1952:87, Nakhleh 1945:60-62, and al-Nūr 1966:103-4.

[31] The poem is introduced and printed in its entirety in Whaybeh 1952:131-32.

[32] For a complete account of the successful attempts by Lebanese critics and poets to rid the Lebanese *zajal* dialect of *fuṣḥā* words and desinential inflections, see al-Nūr 1966:81-87.

function of repeating particular lines in the duel, first in order to remind the poet of the musical meter from which he might have strayed and secondly to give the poet time to improvise the lines that follow.

If two *qawwāls* are present, the audience divides into two groups, each group supporting one of them. The older *qawwāl* starts first by lifting the *daff* (tambourine) and asking for *al-dastūr* (the permission of the audience). He starts by singing on a topic of his own choice which he addresses to the other *qawwāl*. He may start with a riddle, which he dares his opponent to solve in verse; he may challenge him to debate a political or social issue, or may start with *muṭāyabah* (banter, joke, teasing or friendly remark). The opponent must respond in kind, often with *mask al-ḥarf* or sticking to the same meter and the same rhyme. If he is unable to solve the riddle, or emulate the meter and the rhyme, he must apologize in verse or else lose the contest. Neither poet is permitted to plagiarize verses from the tradition or repeat any verses that he might have composed in previous contests; all lines should be improvised on the spot. In most cases a judge who is a *qawwāl* himself or is versed in *zajal* is chosen by the audience to evaluate the duelers and announce the winner (*ibid.*:502).

Early in this century the verbal duel witnessed new and exciting developments. Eventually several poets pooled their resources and traveled around the countryside publicizing their new group or *jawqa*. When invited to a social function, they would sit around a table and praise their host, with one *daff* changing hands as each poet recited his praise. They would then take up a particular subject (often political or social) and duel among themselves. By the the late 1930's and early 1940's, the *jawqa* became more defined; it evolved into an institution, four poets in all. Two of them would band together against the other two and duel over an opposition (day and night, war and peace, freedom and imprisonment, etc.) which either they or someone from the audience would suggest. The *raddādah* would sit behind the *jawqa*, waiting for their cues to sing along with each of the duelers.

Recently a further development has taken place. The poets of one *jawqa* now duel with the poets of another—four against four, four verbal duels in all—and the reputation of each *jawqa* depends on the performance of its members. A typical *mubārāt* (or contest) attracts ten to twenty thousand people. In these contests the duelers follow a prescribed order of improvisation, employing several of the many *zajal* genres that are well-known to the audience. The opening of the duel is a *qaṣīd* (or ode) which the leaders of the two groups recite, one at a time. Part of the *qaṣīd* is a poem in praise of the country, the host, and the audience. Having curried favor with their audience, they then boast about the members of their group and dare their opponents into a duel. At this point the audience is asked to suggest a topic for the duel, which is usually in the form of an

opposition. (At times, the topic is given in advance to the groups by the duel's organizers.) All together four topics (oppositions) are then treated by eight poets, four from each group. This part of the duel employs *maᶜannā*, a different meter from that of the opening *qaṣīd*, and while the *raddādah* are not involved during the singing of the opening *qaṣīd*, they play an important role in the duel proper. At the end of every *maᶜannā* stanza, the *raddādah* come in, pick up the last hemistich, and sing it twice or more, the frequency of repetition being dependent on whether or not the poet is ready to answer his opponent. If the poet takes too long to prepare his answer, the audience will signal their displeasure by hissing or shouting. Since audience reaction is important to the progress of the whole duel, the poets may change the meter of their duels whenever they sense the slightest boredom. When this happens, the meter used is that of *qarrādī*, which, as we have seen above, is a light musical meter characterized by strict rhythm. Also out of deference for the feeling of the audience, the poets may use formulas which the listeners know well, thereby inviting their direct participation. After all the poets are given a chance to duel, the leaders of the groups recite a love or patriotic poem, each in the meter of the opening *qaṣīd*. The contest ends after three or four hours, and both groups are declared winners by their supporters.

I have been describing the kind of highly stylized duel known to the practitioners of *zajal* as *jafā* (harshness, enmity, aversion), which is predicated upon highlighting one's own logic and belittling that of one's opponent. Another kind of duel has little to do with argumentation and disputation; instead the poets display their knowledge of verbal tricks, difficult rhymes, and historical and literary allusions. In this form of contest the poets demonstrate their ability to produce lines (usually in *qarrādī*) in which none or all of the letters appear with diacritics, or lines in which the first word of each line follows the order of the Arabic alphabet, or other such verbal tricks, of which one source alone records more than fifty (al-Wādī n.d.:V, 15-25). As might be expected, the norm here is memorization rather than improvisation. Finally, another favorite duel is the *ᶜatābā* duel, which involves the use of homonyms and a knowledge of *tatlīt*.[33] This form is concerned less with a uniform subject than with the poet's ability to draw upon his knowledge of vocabulary.

[33] *Tatlīt* derives from the second form of the verb *thallatha* (to make "threesomes"). In *ᶜatābā* and *mījānā*, the term refers to the use of three homonyms in the first three hemistichs of the *ᶜatābā* or *mījānā* verse. It is worth noting that this verbal trick most probably developed from an old genre of *fuṣḥā* poetry known as the *muthallathāt*. The most famous of *muthallathāt* is *Muthallathāt Quṭrub*, published and edited by Edvardus Vilmar in 1856. This is a critical edition in Latin which discusses, among other things, the meter and form of the *muthallathāt*. The end-rhyme in the last hemistich of each *bayt* is the same as the most popular rhyme used in *ᶜatābā*.

Each *bayt* of *ᶜatābā* is composed of four hemistichs, the first three of which end with the same word, which itself yields a different contextual meaning from the other two. The fourth hemistich then ends with a word rhyming with "*ār*" or "*āb*" (see Nakhleh 1945:60-62).

*****

The five stanzas that follow are from the famous *zajal* contest which took place in 1971 in Dayr al-Qalᶜa, Bayt Mirī, Lebanon between the *jawqa* of Joseph al-Hāshim (pen name, Zaghlūl al-Damūr) and the *jawqa* of Khalīl Rūkuz, headed by the famous poet, Mūsā Zghayb.[34] The number of people who attended the contest was estimated at more than thirty thousand (Ziadeh n.d.:8). The first duel on "innocence and guilt" was between Edward Ḥarb from Zaghlūl's group and Buṭrus Dīb from Mūsā Zghayb's group; thus the allusion in the first stanza below to the preceding duel.

Jiryis Bustānī:

Rest at ease; we are done with (the subject of) the innocent and the guilty.
Now the time has come for important discourse.
O Bayt Mirī, get drunk with my songs;
You are my ᶜAnjar[35] after the days of (Prince) Fakhr al-Dīn.[36]
Zaghlūl, if you want to ransom the souls of your friends,
Do not send to my pulpit an untried youth.
In the former contest I did not mince my words,
And I showed great compassion to all those who dared to sing with me.
Today (however) I come charging on my Abjar[37]
To attack and scatter around (people's) heads
So that two thousand years hence
History will remember the battle of Bayt Mirī.

Ṭalīᶜ Ḥamdān:

Zaghlūl, rest at ease. The canary sings.

[34] The reference is to the first five stanzas of a famous verbal duel between Jiryis al-Bustānī and Ṭalīc Ḥamdān.

[35] ᶜAnjar is a famous village in eastern Lebanon where a major battle between Prince Fakhr al-Dīn and the Ottoman Turks took place.

[36] A seventeenth-century Lebanese prince who fought off Ottoman occupation of Lebanon.

[37] The famous horse of the legendary pre-Islamic folk-hero cAntar Ibn Shaddād.

You know that Ṭālīᶜ Ḥamdān is the conqueror of enemies.
And Jiryis, since you have started with the severing of heads,
Why has not your sword discovered your head yet?
You are in the habit of attacking me with the sword of death
And I am in the habit of extinguishing and finishing you from the start.
And today in this monastery[38] which is filled with guiding light
I shall strangle you and make you a mere echo.
And tomorrow after you are gone and after time grows old,
History will say a few words with utmost care:
Ṭālīᶜ Ḥamdān destroyed you in every battle
And the battle of Bayt Mirī was no exception.

Jiryis Bustānī:

What did the son of Ḥamdān say? Listen ye world:
He said he would destroy me and he bragged about his muscles.
Does he not know [addressing Ṭālīᶜ] if I tell the sun not to rise,
It will obey, and it will kneel if I tell it to kneel?
And does he not know that the pulpit is the product of my craft?
And that the rainbow is a little ring around my finger?
And tomorrow if history becomes aware of this contest
And registers in its pages the names of the great (poets),
It will mention my heroic deeds and the excellence of my quarry
(where I hone my rhymes);
It will mention the echoes of my cannonballs;
It will mention the monastery that I overwhelmed with my presence;
It will mention my vitality, my good heart, and my great achievements;
And from another angle it will mention you briefly
Because it must mention those who sang with me.

Ṭālīᶜ Ḥamdān:

How blasphemous is history which from a great distance
Feels constrained to mention the likes of you:
But let us suppose that history did not mention me a lot.
Let me tell you why, O conceited one:
Paradise, which is full of perfume and flowers and love,
Fills the breeze with perfume as the breeze passes by it (briefly).
That is why your history (when it rumbles)
Passes briefly by me as you have suggested.
And so do you, great men, rainstorms,
The sea, which has drunk from my thoughts,
The rainbow, tenderness, the night of love,
And all the poets who have attained the highest status,
All pass briefly by my pulpit
To be blessed by my poetry and to vanish quickly.

[38] The reference is to the famous monastery in Dayr al-Qalᶜa in Bayt Mirī, Lebanon.

Jiryis Bustānī:

You have taxed the patience of God, you son of water and clay.
Your years have not been blessed by your generosity (?).
But in order not to deceive our audience
I shall expose you before those who do not know you.
You are a piece of paper among neglected papers
And by sheer luck it ended up in the company of the great,
But it was like a beggar on the roads of history
Seeking alms from all those who pass by him (briefly).
ᶜAntar[39] passed by and bequeathed brow-raising greatness
And Gibrān[40] wrote lines with the ink of the inspired.
And Qays[41] left upon it a breath of love
And the monks crowned it with the halo of faith.
Yet had I not signed it with my poetry
It (you) would not have become a page pleasing to anybody.

What we have here is a perfect example of strong reading, a strategy whose main communicative intent seems to be to put one's opponent down or to test his ability to maintain presence of mind in interaction. One important feature is to constantly try to push one's opponent into a defensive role, by overplaying the implications of his argument. The translation above is deficient in that it is unable to capture important linguistic and paralinguistic elements such as changes in pitch, stress, and syntax which often provide the signals of contest. Also the translation necessarily leaves out all those emotive meanings that are comprehensible only to the particular audience, as well as audience reaction itself, which often consists of loud approval or disapproval of the particular poet's arguments.

Still, however, the lines of argument are perfectly clear. The main issue is how history is going to remember the two duelers. Quality rather than quantity (number of pages) becomes the fine distinction. Soon, however, the argument comes to a draw and the subject changes from "history book" to the "paper" that one of the duelers must sign if his opponent's name will ever be added to the names of the great poets. In the rest of the duel, "paper" reverts to a "death notice" and to a whole series of ratiocinations which stretch the subject to its limits, while still remaining within the realm of general history.

[39] ᶜAntar Ibn Shaddād is a famous pre-Islamic poet known both for his poetry and legendary valor in battle.

[40] The famous author of *The Prophet* and many other writings in English and Arabic.

[41] The reference is to Majnūn Laylā, Qays Ibn al-Mulawwaḥ, an early Islamic Arab poet.

Some of the strategies used in these excerpts are typical of Lebanese verbal duels in general. The main issue is often avoided and side issues are highlighted instead, often over the protestations of the audience. The reason, I suppose, is directly related to the constraints of improvisation, which require, among other things, speed and changes in speech rhythms from natural ones to ones conforming to the demands of the formula. In addition to the main argument, duelers adopt other strategies. A favorite approach is to say that the opponent's argument is old and that the intelligent audience will not buy it. Here the appeal to the audience's wisdom earns the dueler psychological support. Another approach is to put words into the opponent's mouth and then attack these words. Still another strategy would be for one of the duelers to charge his opponent with evading the whole issue, or to berate him for having totally missed the point. Finally, one of the poets may repeat his adversary's weak argument in order to expose and explode it.

In all these strategies, the poets use a large number of syntactic (as opposed to verbal) formulas. The style is often additive, exhibiting similar syntactic structures (in the form of illustrations) which are piled up to give the dueler the necessary time to tie up the loose ends of his argument. A popular syntactic structure is the use of "if clauses," often five or six of them before the poet finally comes up with the "answer" to the conditions. All this leads to the "clincher," which is often in the last two hemistichs of the response. In reality, however, the poets figure out the last two hemistichs (the clincher) first, constructing the argument in reverse, as it were, starting with formulas which have little to do with the argument and then slowly leading back to the clincher. A poet may, for example, start by addressing the stars of heaven, bidding them to listen to his opponent's lies, then brag about his own logic or praise the audience, and all this before he finally comes back to the answer proper.

Rhyme plays an integral role in the duelers' improvisations. Their training involves a knowledge not only of the semantic meaning of words, but most importantly, perhaps, of their morpho-phonological characteristics. They classify words in terms of their sound patterns with particular rhyming possibilities, groupings that can be recalled quickly and employed in particular arguments. Even though the morphology of Arabic is especially conducive to rhyming, the rhymes are not infinite, and the accomplished poet is constantly aware of which rhymes are particularly useful in particular arguments. In a taped interview[42] Zaghlūl al-Dāmūr, one of Lebanon's greatest *zajal* poets, claims that the rhyme word of the

[42] Recorded in 1983 in Zaghlūl's house, Anteliās, Lebanon. In addition to singing all the known genres of Lebanese *zajal*, Zaghlūl discussed the metrics of *zajal* and the strategies used in improvisation. All references to Zaghlūl's observations are to this interview.

first line of a duel is enough to give him an idea about his opponent's line of thought. When asked what he would do if his anticipations were wrong, he said he knew enough strategies to deal with such an eventuality. One such approach, he said, was to evade the question and change the focus of the argument.

I am convinced that all the strategies I have been discussing make improvisation a less formidable task than critics who have not mastered the art of dueling are willing to admit. I am equally convinced that the verbal duel proper is totally improvised on the spot. As Zaghlūl himself put it, no poet can get away with memorizing lines or repeating well-known lines before members of a critical audience who have taped and memorized every verbal duel that has taken place in the past twenty years. He added that "in a verbal duel no poet knows where the argument is going to lead, and memorization will be more difficult to control than actual improvisation." When probed further, Zaghlūl admitted that most poets extemporize rather than improvise their *qaṣīds*, but not the verbal duels themselves. I am using extemporization here to describe the kind of silent preparation immediately before the actual recitation, or as Zaghlūl himself describes it, "notes, main ideas, phrases that an accomplished lecturer uses to treat a topic, with the exception that with us [the poets of *zajal*], these notes and ideas are not written on cards."

While the question of improvisation in the *fuṣḥā* tradition is fraught with controversy (cf. Zwettler 1978 and Monroe 1972), there is little doubt that the phenomenon of verbal dueling in Arabic literary history is as old as the first recorded poems in pre-Islamic times. From the *muᶜāraḍah*[43] between the pre-Islamic poets Imru' al-Qays and ᶜAlqama, to the *mufākharah* and *munāfarah*[44] among the Arab tribes and between the Arabs and the Persians, to the *muᶜāẓamah*[45] of al-Khansā' and the *murājazah*[46] between al-Mughīra ibn al-Akhnas and ᶜAbd Allāh Ibn

[43] *Al-qaṣīdah al-muᶜāriḍah* is a poem emulating the meter, the rhyme, and the aesthetic qualities of another poem. See al-Shāyib 1966:6-8.

[44] *Al-mufākharah* derives from *fakhr* or boasting. *Al-munāfarah* is also concerned with boasting but differs from *al-mufākharah* in that judging by a third party is not necessary. In both poems the poets try to out-boast each other by referring to their individual qualities or the attributes of their tribes.

[45] *Al-muᶜāẓama* is a poem in which the poet brags about his or her ability to bear grief, especially in the case of the death of a relative or an important member of the tribe.

[46] *Al-murājazah* shares most of the characteristics of the aforementioned genres but uses the *rajaz* meter.

Budayl, and finally to *al-munāqaḍah*[47] among the major Umayyad poets, verbal dueling in *fuṣḥā* attains a high level of development. But to say this is not to imply necessarily that Lebanese verbal dueling is directly influenced by the *fuṣḥā* antecedents. Notwithstanding some similarities in general strategy, the idiom, purpose, and content of verbal duels are significantly different in the two traditions. Each tradition, it seems to me, adapted itself to the political and social milieu specific to its own time. Certainly the difference in the poets' roles (the champions in words of their tribes in the *fuṣḥā* tradition, and the verbal virtuosos par excellence in the Lebanese tradition) had an important impact on the form and content of the duels.

As intimated above, most of the other Arab countries, notably Saudi Arabia,[48] Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt, have similar living traditions of vernacular poetry, though none has attained the renown and richness of Lebanese *zajal*. Some of the genres and meters are similar enough to attract scholarly interest in comparative studies. As the political, social, and demographic scenes in the Arab world change, critical analyses of Arabic vernacular poetry assume particular urgency.

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

References

ᶜAbbūd 1968 — Mārūn ᶜAbbūd. *Al-Shiᶜr al-ᶜāmmī*. Beirut.

ᶜAwwād 1930 — Tawfīq ᶜAwwād. "Al-Shiᶜr al-ᶜāmmī." *Al-Mashriq*, 28:436-43, 501-8.

Brockelmann 1928 — C. Brockelmann. *Lexicon Syriacum*. Halle: M. Niemeyer.

al-Bustānī 1870 — Butrus al-Bustānī. *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*. Beirut.

Cachia 1977 — Pierre Cachia. "The Egyptian *Mawwāl*: Its Ancestry, its Development, and its Present Forms." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 8:77-103.

Dalmann 1901 — Gustaf H. Dalmann. *Palästinischer Dīwān*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.

[47] *Al-munāqaḍah* is the literary term applied principally to the famous *naqā'iḍ* of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, and al-Akhṭal in the Umayyad period. For an account of the form of the *naqā'iḍ* and the rhetorical strategies used in them see al-Shāyib 1966:1-6.

[48] For a complete bibliography on Nabaṭī poetry in Saudi Arabia, see Sowayan 1985:218-26.

Dīb 1974 — Kamāl Abū Dīb. *Fī al-Bunyah al-īqāᶜiyyah li al-shiᶜr al-ᶜArabī: Naḥwa badīl jadhrī li ᶜarūḍ al-Khalīl*. Beirut.

Dozy 1967 — Reinhart P. A. Dozy. *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*. Leiden: Brill.

Fārūqī 1981 — Lois Ibsen Fārūqī. *An Annotated Glossary of Arabic Musical Terms*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Frayḥah 1947 — Anīs Frayḥah. *Muᶜjam Frayhḥah*. Beirut.

Frayḥah 1957 — _____. *Ḥaḍārah fi ṭarīq al-zawāl*. Beirut.

Frayḥah 1973 — _____. *Muᶜjam al-alfāẓ al-ᶜāmmiyah*. Beirut.

al-Ḥillī n.d. — Ṣafiyy al-Dīn al-Ḥillī. *Dīwān Ṣafiyy al-dīn al-Ḥillī*. Damascus.

al-Ḥūrānī 1906 — Ibrāhīm al-Ḥūrānī *Al-Nashrah al-usbūᶜiyyah*. Beirut.

al-Ibshīhī n.d. — Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ibshīhī. *AlMustaṭraf*. n.p.

al-Jayyūsī 1977 — Salmā al-Jayyūsī. *Trends and Movements in Modern Arab Poetry*. Leiden: Brill.

Kfarkaddī 1942 — Ibrāhīm Kfarkaddī. *Sabk al-Maᶜānī fī al-zajal al-Lubnānī*. Boston.

Khaldūn 1958 — Ibn Khaldūn. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Trans. by Franz Rosenthal. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

Lecerf 1932 — Jean Lecerf. "Littérature dialectale et renaissance arabe moderne." *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 2:179-258.

Manẓūr n.d. — Ibn Manẓūr. *Lisān al-ᶜArab*. Beirut.

Monroe 1972 — James T. Monroe. "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry: The Problem of Authenticity." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 3:1-53.

al-Muḥibbī 1873 — Muḥammad Amīn ibn Faḍl Allāh al-Muḥibbī. *Khulāsat al-athar*. Cairo.

Nakhleh 1945 — Amīn Nakhleh. *Maᶜannā Rashīd Nakhleh*. Beirut.

al-Nūr 1966 — Jabbour ᶜAbd al-Nūr. *Etude sur la poésie dialectale au Liban*. Beirut.

al-Shāyib 1966 — Aḥmad al-Shāyib. *Tārīkh al-naqā'iḍ fī al-shiᶜr al-ᶜArabī*. Cairo.

Sowayan 1985 — Saad Abdullah Sowayan. *Nabaṭī Poetry: The Oral Poetry of Arabia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

al-Wādī n.d. — Shaḥrūr al-Wādī. *Dīwān Shaḥrūr al-Wādī*. Kfarshīmā, Lebanon.

Whaybeh 1952 — Munir Whaybeh. *Al-Zajal: tārīkhuhu, adabuhu, aᶜlāmuhu, qadīman wa ḥadīthan*. Ḥarīṣā.

Zaydān 1957 — Jurjī Zaydān. *Tārīkh ādāb al-lughah al-ᶜarabiyyah*. Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl.

Ziadeh n.d. — Michel Ziadeh. *Lubnān al-zajal*. Beirut.

Zwettler 1978 — Michael Zwettler. *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry: Its Character and Implications*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 213-35

Palestinian Improvised-Sung Poetry: The Genres of *Ḥidā* and *Qarrādī* — Performance and Transmission

Ḍirghām Ḥ. Sbait

Introduction

The improvised-sung poetry of the Palestinians is a living tradition of oral poetry,[1] extemporized impromptu in the colloquial Arabic of the Palestinians. It is sung by professional native Palestinian poets for their countrymen primarily at weddings, baptisms, private parties, public festivals, and other joyous social occasions (see Ḍ. Sbait 1982:1-59). This improvised-sung poetry is known in Arabic by the name of *ash-shiᶜr al-murtajal* (improvised poetry; cf. Bonnebaker 1978) or *ash-shiᶜr ash-shaᶜbī* (folk poetry) or *az-zajal* (colloquial Arabic poetry in strophic form) or *al-shiᶜr al-ᶜāmmī* (poetry in colloquial language), because it does not follow the grammatical rules of the written standard Arabic used by the poets of literary poetry.

The Palestinian poet-singer who composes this poetry is known by his countrymen as *ḥādī* or *ḥaddā* (lit. "camel-eer"), *shāᶜir shaᶜbī* (folk poet), *qawwāl* (improviser or reciter), or *zajjāl* (improviser), the most common of these names being *ḥaddā* or *shāᶜir*.

My research is based on a collection of improvised-sung poetry

[1] The issue of "orality" in the classical Arabic poetry has been explored before and resulted in two major works: Monroe 1972 and Zwettler 1978. Both works grew out of a substantial body of scholarship initiated by the research of Milman Parry and Albert Lord into the features of oral composition in Homeric poetry; Parry and Lord analyzed the peculiar features of Homeric verse and compared the results to the analysis of a living tradition of oral composition in southern Yugoslavia (Lord 1960). However, while Parry and Lord's work was strengthened by their ability to relate the ancient tradition to a similar and observable living tradition, much of the work on classical Arabic poetry has been marred by an inability to develop evidence for hypotheses about its "orality" from directly observable sources. The living tradition of improvised-sung colloquial poetry of the Palestinian poet-singers provides a unique and crucial vehicle by which scholars could compare and analyze the relation between this living oral tradition and the ancient Arabic poetry. This relation promises to be an even stronger case than that of the Slavic folk singers.

recorded live in the field, neither written or precomposed nor preserved in books, manuscripts, or tapes. It includes approximately 15,000 lines of this extemporaneous poetry, which fall under seven different genres: *ᶜAtābā*, *Ḥidā*, *Farᶜāwī*, *Mḥorabih*, *Mᶜannā*, *Qarrādī*, and *Qaṣīdih*. These genres are entirely different from one another in their poetic forms, diverse rhyme schemes, and musical melodies (Ḍ. Sbait 1982:60-349).

The following paper focuses on two of the most popular genres of the improvised-sung poetry of the Palestinian poet-singers: *ḥidā* and *qarrādī*, these two being the most representative genres of this oral tradition. This study presents a concise literary definition entailing the basic characteristic poetic features of both genres, as well as a brief theoretical musical description. It also presents an analysis of the poetic structure of the basic forms of the *ḥidā* and *qarrādī* with an emphasis on the use of the rhyme schemes, an overwhelmingly dominant poetic feature in this oral poetry. Yet due to the richness and complexity of this poetry, the analysis will exclude the many related subgenres. The analysis will be supported by illustrative quotations of improvised-sung poetry. The paper also deals with the subjects of the poems, as well as the social context in which the poems are improvised-sung. In addition the essay also describes the method in which the *ḥidā* and *qarrādī* are performed, and finally it includes a thorough presentation of the practical training of the Palestinian poet-singers and the manner in which their oral poetry is handed down from one generation of poet-singers to another.

I. *Ḥidā*[2]

A. The Characteristic Features of *Ḥidā*[3]

Ḥidā is the most popular genre of improvised-sung poetry of the Palestinian poet-singers. They employ three major types of *ḥidā*:

---

[2] The *ḥidā* is known as *ḥudā'* and *ḥadw* in dictionaries of literary Arabic, also known as *ḥidā* by omitting the *hamzah*, and as *ḥadādī* in the colloquial Arabic of the Palestinians. The literary form verb *ḥadā* is [Form I] *ḥadwan* and *ḥidā'an*; *ḥudā'an* implies the meaning of singing the *ḥudā*, while *ḥadā al-ibl* means to urge the camels to move while singing to them. The singer of *ḥudā'* in literary Arabic is known as *ḥādī* (pl. *ḥudāt*) and *ḥaddā'* is an exaggerated form of the noun *ḥādī*. But a poet-singer is known as *ḥādī*, or *ḥaddā* (pl. *Ḥaddāy*) in the colloquial Arabic of the Palestinians.

See Frayḥa 1973:32; Dalman 1967:137; Even-Shoshan 1974, II:719; Krupnik and Silbermann 1927, I:279; al-Maᶜlūf 1966:95; Naṣṣār 1962:42-47; Smith 1967:127; and H. Wehr 1976:163.

[3] For additional definitions of the Palestinian *ḥidā* see: ᶜAlqam 1977:60; al-Barghotī 1963; al-Barghotī 1979:63-84; al-Bāsh 1971:63-72; Dalman 1901: Introduction and 137-39; Jargy 1970; Saarisalo 1932; Shiloah 1975; Sirḥān 1979:276-85; and Sirḥān 1977, I:63-84.

muzdawij (couplets), *mrabbaᶜ* (quatrains), and *mthamman*, (stanzas of eight lines), followed always by a refrain. Additionally, each type of *ḥidā* entails several other subgenres. The above-mentioned types of *ḥidā* are based on the principle of doubling the number of lines from one type to another; from 2 to 4 to 8. During a given performance of *ḥidā* the poet-singers start the improvisation with *ḥidā muzdawij*, then switch to *mrabbaᶜ* and *mthamman* in sequential order.

Ḥidā is strictly an outdoor genre, sung basically at the party on the evening before the groom's wedding and accompanied by the folk dance known by the Palestinian Arabs as *saḥjih* (men's folk dance). In the *saḥjih* the *saḥḥījih* (folk dancers) shake their bodies slightly, clap rhythmically, and sing the common *ḥidā* refrain *yā ḥalālī yā mālī*,[4] which can best be translated as ("O how fortunate I am!" or "I am delighted with my money or wealth") and other variations of the same phrase. The audience may join in singing the above refrain.

Saḥjih in the Palestinian village of ᶜAylābūn, summer 1985
(photo courtesy of Bahjāt Ṣlayyiḥ.)

All *ḥidā* songs are rhythmical and responsorial. Moreover, the dancers' refrains conform to the rhythm of the poet-singers' preceding improvisations. The rapid melody and the stress which the poet-singers place on the last rhyming syllables, along with the matching response of the folk dancers' refreains, create a sharp contrast between the poet-singers and the dancers, a combination which creates dynamism in all *ḥidā*

[4] Most of the common refrains are sung spontaneously by the *ṣaff saḥjih* dancers due to the fact that they are familiar to them, or they are introduced by the poet-singers and transmitted verbally to the *saḥjih* dancers by the *ḥāshī* (the *ṣaff saḥjih* organizer).

performances. *Ḥidā* normally is sung in an alternated fashion, but it can be improvised solo as well.

The rhyme scheme of the regular *ḥidā muzdawij* is AB, AB, CB, DB; the *mrabbaᶜ* entails an AAAB, CCCB rhyme scheme; and the *mthamman* employs an ABABABAC pattern. Each line of *ḥidā* utilizes seven or eight syllables. In some samples the poet-singers lengthen certain lines from seven to eight syllables by using vocal syllables such as *aw*, *al*, or *ay* in order to make up for a missing syllable.

All *ḥidā* poems are highly rhythmic and follow the *maqām* of *bayyātī*. The regular *ḥida muzdawij* is sung with a slow tempo *bayyātī*; the *mrabbaᶜ* with a fast-tempo *bayyātī dūgāh*; the *mthamman* with a faster tempo *bayyātī nawā*. The subgenre of *ḥidā muzdawij* known as *is-saḥjih il-baddāwiyyih* (the Bedouins' folk dance) is sung with the fastest tempo following the *maqām* of *bayyātī ḥusaynī*. The tempo gradually accelerates from one type to another. The poet-singers start the improvisation with the slowest type, the regular *ḥidā muzdawij*, and finish with the fastest, the *baddāwiyyih*. The refrain *yā ḥalālī yā mālī* is sung in a free rhythm after all types, except for *is-saḥjih il-baddāwiyyih* in which it is repeated twice instead of once and is highly rhythmic. In both cases the refrain also follows the *maqām* of *bayyātī*. Because the Palestinian *ḥidā* is such a common form, the Palestinian poet-singer is called *ḥādī* (one who improvises-sings *ḥidā*) by his countrymen, even though he sings all other genres of colloquial poetry as well.

B. The Poetic Forms of the *Ḥidā*

1. *Ḥidā Muzdawij,*[5] i.e., *ḥidā* of two lines.

The form of regular *ḥidā muzdawij* consists of a pair of improvised lines by one poet-singer followed by the dance of *saḥjih*, rhythmical clapping and the dancers' refrain *yā ḥalālī yā mālī* sung once by the audience in a slow tempo. Then a second poet-singer improvises two pairs of *muzdawijāt*, and the improvisation continues in the alternating fashion stated above. The following *ḥidā* by ᶜAbdallāh Mūsā and Abū Lail[6] illustrates this feature:

i. ᶜAbdallāh: Al bismi bādī lḥadādaī
Iᶜtimādī ᶜal-ḥayy- il-ᶜālī

[5] Some Palestinian poet-singers call this type of *ḥidā mafrūd* (i.e., divided by singing pairs of lines of *ḥidā*, one at a time).

[6] Yūsif Maṣarwih, born in Kufr Qarᶜ, the Muthallath, in 1936. He became a professional poet-singer in 1955.

	The Ṣaff:	Aw[7] yā ḥalālī yā mālī
ii.	ᶜAbdallāh:	Wmin baᶜdi hādhā walladhī ṣallū ᶜarāᶜi r-risālih
	The Ṣaff:	Aw yā ḥalālī yā mālī
iii.	Abū Lail:	Ilbadri ᶜaddinyā bazagh wannajmi ḥawluh bilālī
	The Ṣaff:	Aw yā ḥalālī yā mālī
iv.	Abū Lail:	Nādī ᶜalā kull il-ᶜArab illailih nādī larjālī
	The Ṣaff:	Aw yā ḥalālī yā mālī
		(Ref. ᶜA. Mūsā and Y. Abū Lail, Cas. 34, A-191-307)
i.	ᶜAbdallāh:	In the name (of Allāh), I start the *ḥadādī*; I rely on the Supreme Being.
	Dancers:	O how fortunate I am!
ii.	ᶜAdballāh:	And after this, pray on the guardian of the Message (i.e., The Prophet Muḥammad).
	Dancers:	O how fortunate I am!
iii.	Abū Lail:	The full moon has risen on the world and the stars beam around it.
	Dancers:	O how fortunate I am!
iv.	Abū Lail:	[I] call all the Arabs tonight I call my men.
	Dancers:	O how fortunate I am!

ᶜA. Mūsā's *muzdawijāt* rhyme ABCB and Ab, Lail's DBEB. The "B" rhyme is always fixed and is used with all the even lines of the entire *ḥidā* improvisation of both poet-singers.

l.a. *Is-saḥjih Il-Baddāwiyyih*

A popular variation of *ḥidā mazdawij* is the subgenre termed by the

[7] I have noticed in listening to my cassettes that most poet-singers who improvise all types of *ḥidā* utter an *aw* or *al* sound immediately after the end of their *muzdawij*, or *mrabbaᶜ*, or *mthamman*, and that is followed by the *saḥjih* dancers who clap and repeat their refrain. It seems that the poet utters an *aw* or *al* sound in order to give a clear indication to the dancers that he has finished his *muzdawij* or *mrabbaᶜ* and that the refrain can begin. It is also noticeable that the dancers, who are aware of the end of the *muzdawij*, react spontaneously and sing the *aw* or *al* sounds together with the poet, then continue on with the refrain. It is the *aw* and *al* sounds that create a sense of order and transition within the *ḥidā*.

poet-singers as *is-saḥjih il-baddāwiyyih*.[8] It is distinguished by its rapid rhythm, the fastest of all types of *ḥidā*. Its refrain, *yā ḥalālī yā mālī*, or its variations, are sung twice by the *saḥjih* dancers with the fastest tempo of all types of *ḥidā* and is repeated after each *muzdawij* in order to match the rhythm and length of the improvised *muzdawijāt*. The following example by ᶜAwnī Sbait[9] and ᶜAfīf Nāṣir[10] illustrates this subgenre:

i.	ᶜAwnī:	ᶜAssaḥjih il-baddāwiyyih rjālī ruddū ᶜalainā
ii.	ᶜAwnī:	Rjālī ruddū ᶜalainā rjālī ruddū ᶜalainā
	The Ṣaff:	Aw yā ḥalālī yā mālī issabiᶜ ṣād il-ghazālih[11]
iii.	ᶜAfīf:	Bihalfarḥah farḥānīn farḥit ᶜizz il-aqrabīn
	The Ṣaff:	Aw yā ḥalālī yā mālī issabiᶜ ṣād il-ghazālih
iv.	ᶜAfīf:	Wᶜash-shamāl wᶜalyamīn ḥayyī rjāl il-kamāli
	The Ṣaff:	Aw yā ḥalālī yā mālī issabiᶜ ṣād il-ghazālih

(Ref. ᶜAwnī Sbait and ᶜAfīf Nāṣir, Cas. 28, B-381-435).

i.	ᶜAwnī:	Let us join the bedouin folk dance; My men, (the dancers) answer us.
ii.	ᶜAwnī:	My men, answer us; My men, answer us.
	Dancers:	O how fortunate I am; The lion has captured the female gazelle.

[8] *Is-saḥjih il-baddāwiyyih* was named so possibly because it originated among the Bedouins of Palestine.

[9] ᶜAwnī Sbait, born in Iqrith, the Galilee, in 1930. He became a professional poet-singer in 1950. ᶜAwnī is the only Palestinian poet-singer who has published a collection of colloquial poems (see ᶜA.Sbait 1976).

[10] ᶜAfīf Naṣīr, born in Kufr Smaiᶜ, the Galilee, in 1941. He became a professional poet-singer around 1970.

[11] The audience here sings a different refrain, *yā ḥalālī yā mālī issabiᶜ ṣād il-ghazālih* ("Oh how fortunate I am! The lion [groom] has captured the female gazelle [bride]").

iii.	ᶜAfīf:	We are happy in this wedding, The wedding of the best relatives.
	Dancers:	O how... etc.
iv.	ᶜAfīf:	To the left and right sides, I greet the men of perfection.
	Dancers:	O how... etc.

ᶜAwnī rhymed the two lines of *muzdawij* "i" AB, and *muzdawij* "ii" BB. ᶜAfīf did not follow the rhyme scheme of ᶜAwnī, but instead rhymed *muzdawij* "iii" and "iv" CC, CE. It should be noted that the "E" rhyme matched the rhyme of the refrain. Afterwards, both poet-singers extemporized pairs of *muzdawijāt* that have a fixed "E" rhyme in their fourth line throughout the entire poem.

2. *Ḥidā Mrabbaᶜ*, i.e., *ḥidā* of four lines.

The *ḥidā mrabbaᶜ* is a rhythmic and rapid type. Its form entails the improvisation of four lines sung continuously by one poet, with a fast tempo in comparison to that of the regular *ḥidā muzdawij* (II.B.1). Each *mrabbaᶜ* is followed by the *saḥjih*, the rhythmical clapping, and the refrain, *al yā ḥalālī yā mālī*, which is sung by the dancers only once after each *mrabbaᶜ*. The poet-singers improvise several types of *ḥidā mrabbaᶜ* which share most of the common poetic features of the basic *mrabbaᶜ* but differ slightly in one aspect or another.

The following is a brief excerpt from a long debate in *ḥidā mrabbaᶜ* between ᶜAwnī Sbait and ᶜAfīf Nāṣir concerning "imprisonment and freedom." This type is the most advanced form of *ḥidā*, in which the poet-singers debate highly intellectual subjects requiring a great deal of argumentativeness. It is known in the colloquial Arabic by the name *mḥāwarah* (lit. *Ḥiwār*, i.e., debate).[12]

Mrabbaᶜ I

ᶜAfīf:

i. ᶜAaqwālak balabbīk
ii. Wibjāwib ᶜamaᶜānīk

[12] Such a debate was famous among Arab poets of literary Arabic, e.g., at the court of Sayf al-Dawlah al-Ḥamdānī in Aleppo. Among the poets who participated in such a debate were al-Mutanabbī and Ibn Khālawayh. The debate is known in classical Arabic by the name *munāẓarah*; the plural is *munāẓarāt* (see al-Fākhūrī n.d.:602). The debate with *mrabbaᶜ* is the climax of the evening for the groom's part and is the most elaborate type of *ḥidā*. See the complete description of the debate's procedure in Ḍ. Sbait 1982:221-24.

iii. Ḥurriyyih ānā baᶜṭīk
iv. Wbissijin iḥnā rāḍīn
The Ṣaff: Yā ḥalālī... etc.

Mrabbaᶜ II

ᶜAwnī:
i. Yallī bissijin ṭamᶜān
ii. Nādī tatiᶜ-mal sajjān
iii. ᶜAsijnak aᶜṭī burhān
iv. Ykūn awḍaḥ barāhīn
The Ṣaff: Yā ḥalālī... etc.

Mrabbaᶜ III

ᶜAfīf:
i. Khallī l-qawl ibistifhām
ii. Wkhūdh w-aᶜṭi bilkalām
iii. Lawlā ssijin mā bitnām [E.]
iv. ᶜYūnak min is-sarrāqīn.
The Ṣaff: Yā ḥalālī... etc.

Mrabbaᶜ IV

ᶜAwnī:
i. Sijnak aswad kaẓẓālām
ii. Kulluh aḥzān w-ālām
iii. Lawlā l-ḥurriyyih il-ānām [E.]
iv. Mā shāfat ḥāyāt illīn
The Ṣaff: Yā ḥalālī.. etc.

(Ref. ᶜAwnī Sbait and ᶜAfīf Nāṣir, Cas. 24, A-64-298.)

Mrabbaᶜ I

ᶜAfīf:
i. I will obey your request
ii. I will comply to your thoughts
iii. I will give you “freedom”
iv. And I am satisfied with “prison.”
Dancers: O how... etc.

Mrabbaᶜ II

ᶜAwnī:
i. O he who has greed for prison
ii. Call out loud and make a prison
iii. Give a very clear proof
iv. Concerning [the importance of] your prison.
Dancers: O how fortunate I am!

Mrabbaᶜ III

ᶜAfīf:
i. Keep on questioning
ii. And take and give in your speech
iii. Without prison your eyes
iv. Could not sleep because of thieves.
Dancers: O how... etc.

Mrabbaᶜ IV

ᶜAwnī:
i. Your prison is black like darkness
ii. It is sadness and pain
iii. People without freedom
iv. Cannot see the life of gentleness.
Dancers: O how... etc.

Mrabbaᶜ I by ᶜAfīf rhymes AAAB, *Mrabbaᶜ* II by ᶜAwnī CCCB, *Mrabbaᶜ* III DDDB, and *Mrabbaᶜ* IV EEEB. The B rhyme is strictly followed by each poet-singer throughout the improvisation in order to keep a fluent, fixed pattern, but the set of rhymes of the preceding three lines is always subject to change.

3. *Ḥidā Mthamman*, i.e., *ḥidā* of eight lines.

This form of *ḥidā* is based on the improvisation of eight lines sung continuously by one poet-singer, and has a faster tempo than that of the *mrabbaᶜ*. Each *mthamman* is followed by the *saḥjih*, the rhythmical clapping and the refrain *yā ḥalālī yā mālī*, sung only once after each *mthamman*. *Ḥidā mthamman* is usually exchanged by two poet-singers, each improvising eight lines continuously without any repetition. The following example by the poet-singer Ḥannā Sbait[13] illustrates the regular type of *ḥidā mthamman*:

Ōf
i. Binghannī bhal-ḥafli shshiᶜr
ii. ḥattā nqaddim wājibnā
iii. Badl il-jumᶜah nghannī shahr
iv. Ta-niᶜjib jāmāᶜ itnā
v. Nfayyiḍ yānābīᶜ ishshiᶜr
vi. Idhā lḥaflih tiᶜjibnā
vii. Bḥibb ishshiᶜr wfawq ilmuhr
viii. Bkhayyil wibnādi l-fursān
The Ṣaff: Yā ḥalālī yā mālī

(Ref. Ḥannā Sbait, Cas. 7, B-303-367)

[13] Ḥannā Sbait was born in Iqrith, the Galilee, in 1921. He became a professional poet-singer in 1940.

	Ōf
i.	We sing poetry in this wedding
ii.	In order to do our duty (i.e., in respect for the host)
iii.	Instead of one week, we are ready to sing for one month
iv.	In order to delight our folks
v.	We overflow the springs of poetry
vi.	If we like the celebration
vii.	I like poetry, and on horseback
viii.	I gallop and call the knights.
Dancers:	O how fortunate I am!

Ḥannā rhymed his *mthamman* ABABABAC. This is the common rhyme scheme of the regular *mthamman*. The C rhyme is fixed throughout the entire improvisation.

C. The Subjects of *Ḥidā*

In determining the main subjects of the *ḥidā* of all types in my collection, each *muẓdawij*, *mrabbaᶜ* or *mthamman* was classified according to its main and not according to the secondary subjects. The following are the major subjects: a) praise (the most dominant subject in all *ḥidā*) of the host, the bride and groom, their families, the guests or their villages; b) zeal and self-praise; c) description of the occasion; d) friendly debates concerning social, educational, and intellectual subjects; e) political criticism; f) humanistic themes; and g) love.

D. The Context of *Ḥidā*

The *ḥidā* in my collection was recorded, in the main, on the evenings of weddings or on occasions when the groom's *saḥjih* took place outdoors. The *saḥjih* is the main event of the groom's evening party. *Ḥidā* can also be sung on other festive social occasions, such as the celebration of the christening or circumcision of a child.

II. *Qarrādī*[14]

[14] The term *qarrādī* is possibly derived from the root stem *rqd*, which is found in most Semitic languages. The Arabic verb *raqada* means to lie down or to dance (Khalīl 1974:16-17). The verbs *rakad* and *rkad* in Aramaic, *rakadu* in Akkadian, and *raqaṣa* in Arabic all mean to dance to a rhythmical melody or song (see Even-Shoshan 1974, VI:2565, Dalman 1967:408, al-Jurr 1973:597, and Wehr 1976:354). Perhaps due to a metathesis of the two first radicals of the root stem *rqd*, the term *qarrādī* was used instead of *raqadī* colloquially to mean a poem or song which prompts dancing, or a rhythmical and dancing poem. For further details see al-Nour 1957:91-101; al-Ra'ūf 1976:13; ᶜAbbūd 1968:70; Jargy 1970:13, 40-41, 50, and 85; Shiloah 1975:280; Sirḥān 1977:III, 13; Sirḥān

A. The Characteristic Features of *Qarrādī*

Qarrādī is a genre based on the improvisation and singing of *muzdawijāt* (pairs of lines), *mrabbaᶜāt* (four lines) or *mthammanāt* (eight lines). Each *qarrādiyyih* (one improvisation of *qarrādī*) has a different *maṭlaᶜ* (opening section) of which one or two lines are repeated once or twice by the audience as a refrain. Most of the *maṭāliᶜ* (pl. of *maṭlaᶜ*) are created by the poet-singers, but it is also customary for a poet-singer to borrow a popular *maṭlaᶜ* from another poet-singer and to improvise lines that fit with its rhyme, rhythm, and melody. *Qarrādī* can be sung solo or alternately by two or more poet-singers.

The regular *qarrādī muzdawij* uses an AB, CB, DB, etc., rhyme scheme; the *qarrādī mrabbaᶜ* usually rhymes ABAB, CCCB, etc., and the *qarrādī mthamman* follows an ABAB, in its *maṭlaᶜ*, then a CDCDCDCD scheme. The *qarrādī* poems utilize three different lengths: pairs of seven and seven syllables each, pairs of seven and eight syllables of varying length, and pairs of seven and four syllables in each line.[15] Most *qarrādī* improvisations do not deal with a single subject, yet some poems in my collection do deal with only one topic.

The majority of *qarrādī* improvisations are rhythmical and suitable for popular folk dances. Therefore, they are usually accompanied by a *durbakkih* (Arabic drum), *daff* (tambourine), handclaps, and the repetition of rhythmic refrains by the audience. The use of the *ᶜūd* (lute) and violin, or other folk instruments such as the *mijwiz* (double reed) or the *shubbābih* (flute), is optional. The instruments are played by professional or amateur musicians, and only rarely by the poet-singers themselves. *Qarrādī* songs vary in rhythm and melody; some melodies are commonly used by all while others are specific to certain poet-singers. In my collection all *qarrādī* songs except one, have a fast tempo and are sung in duple meter following the musical *maqām* of *sīgāh*.

1979:106; and Wuhaybah 1952.

[15] It is worth noting that the *qarrādī muzdawij* resembles the *ḥidā muzdawij* in its being based on couplets and in having a similar rhyme scheme. The *qarrādī mrabbaᶜ* is also similar to the *ḥidā mrabbaᶜ* in number of lines and rhyme scheme; and the *qarrādī mthamman* has the same number of lines as the *ḥidā mthamman* and employs the same rhyme scheme. However, other poetic features and especially the musical melodies of the two genres are completely different. Consequently, it is safe to say that both genres exert some poetic influence on each other. Still other *qarrādī* and *ḥidā* subgenres excluded from this paper do not share the same poetic features. Furthermore, both genres differ completely in the refrains they employ, the folk dances which accompany each of them, and, above all, in melody. It is also worth mentioning that the *qarrādī* is usually improvised-sung and accompanied mainly by folk music instrument, while the *ḥidā* is not.

B. The Poetic Forms of *Qarrādī*

l. *Qarrādī Muzdawij*

Qarrādī improvisations of this category are based on the extemporization of a vocal introduction such as an *Ōf* followed by a *maṭlaᶜ* of two short lines of seven and four syllables, or two long lines of seven syllables eachḥ Each *maṭlaᶜ* is sung by the audience as a refrain. If the *maṭlaᶜ* is unfamiliar to the audience, the poet sings it along with them. Thereafter, the poet-singer improvises *muzdawijāt* or *mrabbaᶜāt* which are followed by the audience's refrains. In the following quotation Shāhīn Sbait[16] and ᶜAfīf Nāṣir relied on the improvisation of *muzdawijāt*, each of which expresses a separate notion. The refrain is repeated only once by the audience.

i.	Shāhīn:	ᶜArīsainā hal-asmar
ii.		Yābū Zaid il-Hilālī
	Audience	ᶜArīsainā hal-asmar Yābū Zaid il-Hilālī
iii.	Shāhīn:	Zādat minnuh mḥabbitnā
iv.		W-firḥit kull il-āhālī
	Audience	ᶜArīsainā... etc.
v.	ᶜAfīf:	Hādhi l-farḥah farḥitnā
vi.		Faraḥ laghlā l-āhālī
	Audience	ᶜArīsainā... etc.

(Ref. Shāhīn Sbait and ᶜAfīf Nāṣir, Cas. 12, A-270)

Maṭlaᶜ by Shāhīn:

i. Our groom is this "brown"[17] person

ii. You are brave like the warrior Abū Zayd al-Hilālī (see Lane 1973:391).

Refrain by the audience:

As in i. above

[16] Shāhīn Sbait, born in Iqrith in 1937, became a professional poet-singer in 1957; he quit the profession in 1968.

17 A sign of beauty among Arabs.

iii. Shāhīn: Because of him our love has increased
iv. And all the relatives are happy.

Audience: Our groom... etc.

v. ᶜAfīf: This wedding is our wedding
vi. The wedding of the dearest of relatives.

Audience: Our groom... etc.

The foregoing *qarrādī muzdawij* is sung with a fast duple meter. The *maqām* is *sīgāh* adhering to *rast* towards its end. Shāhīn rhymed his *muzdawijāt* ABCB, and ᶜAfīf continued the same scheme and rhymed his *muzdawijāt* CB, etc. The B rhyme is maintained throughout the entire improvisation.

2. *Qarrādī Mrabbaᶜ*

Poems of this category are based on *mrabbaᶜāt*. Even the *maṭlaᶜ* itself is a *mrabbaᶜ*. Its third and fourth lines are repeated only twice by the audience as a refrain. Each pair of lines consist of two unequal lines: the first line of each *mrabbaᶜ* has seven syllables and the second line has four syllables, for a total of eleven syllables altogether. The following lines which are improvised by the poet-singer Muḥammad al-Rīnāwī[18] illustrate this type:

maṭlaᶜ mrabbaᶜ:

i. Bism il-waṭan binghannī
ii. W-nilqī l-majhūd
iii. Wiblādī mithl il-jannih
iv. Malyānih w-rūd

Audience, refrain:

Wiblādī mithl il-jannih
Malyānih wrūd
Wiblādī mithl il-jannih
Malyānih w-rūd

Maṭlaᶜ by al-Rināwī:

i. We sing in the name of the homeland
ii. And we participate in the effort
iii. And my country is like a garden
iv. Full with roses

18 Muḥammad al-Rīnāwī, born at al-Rainih in 1918. He became a professional poet-singer in 1940.

Audience:

And my country... etc.
Full... etc.
And my country... etc.
Full... etc.

The above mentioned *qarrādī mrabbaᶜ* is sung in a slow duple meter following the *maqām* of *sīgāh*, and it is accompanied by handclapping but not music or dances. The first *mrabbaᶜ* rhymes ABAB and the second (not quoted here) CCCB.

3. *Qarrādī Mthamman*

This type of *qarrādī* is based on the improvisation of a *maṭlaᶜ* of *qarrādī mrabbaᶜ* in which the last two lines form the refrain. Afterwards, the poet-singers improvise *qarrādī mthamman*. Each pair of lines is divided into two unequal parts, the first of which has seven, and the second four syllables. The following quotation from Jihād Sbait[19] and Ḥannā Sbait represents this type:

Jihād opens with a *maṭlaᶜ*:

mrabbaᶜ:

i. Talfantillik yā samrā [E.]
ii. ᶜAnnumrah th-nain
iii. Bain il-baiḍah wissamrā [E.]
iv. Ḍāᶜū r-raqmain

Refrain by the audience:

Bain ilbaiḍah wissamrā
Ḍāᶜū r-raqmain
Bain ilbaiḍah wissamrā
Ḍāᶜū r-raqmain

Ḥannā responds with a *qarrādī mrabbaᶜ:*

i. Bain il-baiḍah wissamrā [E.]
ii. T-shiᶜ il-qamrā
iii. Maḥlā layālī l-khamrah [E.]
iv. Bain al-ahlain

Refrain by the audience:

Bain... etc.
Ḍāᶜū... etc.
Bain... etc.

19 Jihād Sbait, born in Iqrith in 1939, became a professional poet-singer in 1965.

Ḍāᶜū... etc.

Jihād resumes with a *qarrādī mthamman*:

i. W-khāyif min baᶜd il-malqā [E.]
ii. Yubdū l-hijrān
iii. Waqᶜud qāsī bilfurqah [E.]
iv. Lāḍā n-nīrān
v. Muhjit qalbī miḥtirqah [E.]
vi. Frāq il-khillān
vii. Lākin marrah bissirqah [E.]
viii. Bawfī laddain

Refrain by the audience:

Bain... etc.
Ḍāᶜū... etc.
Bain... etc.
Ḍāᶜū... etc.

(Ref. Jihād Sbait and Ḥannā Sbait, Cas. XI, B-264-352)

Maṭlaᶜ by Jihād:

i. - ii. I phoned you, O brown girl, I dialed
number two (i.e., the wrong girl)
iii - iv. But I got the two numbers of the
white girl and the brown girl mixed up

Refrain by the audience:

But I got the two numbers... etc.
But I got the two numbers... etc.

Qarrādī mrabbaᶜ by Ḥannā:

i - ii. Between the white girl and brown girl the moon shines
iii - iv. How marvelous are the nights in which we drink
wine amongst our relatives.

Refrain by the audience:

But I got... etc.
But I got... etc.

Qarrādī mthamman by Jihād:

i - ii. I am afraid that after the reunion, another separation
of the beloved will occur
iii - iv. And I sit, suffering the blaze of the fire of separation

v. - vi. The core of my heart is burning because of the beloved's separation
vii - viii. However, one time, even if it is on the sly, I will pay my debt (to the beloved).

Refrain by the audience:

But I got... etc.
But I got... etc.

Jihād and Ḥannā go on alternating *qarrādī mthamman* concerning the same subject. The poem is rhythmic, but it is sung in a medium tempo, employing the *maqām* of *sīgāh*. The *maṭlaᶜ* of Jihād rhymes ABAB, the *mrabbaᶜ* of Ḥannā AAAB and the *mthamman* of Jihād CDCDCDCB.

C. The Subjects of *Qarrādī*

The immense number of 1400 lines of *qarrādī* in my collection makes it difficult to classify them in terms of their subject matter. The topical unity in many *qarrādī* improvisations diminishes due to the fact that each improvisation combines several subjects. Still, some *qarrādī* improvisations treat a single explicit theme. The most common topics of the *qarrādī* are: a) a description of the occasion, the poet-singer's feelings, the audience's enthusiasm, the parents' sentiment, the brothers' and sisters' affection, and the relatives' and guests' response; b) praise of and congratulations to the groom, his parents, relatives, and others; c) nationalistic themes, which most often include praise and description of the homeland and its charming nature; d) the welcoming of a returning emigrant or a farewell to an emigrant; e) the thoughts of the poet-singer on Christmas evening; f) a humorous debate between a professional poet-singer and an amateur; g) advice from a father to his son; and h) love themes.

D. The Context of *Qarrādī*

The *qarrādī* poems in my collection are sung only while sitting indoors. They are improvised at weddings, especially during *zaffat il-ᶜarīs* (the shaving of the groom, a highly celebrated event by the Palestinians), or while eating and drinking at the time of the wedding. They were also performed at a *khuṭbih* (engagement party), at private and family parties, at a *mahrajān* (festival), at a private high school party, and at a *nadwat*

zajal[20] (a singing session at which poet-singers improvise poetry in colloquial Arabic and debate concerning social matters). *Qarrādī* can also be sung at other happy social occasions.

Groom's *Zaffah* in the Palestinian Arab village of Fassūṭah, October 1980.
(photo courtesy of Bassām Sbait and Nazeeh ᶜĀṣī)

III. The Performance of the Improvised-Sung Poetry

The poet-singers are invited to sing in teams of two or possibly three or four, primarily at weddings at which they are the main entertainers. Every performance of improvised-sung poetry may last from a few minutes to a few hours, depending on the occasion and the time allowed to the poet-singers. On a wedding eve two poet-singers or more could alternate colloquial poetry for an average of four hours straight without a break. As the poets sing they switch rapidly from one genre or subgenre to another, and from one melody to another without any hesitation, rarely missing a rhyme or getting confused.

When the *ḥidā* poems are sung outdoors, normally the poet-singer stands at the end of the *ṣaff saḥjih* so that he can see his colleague, the *saḥjih* dancers, and the other guests attending the occasion. He sings while holding a microphone in one hand as he places his other hand on his cheek

20 *Madwat az-zajal* is most often a local radio program or television show in which two or more poets sing various types of *zajal* including *qarrādī* while debating about a variety of social subjects. However, it is also customary to hold such a nadwah in a village or city club.

and the tip of his middle finger in his ear. His poems are aired through a loudspeaker. When the poet-singer sings *qarrādī* indoors, he may perform while sitting down on his chair at the table or he may stand so that the audience can easily see him. He sings facing them with or without a microphone, depending on availability. Whether singing outdoors or indoors the poet-singer may change his physical position from time to time depending on the length of the improvisation and the way in which the folk dancers and the audiences are situated. The folk dancers are always an integral part of the performances. They repeat applicable refrains and dance accordingly. There is a mutual interaction and a responsorial contrast between the poet-singers' poetry-melodies and gestures, and the dancers' dances and singing of refrains.

Even the hundreds of audience members attending the celebration are spiritually uplifted and become involved in the performance due to the interesting issues presented by the poet-singers, especially the intellectual debates, and due to the precise coordination between the poetry, the melodies, the refrains, and the dances. Consequently the performances are vivid and therefore highly enjoyable.

IV. The Poet-Singers: Training and Transmission of Oral Poetry

My interviews with fourteen Palestinian poet-singers, conducted in the summer of 1979, indicate that their practical training is amazingly similar. Initially, each of them learns the melodies first and improvises alone at home, then later practices with an older professional poet-singer in his own village. Finally, each performs in other villages.

While the poetic forms of each genre and sub-genre of the improvised-sung poetry which they perform are more or less fixed, the poet-singers do not have a fixed written or oral text which they always repeat, so every new improvisation is different from the previous ones. This is due to the use of new rhymes or rhyme schemes, words, images, debates, and different subjects. Thus each repertoire differs, as do the gestures of the poet-singers and the audiences' refrains and folk dances which accompany the improvisations. However, my investigation suggests that certain new creations are simply a rearrangement of the words, the images, or the old ideas.

Palestinian improvised-poetry also employs established melodies stemming from the older generation of poet-singers and known to all current ones. These melodies are inherited and transmitted orally from one generation of poet-singers to another. Nobody knows when and where these melodies originated. All poet-singers without exception have told me that they learn the melodies by *samāᶜ* (listening) to older performers at

various social occasions in and outside their villages. They first learn the melodies of all genres and practice them alone at home, testing their voices through these established melodies. After mastering the melodies they focus their attention on lyrics. Each poet-singer follows these basic melodies but adds his own musical variations and embellishments.

The poet-singer may discover his talent and love for improvised-sung poetry in a number of ways: either through reciting literary poetry in school, writing some lines of poetry alone, orally improvising a few lines, or learning some lines by famous poets. Then the poet-singer passes a psychological stage in which he tests his basic ability to improvise and his courage to do so in public. Since the melodies are already known to him, he now tries to improvise words which agree with the melody. He also concentrates on rhymes and number of syllables and tries to imitate the professional poet-singers whom he has already heard. At this point the poet-singer is already capable of applying his poetic forms to the pre-established melodies, thus creating actual improvised-sung poetry. If he decides that he has the ability to improvise some lines of each genre alone at home, he then sings in family circles where he is usually encouraged. He gradually gains some experience and courage, and his fear of the public diminishes. At a later stage he sings to friends and other people in the village, especially in the absence of other, more professional poet-singers whose presence might embarrass the amateur.

After a period of self-training lasting a few years, the novice poet-singer gains more self-assurance and experience and is now ready to challenge a professional poet-singer. At the first possible opportunity a host, a friend, or a family member introduces the novice to a seasoned professional poet-singer who will invite him to sing with him at a wedding party. If he passes this first test, and most new poet-singers do, he gradually becomes recognized as a professional who will be invited to sing for payment either in his own village or somewhere else in the region. The audience's encouragement is one of the keys to the success of a beginning poet-singer.

The time for *tadrīb* (self-training) and for the *mumārasah* (apprentice-ship) with other poet-singers lasts from a minimum of two years to a maximum of ten years. Most of the poet-singers told me that they discovered their talent to improvise at an early age, sometime between ten and sixteen. However, they were unlikely to turn professional and to be recognized as such at this early age, so they practiced first for a long period, buying time and acquiring knowledge in order that they could stand and sing for a few hours with a professional poet-singer. Two poet-singers told me that they ran away from the first wedding at which they improvised during the first break because they were afraid to continue improvising with the professional. Some new performers prepared a poem

beforehand and recited it during their first appearance. All new poet-singers admit, however, that the older ones were very sympathetic and supportive. Finally, when the poet-singer knows how to isolate himself from the audience around him and concentrate fully on his improvisation, and knows how to apply the poetic forms to the existing melodies, he can improvise without any difficulty in public. The more he practices, the more his job becomes a routine. The talent, experience, and motivation of the individual poet-singer are the keys that guarantee him success.

The older poet-singers said that they do not teach the younger ones, but rather help them to practice and accompany them on various occasions. The younger poet-singers also emphasized the importance of being attached to an older professional–without which relationship it would take them much longer to be recognized as mature and independent. Most older performers are interested in keeping this tradition alive, so they welcome any new poet-singer and help him to practice and establish himself as a professional.

Some also said that they inherited the art of improvisation from a family member or a relative who was a folk poet, a folk singer, or a folk musician. The presence of a performing relative gave them direct access to the art and accelerated the process of learning to improvise and sing oral poetry. As the poet-singers themselves say, there are no books, schools, or instructors to teach this art of oral poetry; since it has never been written down, it is is orally transmitted.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, the contemporary Palestinian poet-singers produce a unique oral colloquial poetry entailing very precise poetic features which follow very colorful melodies. They improvise-sing seven different complex genres, two of which are the *ḥidā* and the *qarrādī*. The *ḥidā* is a major genre employed outdoors during the *saḥjih* which takes place during the evening party for the groom, and is based on at least four different rigid poetic forms differing in their rhyme schemes and musical melodies. The *qarrādī* is also a major popular genre employed indoors, and is accompanied by folk dances and forms part of the groom's or the bride's parties. It also employs at least four different poetic forms which have varying rhyme schemes and melodies. While the refrains of the *ḥidā* are almost fixed, the *maṭāliᶜ* (opening verses - refrains) of the *qarrādī* poems are not. Some poetic similarities exist between the *ḥidā* and the *qarrādī*, but their context and function, and above all their melodies, are entirely different.

The poet-singers either improvise solo or alternate their poetry.

They are engaged in entertaining the many guests attending the weddings and other social occasions. They produce a unique art form and debate about intellectual topics, thus lifting the spirit of their audience. The audience admires their extraordinary poetic and musical talents.

In order for the poet-singers to become professional and be recognized by other established poet-singers and by the public,they must go through a long period of training and practice which may take several years. They master the melodies first by *samāᶜ* (listening); then they work hard on their lyrics, applying them to the pre-composed established melodies, and polish up the rhyming technique, which is a crucial feature of this improvised poetry. After they test themselves locally in their village by challenging a seasoned poet-singer, they gradually become recognized by older professional poets and by the people and finally achieve their ultimate goal of becoming established performers.

The older generation of poet-singers pass along this poetic tradition orally to the younger generation, who also work sincerely to pass it on to contemporary poet-singers in order to preserve this unique form of art, an important aspect of the Palestinian culture.

Portland State University

References

ᶜAbbūd 1968 — M. ᶜAbbūd. *al-Shiᶜr al-ᶜAmmī*. Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah Wa-Dār Mārūn ᶜAbbūd.

ᶜAlqam 1977 — N. ᶜAlqam. *Madkhal Lidirāsat al-Fūlklūr*. al-Bīrih, The West Bank: Jamᶜīyyat Inᶜāsh al-Usrah.

al-Barghotī 1963 — A. al-Barghotī. "Arab Folk Songs from Jordan." Ph.D. dissertation, University of London.

al-Barghotī 1979 — _____. *al-Aghāni al-ᶜArabiyyah al-Shaᶜbiyyah Fī Filasṭīn Wa-al-Urdunn*. Al-Quds: Maṭbaᶜat al-Sharq al-ᶜArabiyyah.

al-Bāsh n.d. — al-Bāsh *al-Ughniyah al-Shaᶜbiyyah al-Filasṭīniyyah*. Damascus: n.p.

Bonnebakker 1978 — S. A. Bonnebaker. "Irtidjāl." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New ed. Leiden: Brill. IV:80-81.

Dalman 1901 — G. Dalman. *Palästinischer Diwan*. Leipzig: J. C. Heinrich'sche Buchhandlung.

Dalman 1967 _____. *Aramäisch-neuhebräisches Handwörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud, und Midrash* Hildesheim: Georg Olms.

Even-Shoshan 1974 A. Even-Shoshan. *Ha-millon He-hadash*. Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer.

al-Fākhūrī n.d. Ḥ al-Fākhūrī. *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ᶜArabī*. Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Būlīsiyyah.

Frayḥah 1973 A. Frayḥah. *Muᶜjam al-Alfāẓ al-ᶜĀmmiyyah*. Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān.

Jargy 1970 S. Jargy. *La poésie populaire traditionnelle chantée au Proche Orient Arabe*. Paris: Mouton.

al-Jurr 1973 Kh. al-Jurr. *Lārūs, al-Muᶜjam al-ᶜArabī al-Ḥadīth*. Paris: Mouton.

Khalīl 1974 Kh. Khalīl. *Al-Shiᶜr al-Shaᶜbī al-Lubnānī*. Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīᶜah lil-Ṭibāᶜah Wa-al-Nashr.

Krupnik and Silbermann 1927 Krupnik and Silbermann. *A Dictionary of the Talmud, the Midrash, and the Targum*. London: Shapiro, Valentine, and Co.

Lane 1973 E. Lane. *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. New York: Dover.

Lord 1960 Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Rpt. 1968 et seq. New York: Atheneum Press.

al-Maᶜlūf 1966 L. al-Maᶜlūf. *al-Munjid Fī al-Lughah wa-al-Adab wa-al-Aᶜlām*. Beirut: n.p.

Monroe 1972 James Monroe. "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 3:1-53.

Naṣṣār 1962 Naṣṣār. *al-Shiᶜr al-Shaᶜbī al-ᶜArabī*. Cairo.

al-Nour 1957 ᶜAbd al-Nour. *Étude sur la poésie dialectale au Liban*. Beyrouth: Publications de l'Université Libannaise.

Parry 1971 Milman Parry. *The Making of Homeric Verse*. Ed. by Adam Parry. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

al-Ra'ūf 1976 al-Ra'ūf. *Bidāyāt al-Shiᶜr al-ᶜArabī Bayna al-Kamm wa-al-Kayf*. Miṣr: Maktabat al-Khānajī.

Saarisalo 1932 — A. Saarisalo. *Songs of the Druzes. Studia Orientalia,* IV, 1. Helsinki: Societas Orientalis Fennica.

ᶜA. Sbait 1976 — ᶜAwnī Sbait. *al-Jurḥ al-Thā'ir* [*The Festering Wound*]. Nazareth: Maṭbaᶜat al-Nāṣirah.

Ḍ. Sbait 1982 — Ḍirghām Ḥ. Sbait. "The Improvised-Sung Folk Poetry of the Palestinians." Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle.

Shiloah 1975 — A. Shiloah "A Group of Arabic Wedding Songs from the Village of Deyr al-Asad." In *Studies in Marriage Customs*. Jersusalem: The Hebrew University Folklore Research Center. pp. 285-89.

Sirḥān 1977 — N. Sirḥān. *Mawsūᶜat al-Fūlklūr al-Filasṭīnī*. Amman: Maṭbaᶜat al-Tawfīq.

Sirḥān 1979 — _____. *Aghānīnā al-Shaᶜbiyyah Fī al-Ḍaffah al-Gharbiyyah*. Kuwait: n.p.

Smith 1967 — P. Smith. *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Wehr 1976 — H. Wehr. *Arabic-English Dictionary*. Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, Inc.

Wuhaybah 1952 — M. Wuhaybah. *al-Zajal: Tārīkhuhu, Ādābuhu, wa-Aᶜlāmuhu Qadīman Wa-Ḥadīthan*. Ḥarīṣah, Lebanon: al-Maṭbaᶜah al-Būlīsiyyah.

Zwettler 1978 — Michael Zwettler. *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry: Its Character and Implications*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 236-53

Banī Halba Classification of Poetic Genres

Teirab AshShareef

I. *Introduction*[1]

The Banī Halba are an Arabic-speaking ethnic group who live in the Southern part of the Darfur Region in the Sudan. They are one of the *Baggāra* (cattle-rearing) ethnic groups who inhabit a curve-like belt in the Southern Darfur and Kordofan Regions. According to the 1955-56 population census, the last reliable census, their population was about 50,000. The Banī Halba inhabit an area which lies to the southwest of Nyala, approximately between latitudes 11^{0} and 12^{0} N., and longitudes $23½^{0}$ and 25^{0} E. They have a subsistence economy, the resources of which are animals (mainly cattle with a few goats), land, and *hashāb* trees, the producers of gum Arabic. The animals are privately owned by individual households, but land is communally owned and everybody has equal access to it.

The ethnic group has two sectors-a nomadic sector and a sedentary one. The sedentary sector lives on farming and the nomads migrate southwestwards in the harvesting season in search of water and grass for their cattle. They spend winter and summer there and then migrate back to the homeland at the onset of the rainy season. The two main sections of the ethnic group are Awlād Jābir and Awlād Jubāra, each having six main subsections. This structure is hereditary and each individual is a member of a household. A group of households forms both a social and an administrative unit headed by a *sheikh* (pl. *mashāyikh).* A number of sheikhs forms a larger unit headed by a *ᶜumda*. All the *ᶜumad* (pl. of *ᶜumda)* used to owe allegiance to a paramount head, the *Nāẓir.* The administration of the ethnic group is thus organically linked to its social

---

[1] This paper originated in research completed in the Sudan in April, 1977. The tapes referred to here were recorded during the fieldwork I conducted in May-June, 1974 and March-April, 1975. These tapes are deposited in the Folklore Archives of the Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum, Sudan.

I am using a phonetic system of transliteration for the names of the poetic genres to represent their actual pronunciation, and a phonemic one for proper nouns; hence *at-tiḍikkir* rather than *al-tiḍikkir;* and al-Raḍī rather than ar-Raḍī. All translations of Arabic poetic texts are mine.

structure. In 1971, however, the government cancelled the paramount headship and maintained the *mashāyikh* and *ᶜumad*.

The Banī Halba are Muslims. The different facets of their life and culture are those of a nomadic Muslim Arab community. Kinship is an important social institution in their community and their group consciousness and sense of solidarity are very strong. Moral values such as courage, hospitality, respect for neighbors, and the like are highly regarded. The different aspects of their life and culture are interdependent, and there is a continuous interplay between them.

II. *Conception of Poetry*

The Banī Halba identify poetry with singing. To them, poetry is song irrespective of whether it is actually sung or merely chanted. It is art, and the difference between art and ordinary speech is the *naẓim* or *ghine* (singing) (ᶜAlī 1975: Tape no. 1815). The poet is a singer, and all genres of poetry are called *ghine* (singing). Each genre is given a name of its own, distinct from other genres. The Banī Halba believe that in order to compose with a high degree of dexterity in any poetic genre, a bard[2] should be talented and inspired (Aḥmad 1974: Tape no. 1809). Poets themselves believe that composition is inspired by a supernatural being such as a jinnee or a demon. Each poet has a particular jinnee as the source of poetic inspiration. Inspiration is thus an important element in the Banī Halba conception of poetry. Intelligence is also a prerequisite for being a good poet *(ibid.)*. An original and skillful praise poet should not repeat the same words, images, metaphors, and so on, which he has used previously (Muḥammad 1974b: Tape no. 1803). One should be creative and should always invent new stylistic devices and new ways of using the available linguistic repertoire of the dialect.

Other criteria by which the audience critiques the bards include richness and broadness of repertoire, thematic poise, and subtlety in both performance style and linguistic style.[3] Plagiarism (borrowing from the compositions of other bards) is regarded as an indication of artistic incompetence.

[2] The words "poet" and "bard" are used interchangeably in this paper and invariably mean both male and female poet or bard, unless otherwise stated.

[3] Cf. the critical criteria for evaluating *ìjálá* artists in Babạlọlá 1966:47-50.

III. *Classification of Poetic Genres*

The Banī Halba classify their poetry into various genres. Their criterion of classification is based on the tune to which the poetry is chanted or sung and the poetry's musical accompaniment, which is either hand clapping or drumming, for they use no other (ᶜAlī 1975: Tape no. 1815; Muḥammad 1974b: Tape no. 1803). Even if two genres have the same musical accompaniment, they can be distinguished by their difference in tempo.[4]

There are sung genres and chanted genres. Both types are composed and performed by both men and women. However, some genres are exclusively sung or chanted by men, others exclusively sung or chanted by women; that is, gender is an important factor in the classification of poetic genres among Banī Halba. There are three major genres in Banī Halba folk poetry: *al-kātim, sanjak,* and *jardāg* or *bōshān*. The first is sung b) women, the second is sung by both men and women, and the third is chanted by men.[5]

Poetic genres are classified according to gender.[6] Two genres, however, are sung by both men and women. Men's genres are: *sanjak; jardāg* or *bōshān; zanig* (tea-praise); *ḳōṛṃagḷa, am-digēne;* and *dag-al-ᶜēsh* (grain-threshing) songs. All are chanted except *sanjak* and *dag-al-ᶜēsh*

---

[4] Cf. the genres of medieval Arabic folk poetry in al-Marzūqī 1967:75-81.

[5] There are other poetic genres not mentioned here which are obsolete: *at-tōr ḥaran, ᶜirēj,* and *kifēt*. The first and second were for adults and were sung by women while men participated with women in the dance. The third was for the young and was sung by girls while boys participated with them in the dance.

There is a legend that explains why *kifēt* was abandoned. It says that there was once a big circumcision ceremony where a large number of people gathered. They ate and drank in abundance and sang and danced excessively. This hilarious festivity continued day and night for more than a week. One day while the boys and girls were performing *kifēt,* the earth suddenly swallowed them. Since then, the performance of *kifēt* was abandoned forever.

The reason why the performers of *kifēt* in particular perished may have something to do with its style of performance. The boys beat the ground rhythmically with their feet while the girls shook their heads, shoulders, and breasts rhythmically with the singing and the clapping. The element of protest on the part of the earth, which suffered beating for many days successively, may be the reason why *kifēt* has been chosen to be the subject of the legend rather than *at-tōr ḥaran*.

The moral of this legend is that what happened to the performers of *kifēt* was God's punishment for them, as representatives of the other dancers, for over-indulgent celebration. This punishment was meant to be a reminder to their contemporaries and to posterity. The legend is, moreover, a plea for mediation and an attack on extremity in life. Misery and joy are complementary to one another and are a part of human life; any excess in handling either of them may lead to catastrophes.

[6] Cf. the criterion of classification of Somali poetry, which is similar to that of Banī Halba (see Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:46).

songs, which are sung. The sung women's genres are: *al-kātim, sanjak, kadal, chaq* (lip-tattooing) songs, *al-gidērī* (adolescent love songs), and *ghine-' l-murḥāka* (grinding-stone songs). The chanted women's genres are: *zanig, mushkār-ar-rujāl wa-' l-khēl* (praise of men and horses), *at-tiḍikkir* (funeral dirges), and *mahōhāt aI-atfāl* (lullabies)(ᶜAlī 1975: Tape no. l815; Muḥammad 1974b: Tape no. 1803).

Men's *sanjak* is thematically love poetry. The poet may, however, digress to lampoon a beautiful woman's husband, but in the broader sense he is still within the realm of love poetry (Abbakar 1974: Tape no. 1808):

S.[7] Ḥiwēshiya al-Sayyid is the sun and the moon.
If an atheist saw her, he would be converted.
(ᶜAlī 1975: Tape no. 1819)

and from a *kasre* (closing song):

S . *wō wō* I have fire within me

Ch. Show me her way
wōhō wōhō wōhō

S. *Wōhō* I love her very much
Show me her way

Ch. *wōhō wōhō wōhō*
(ᶜAlī 1975: Tape no. 1819)

Men's *sanjak* is sung in a shrill voice, which rises at the beginning of the stanza and falls at its end. In *sanjak,* the antiphonal musical form is utilized to its utmost limits; there is a soloist-chorus reciprocity which allows for an interaction between leader and chorus. The resulting performance is an amalgam of the participation of both. J. H. K. Nketia called this stylistic device of folk song performance "the call and response form" (1962:28ff). Ruth Finnegan gives an adequate description of it as follows: "The role of the soloist (or 'cantor') is crucial. It is he who decides on the song and when it should start and end . . . in contrast to the part played by the chorus which is more or less fixed" (1970:259). This antiphonal form is a basic characteristic of the performance of Banī Halba sung poetry. It is only in *sanjak,* which is performed by both men and women alternately in the same setting, that we find a male soloist and his chorus and a female soloist and her chorus. The two teams alternate in singing in shifts, and participate in different aspects of the performance. An alternation between more than one cantor may sometimes occur in the performance, while the chorus

[7] "S" and "Ch" stand for "soloist" and "chorus," respectively. These abbreviations will be used throughout the paper.

remains constant.[8]

In the performance of Banī Halba song, the call and response form depends basically on two devices-repetition and *marāra* (rhythmic humming of sounds)—and makes use of them to the maximum, which renders them essential characteristics of the performance of the poetry These two devices intertwine and intermingle in the actual performance to the extent that they become one and the same thing.

The structure of *sanjak* exhibits the following elements: the *garjūm* (refrain), the *shēl* (song proper), the *muftāḥ* (a refrain which does not entail a closing song, lit. "key"), and the *kasre* or *dingēse* (closing song) The singing of the *garjūm* and *shēl* is compulsory and basic to the performance, but the singing of the *muftāḥ* is optional. The deft manipulation of these elements determines the bard's degree of mastery of his art.

The *jardāg* or *bōshān* is chanted. Thematically, it is heroic and consists of praise poetry of men and horses; it eulogizes men of valor and horses of noble breed (Muḥammad 1974b: Tape no. 1803). In it the heroic and the eulogistic contents intermingle and it is difficult to draw a line between them. Love as a theme may also intertwine with the heroic content.[9] The function of the *jardāg* as praise poetry is the validation of the social and political status of the panegyrized person—whether political leader or socially or economically renowned person-by glorifying him. In addition, it serves as an incentive for conformity to accepted social norms.[10] The *jardāg* was also used in the past in its heroic capacity as war poetry chanted before going to battle to boost the morale of the warriors.[11] It is also chanted during the *nuggāra* (drum) dance as heroic poetry.

The performance style of *jardāg* is declamatory with a rapid tempo and a very high tone. Its manner of recitation is aloof and majestic to suit

---

[8] Cf. the singing of the Somali *Heello,* in which we find such an aspect of performance (see Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:50).

[9] ʿIzz-al-Dīn Ismāʿīl (1968:269), confuses *sanjak* with the *bōshān* or *jardāg,* the genre we are dealing with here, and considers them one genre. He writes: "And it is obvious that there is no difference between the *sanjak* and the *bōshān* except in their names. It seems that the name of *sanjak*—as usually happens—is originally the name of the dance accompanying the singing. It is known that the *sanjak* dance among Banī Halba is especially for men" (trans. mine). As I stated above, the *sanjak* and the *bōshān* or *jardāg,* our present genre, are two different genres, but they may have the theme of love in common. Moreover, the name of *sanjak* is given to both the singing and the dancing, and not to the dancing only as the writer claims. Both men and women participate in the *sanjak* performance, and it is the women who actually dance, not the men.

[10] For other functions of folklore in general, see Bascom 1965.

[11] This function of the *jardāg* is similar to that of the Somali *geerar*; see Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:49.

the heroic content. Its artistic conventions of recitation demand a dextrous and dramatic manipulation of voice volume, pause, rhythm, tempo, and tone. There is a final cadence at the end of each verse and a pause. The voice then rises at the beginning of the following verse. Like the Somali *gabay,* the *jardāg* "has a simple melody with great variations in the length of notes" (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:47). The bard can make as many variations as he likes within the limits of these characteristics. His skill resides in the way he makes use of these conventions provided by tradition.

Non-verbal repetition is used as a keynote to the *jardāg* at the beginning of the performance in the form of repeated rhythmic humming of sounds:

> *W ō hō wō wōhō wō wō wōwōy*
> *Awiya wō wō wōy ya wōy hō bōhōy wō hō wōy*
> *A wiya wō wō ya wōy hō bōhōy wō hōy wōy*
> *Hey bē biya hō wō hoy wōy hō wōy*
> Our brothers, Banī Halba, do not accept the traitor
> Our brothers, Banī Halba, do not accept the traitor
> We, Banī Halba, are the panthers that spread after the rain stops
> Our horses attack other ethnic groups
> Banī Halba are panthers; our horses attack other ethnic groups.
>
> (Bashar 1974: Tape no. 1820)

The diction of the *jardāg,* like that of the Somali *gabay,* "is characterized by a philosophical mood, with general observations about life interspersed throughout the poem" (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:48). The style is reflective and the words are carefully selected:

> He who tries to escape it [death] will find it chasing him.
> Fighting is a black cooking-pot which besmears whoever touches it.
> Discord is like food offered as charity; whoever is present gets his share.
>
> (Abbakar 1974: Tape no. 1808).

The *zanig* is tea-praise. It is one of the two genres composed and chanted by both men and women, and is associated with one of the most popular practices in the Banī Halba community: drinking tea. Offering one's guest a cup of tea is a measure of hospitality (Aḥmad 1974: Tape no. 1809). This genre is linked with the *barāmka,* which is a gallantry association of youth concerned with the norms of politeness, good manners, handsome attire, courteous behavior towards women, and-most important of all-the rules of drinking tea, either in an ordinary social setting or during the formal tea-drinking sessions of the association.[12]

In the *zanig,* sugar and tea are described from their arrival in Port

[12] Cf. the *barāmka* association among the Humur, another Sudanese *Baggāra* (cattlerearing) ethnic group in the Southern part of Kordofan region (in Cunnison 1966:122-28).

Sudan, through their transportation by train across the country up to Nyala, the provincial capital, then by truck to the Banī Halba homeland The individuals who are associated with this process-the railway stationmaster, the train driver, the local government officer and the retailer-are mentioned in the poetry. In the *zanig,* the *barāmka* extol their patterns of behavior and condemn those who do not conform to these patterns. They call these people *kamākle* (sing. *kamkalī).*

Men's *zanig* is chanted in a very swift style of recitation and a deep voice. It has a lucid, straightforward linguistic style which rarely uses figurative language. Another feature of the *zanig* style is its frequent use of dialogue, which adds a dramatic flavor and vividness to the performance:

He said, "I was asleep at midnight
and the telephone brought me some news."
I said, "What is the news?"
He then said to me,
"Oh, head of the *barāmka,*
haven't you heard the news?"
I said, "No, I haven't heard anything."
He said, "Italy has attacked Suākin,
Port Sudan,[13] and al-Gaḍārif with
tanks, aircraft, and artillery.
It bombed the telephone wires and
the railway, and that is why sugar
has not arrived."

(Aḥmad 1974: Tape no. 1809)

Ḳōṛṃagḷa was originally war poetry.[14] It is a heroic recitation which was performed by men upon arriving home victorious from battle. Nowadays it is performed when men return from a *faza*^{c} (a help campaign in pursuit of a thief or assisting someone in trouble), or on ordinary happy occasions such as weddings or circumcision ceremonies. When men recite *Ḳōṛṃagḷa* the women receive them with exultant joy while ululating and singing merrily (Muḥammad 1974a: Tape no. 1802). *Am-digēne* is then performed at home. This is a jubilant victory dance to the non-verbal singing of a rhythmic utterance of sounds accompanied by clapping *(ibid.;* ^{c}U. Ibrāhīm 1975: Tape no. 1822):

S. *Wahaywō*
Ch. *Ohuwo*

[13] Suākin and Port Sudan are the Sudanese ports on the Red Sea in eastern Sudan. These are the towns through which imports, including tea and sugar, enter the country; hence their significance to the bard.

[14] Cf. the Somali *geerar* in Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964:49.

S. *Wahaywō*
Ch. *Ohuwo*

S. *Ihowo*
Ch. *Ihowo*

S. *Wahaywō*
Ch. *Ihowo*

S. *Tirīrīrī*
Ch. *Howo.*

(ᶜU. Ibrāhīm 1975: Tape no. 1822)

Ḳōṛṃagḷa and *am-digēne* are twin genres which are complementary; neither lean be performed without the other. *Ḳōṛṃagḷa* is recited in a declamatory style with a slow tempo and a deep voice. The manner of recitation is aloof and majestic to suit the heroic content. It has short staccato verses, and its diction is denotative rather than connotative. The sound effect of the poetry is emphasized for the creation of maximum emotional excitement:

S. *Wāy jāritna*
Le-'m-gurūn zōlina
Kin mutna ḥagga-'ṭ-ṭēr yiwāritna

(Dahab 1975: Tape no. 1818)

S . Oh our neighbor
[I am addressing] our friend with the long braids
If we died let the vultures feed on us.

Dag-al-ᶜēsh songs among Banī Halba fall within the larger cross-cultural generic category of work songs. These grain-threshing songs are sung during the harvesting season while men cooperatively thresh the millet harvest on a *madag* (threshing-floor). As is the case with other work songs, the words of these songs are simple and direct. The rhythm and the melody are of primary importance to the meaning of the words:

S. *Anīna gibēl shin gulnā?*
Ch. *Gulna-' ṭ-ṭer biyākulnā.*

(Faḍl-al-Karīm 1975: Tape no. 1823)

S . What did we say earlier?
Ch. We said the vultures will feed on us.

This stress on the rhythm allows for the use of nonsensical words to fill out the rhythm and complete the melody, e.g., the word *"kijaynā"* repeated by the chorus in the following stanza:

S. *ᶜAmmitī Maryam*
Ch. *Kijaynā*
S. *Maryam am-dalazāt*
Ch. *Kijaynā*.

(Faḍl-al-Karīm 1975: Tape no. 1823)

S. Aunt Maryam
Ch. *Kijaynā*
S . Maryam, the one with the fat behind
Ch. *Kijaynā*

Moreover, the performers themselves are the audience of the grain-threshing songs. In Finnegan's words, "the work . . . provides the occasion rather than the subject-matter, and the song depends on the rhythm of the work rather than an audience for its point of departure" (1970:231).

Like other work songs, grain-threshing songs have a psychological function in lessening the fatigue of the workers and enabling them to endure the monotony of the work, a psychological effect created by the harmony resulting from the synchronization between the song and the rhythmic movement of the work. Finnegan's description is, again, appropriate: "the work becomes attractive and artistic rather than merely laborious, and the song a background to a kind of dance as well as to labour" (238).

The Banī Halba also have *niḥās* (royal copper-drum) poetry in the sense that the beats of the drum performed in a particular rhythmic manner express linguistic meaning. This takes place, as Finnegan puts it, "through direct representation of the spoken language itself, simulating the tone and rhythm of actual speech. The instruments themselves are regarded as speaking and their messages consist of words" (481). This poetry is peculiar to the traditional *niḥās* only. Ordinary drums are used as accompaniments to sung poetry as in the *kadal* or the drum dance as mentioned above.

This copper-drum is kept by the paramount head and handed down from generation to generation of rulers. It is the emblem of ethnic pride and solidarity, since the Banī Halba believe that it has been brought from Arabia by their ancestor Jamᶜān al-ᶜAṣī. This *niḥās* poetry is political poetry which is normally beaten on political and social occasions such as gatherings, battles, installations of new paramount heads, *fazaᶜ* (help campaign), *nafīr* (voluntary customary co-operative work) in the paramount head's farm, funerals of the royal family, and so forth. Each beat has a particular linguistic meaning known to the members of the ethnic group and thus is easily communicable to them.

Copper-drum poetry uses non-verbal communication through the almost indefinite repetition of the beats with varying tempos. There are three kinds of beat sequences, which differ in tempo depending upon the

situation in which they are employed. The first one, a call for the men to gather, is composed of one beat repeated several times in very slow tempo; there is a pause after each beat. It goes:

Till
Till
Till
Till
Till

(Maghayyan 1975: Tape no. 1824)

The second kind of beat sequence is sounded when the paramount head is getting ready to lead the procession after the gathering of his men on horseback. This beat sequence simulates the phrase *Sulṭān gum* ("stand up, Sultan").[15] The repeated unit of this kind consists of three beats sounded continuously without pause and with a swifter tempo than that of the first sequence:

Til dil dil
Til dil dil
Til dil dil
Til dil dil
Til dil dil
Til dil dil
Til dil dil
Til dil dil
Til dil dil

(Maghayyan 1975: Tape no. 1824)

The third kind of beat sequence is sounded when the horses start their procession with the paramount head in front and with the copper-drum on camel-back succeeding him, followed by his men on horseback. This beat simulates the phrase *biktul bizgul* ("he [the paramount head] kills and throws away"). The repeated unit consists of four beats sounded continuously without pause. This sequence's tempo is faster than that of the first beat and slower than that of the second:

Dil til dil til
Dil til dil til
Dil til dil til
Dil til dil til
Dil til dil til
Dil til dil til

(Maghayyan 1975: Tape no. 1824)

[15] The use of the word *Sulṭān* here instead of its local equivalent *nāẓir* is an index to the cultural dissemination that took place as a result of the close—and yet hostile—contact between Banī Halba and the Fur Sultanates in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

AI-kātim is the major women's genre. It is sung and is thematically love and heroic poetry (al-Rihēd and al-Raḍī 1975: Tape no. 1821).[16] The heroic content intermingles with the panegyric content, which is either communal or personal. The communal panegyric is for either the whole ethnic group, a section of it, or a clan; the personal panegyric is for either kinsmen or renowned men.

AI-kātim exploits the soloist-chorus reciprocity in musical form by drawing it out almost indefinitely. Verbal repetition is used, and there is a repeated interchange between soloist and chorus. Two types of verbal repetition can be discerned. In the first type, both soloist and chorus repeat their parts of the stanza without variation:

S. They [Banī Halba] have unified their opinion
And they approach death if they sense it.

Ch. They have prepared their weapons
And they are getting trained.

* * * * *

S. They have unified their opinion
And they approach death if they sense it.

Ch. They have prepared their weapons
And they are getting trained.

* * * * *

S. They have unified their opinion
And they approach death if they sense it.

Ch. They have prepared their weapons
And they are getting trained.

(al-Rihed 1975: Tape no. 1821)

The second type of verbal repetition in *al-kātim* takes place when the cantor repeats the first verse of the stanza and improvises on it indefinitely while the chorus refrain remains constant. There is an unlimited possibility for improvisation on the cantor's part, which is done by substituting words and

[16] Dr. ᶜIzz-al-Dīn Ismāᶜīl, again, confuses the *bōshān* and *al-kātim* just as he confused the *bōshān* and *sanjak*. He writes (1968:275): "The praise *bōshān* is called *al-kātim*." This is not correct because, as we have seen, the *bōshān* and *al-kātim* are two separate genres although they may have some themes in common; e.g., panegyric and love. This is a common feature of Banī Halba folk poetry. What brought confusion to Dr. Ismāᶜīl might have been that he adopted a thematic typological criterion extrinsic to the poetry in question, while ignoring the local typological criterion adopted by the people themselves.

phrases in the formulas. The repeated refrain of the chorus acts as a closing cadence to the singing of each stanza:

S. Halba's sons are few.
Ch. There is no desertion in the face of death.

S. The ethnic group is small.
Ch. There is no desertion in the face of death.

S. The rams of sacrifice are few.
Ch. There is no desertion in the face of death.

(al-Rihēd 1975: Tape no. 1821)

Women's *sanjak* is thematically love poetry but sometimes merges into praise and heroic poetry. It shares with men's *sanjak* such generic features as the *shēl* (song proper) and the *kasre* (closing song), and such stylistic features as the call and response musical form, repetition, and *marāra* (rhythmic humming of sounds) with men's *sanjak*. The only difference is that the *garjūm* (refrain) and the *muftāḥ* (a refrain which does not entail a closing song) are restricted to men's *sanjak;* e.g.

S. *Sanjak* demands discipline
S +Ch. Perform it gently,
My twin,[17] the newly-grown seedling.[18]

S. *Sanjak* demands discipline
S. + Ch. Perform it gently,
My twin, the newly-grown seedling.

S. *Wōhō habābi hōy*
S + Ch. *Hōhō wōho wōhōy*
Wōhō habābi hēy.

(A. al-Manzūl 1975: Tape no. 1825)

The following is an example of a *kasre* (closing song):

S. Pure honey, if you are leaving
Just say to me, "Let us go."

Ch. Pure honey, if you are leaving
Just say to me, "Let us go."

S. Pure honey, if you are leaving
Just say to me, "Let us go."

[17] The lover is frequently referred to as a "twin."

[18] "Newly-grown seedling" is a euphemism for physical tenderness.

Ch. Pure honey, if you are leaving
Just say to me, "Let us go."

CA. al-Manzūl 1975: Tape no. 1825)

The *kadal* or *geduma* is sung exclusively by women to the accompaniment of the drum solely on the occasion of circumcision of boys, that is, of their initiation into manhood (M. Ibrāhīm 1974: Tape no. 1804). In the *kadal,* the rhythm of the drum beats is balanced with that of the words of the poetry. The bardess composes during performance and praises the circumcized boy and the male members of his family: his ancestors, his father, his uncles, and his brothers. In the content of the *kadal,* there is an interplay between the praise and the heroic, which are closely knitted together.

The antiphonal form is also an essential element in the performance of *kadal*. One type of verbal repetition is used in which the cantor recites the whole stanza, followed by the chorus repeatedly reciting the whole stanza:

S. The lion of the night
And the tiger of the evening
I am calling him, al-Ḥurriyya's maternal uncle,
Who needs no support if it [the battle] started.

Ch. The lion of the night
And the tiger of the evening
I am calling him, al-Ḥurriyya's maternal uncle,
Who needs no support if it [the battle] started.

S. The lion of the night
And the tiger of the evening
I am calling him, al-Ḥurriyya's maternal uncle,
Who needs no support if it [the battle] started.

Ch. The lion of the night
And the tiger of the evening
I am calling him, al-Ḥurriyya's maternal uncle,
Who needs no support if it [the battle] started.

(Ilyās 1974: Tape no. 1802:

Mushkār ar-rujāl wa-' l-khēl (lit. "praise of men and horses") is women's genre which is chanted. It is concerned with the eulogies of courageous and hospitable men and horses of noble breed (K. al-Manzūl 1975: Tape no. 1821). The *mushkār* is, hence, generically related to that men's *jardāg*. It is also thematically and stylistically akin to the men's *jardāg* in that they both have heroic and eulogistic content. Like the *jardāg* the manner of recitation of the *mushkār* is aloof and majestic to suit the heroic content. It is recited with a very high tone and a rapid tempo:

Banī Halba, my kinsmen, you are the humming bees that sting in the face.
You are the bitterness of a split colocynth.
You are the sharpness of a newly-sharpened razor.
The ones who protect the women of the ethnic group, the ones who do not take indignity.
The generous ones, the ones who are not dishonest.

(Ilyās 1974: Tape no. 1802)

The *mushkār* also encompasses the *miᶜyār* (lampoons) of men who do not conform to accepted patterns of social behavior, especially the cowards and the mean (K. al-Manzūl 1975: Tape no. 1821). Such lampoons are used as incentives for conformity and instruments of social pressure:

Al-Bilēl, ᶜUthmān's son,
I thought you were one who crushes men,
But I found out that you are a fool and good-for-nothing
When the horses galloped [to battle], the one who is as domestic as a pet.

(K. al-Manzūl 1975: Tape no. 1821)

Also:

ᶜAṣīr, al-Gōnī's son, and al-Faḍl are neighbors.
If you ask ᶜAṣīr [to go to fight], he will say to you, "I am looking after my children. "
If you ask al-Faḍl, Dabbūg's son, he will say to you, "I am ill."

(K. al-Manzūl 1975: Tape no. 1821)

Women's *zanig* is chanted. It is thematically love poetry; it also uses antiphony:

S. Azum sea,[19] I will swim nowhere except in your waters.
Wait some days for me to rid me of my worries.

Ch. Azum sea, I will swim nowhere except in your waters.
Wait some days for me to rid me of my worries.

(Sabīl 1975: Tape no. 1824)

Women's *zanig* is sometimes a straightforward non-narrative tea-praise unlike the narrative and dialogic men's *zanig:*

[19] Azum Sea is actually not a sea, but is figuratively called so. It is a large seasona water-course.

S. Tea, the medicine of the sick, is being served.

Ch. What we are doing is mere gallantry, for these are the affairs of the ḥurafa.[20]

(Sabīl, 1975: Tape no. 1824)

At-Tiḍikkir[21] (lit., "remembering") is a genre of work poetry collectively chanted by women while separating the husk of millet from the grains to prepare food during the *furāsh* (the first three days of formal mourning after a person's death). It is a hymn-like invocation in which women ask God's forgiveness for the dead person. Essentially, it expresses an acceptance of, and a resignation to, the bitter fact of death as dictated by the teachings of Islam:

We have been created from non-existence to end in non-existence.
Non-existence is unavoidable.
God the Beneficent creates and exterminates.

(cAbd-al-Ḥamīd 1975: Tape no. 1824)

At-Tiḍikkir, as its name designates, functions as a remembrance and a reminder to the living of the transience of life, of the inevitability of death, and of the eternal life that follows.

Ghine-' l-murḥāka (grinding stone singing) is another genre of work poetry sung solo and without chorus by women when grinding millet indoors (ᶜAbd-al-Raḥmān 1975: Tape no.1819). Finnegan's description of solitary women's work songs adequately applies to this genre: "This is a situation that gives scope to the expression of more personal feelings . . . than in the group songs" (1970: 237). Here is an example:

O, his mother who begot him,
Tell the highly selected *zaytūn*[22] to take it easy.
Wealth is acquired and not hereditary.

(ᶜAbd-al-Raḥmān 1975: Tape no. 1819)

This genre is now dying because of the increasing number of flour-mills built in the Banī Halba homeland.

Chaq poetry is sung during the lip-tattooing ceremony of a young

[20] *Ḥurafa* (sing., *ḥarīf)* is another name that the *barāmka,* the members of the tea drinking association, call themselves.

[21] In Banī Halba dialect, and most other Sudanese Arabic dialects, the standard /*dh*/ is pronounced /*ḍ*/, as in *ḍanab* for *dhalnab* ("tail") and *ḍabaḥ* for *dhabaḥa* ("to slaughter"); hence the standard equivalent of *at-tiḍikkir* is *al-tadhakkur* (i.e., "remembering").

[22] The *zaytūn* (lit., "olives") is the generic name given to a kind of rounded ornament made of ivory and used in necklaces. The shape of a single *zaytūnāye* is oval, similar to that of an olive.

girl, an initiation ceremony into womanhood and subsequently marriage. Its content is panegyric: it eulogizes the girl who is being lip-tattooed, and usually praises her beauty, virtuous behavior, and endurance:

The multi-colored heifer
Has an amulet hanging from her neck
The one with a luminous canine
What does the track of thorns do?[23]

(Sabīl 1975: Tape no. 1824)

Mahōhāt al-aṭfāl (lullabies) are a genre sung by mothers while rocking their children to sleep or trying to stop them from crying. These songs use simple words which are chosen for their sound quality rather than their meaning:

Taᶜāl yā nōm *nōm al-ᶜiyāl*
Kin jīt nahār *banṭīk kisār*
Kin jīt fi-'l-lēl *banṭīk ijēl*
Kin jīt ᶜashiye *banṭīk nasiye*

(Sabīl 1975: Tape no. 1824)

Come, sleep — come to my child
If you come by day — I'll give you bread
If you come at night — I'll give you a calf
If you come in the evening — I'll give you buttermilk

Al-Gidērī is a genre composed and sung by adolescent girls and performed in a dance in which both boys and girls participate. The theme of this genre is adolescent love.

Musa, the ounce of gold,
My life is a gift to you.

(ᶜUmar 1975: Tape no. 1821)

Also:

He is a summer rain
that quenches thirst.

(ᶜUmar 1975: Tape no. 1821)

IV. *Conclusion*

The Banī Halba identify poetry with singing. To them, poetry is song and a bard is a singer: that is why they consider non-verbal genres,

[23] Lip-tattooing is performed by using a bundle of thorns.

such as *am-digēne* and copper-drum beat, poetry. Inspiration and talent are regarded as the basic prerequisites for being a good poet. Bards themselves believe in inspiration by jinnees, each bard having a particular jinnee who is the source of poetic inspiration. Critical criteria for evaluating poetry include originality, richness and broadness of linguistic repertoire, thematic poise, and stylistic subtlety.

The Banī Halba classification of their poetic genres is based on the tune to which the poetry is chanted or sung, and on the musical accompaniment, which is either clapping or drumming. The dichotomy of poetic genres according to gender is a facsimile of the social dichotomy: there are men's genres on the one hand and women's genres on the other. The chanting and singing of poetry, however, is not divided according to gender, for both men and women chant and sing.

University of Minnesota

References

Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964 — B. W. Andrzejewski and I. M. Lewis. *Somali Poetry* Oxford Library of African Literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Babạlọlá 1966 — S. A. Babạlọlá. *The Content and Form of Yoruba Ìjálá.* Oxford Library of African Literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bascom 1965 — William R. Bascom. "Four Functions of Folklore." In Alan Dundes, ed., *The Study of Folklore*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. pp. 279-98.

Cunnison 1966 — I. Cunnison. *Baggāra Arabs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Finnegan 1970 — Ruth Finnegan. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ismāʿīl 1968 — ʿIzz-al-Dīn Ismāʿīl. *al-Shiʿr al-Qawmī fī al-Sūdān*. Beirut: Dār al-ʿAwda.

al-Marzūqī 1967 — Muḥammad al-Marzūqī. *al-Adab al-Shaʿbī fī Tūnis*. Tunis: al-Dār al Tūnisiyya Li-al-Nashr.

Nketia 1962 J. H. K. Nketia. *African Music in Ghana: A Survey of Traditional Forms*. Accra: Longmans.

Oral Sources

Abbakar, ᶜUmar Aḥmad	1974	Tape no. 1808
ᶜAbd-al-Ḥamīd, Rīfa Khaṭir	1975	Tape no. 1824
ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, Faṭṭīma Ibrāhīm	1975	Tape no. 1819
Aḥmad, ᶜAbd-al-ᶜAzīz Hārūn	1974	Tape no. 1809
ᶜAlī, Aḥmad Adam	1975	Tape no. 1815
Bashar, Adam Ḥusayn	1974	Tape no. 1820
Dahab, ᶜAbd-Allāh Maṭar	1975	Tape no. 1818
Faḍ1-al-Karīm, Sulaymān	1975	Tape no. 1823
Ibrāhīm, Maryam Muḥammad	1975	Tape no. 1804
Ibrāhīm, ᶜUmar	1975	Tape no. 1822
Ilyās, Kaltūm Idrīs	1974	Tape no. 1802
Maghayyan, Aḥmad Dāwūd	1975	Tape no. 1824
al-Manzūl, Am-Marād Muḥammad	1975	Tape no. 1825
al-Manzūl, Kaltūma	1975	Tape no. 1821
Muḥammad, Muḥammad al-Ḥasan	1974a 1974b	Tape no. 1802 Tape no. 1803
al-Raḍī, 'Um-Salama	1975	Tape no. 1821
al-Rihēd, Ḥalīma Dāwūd	1975	Tape no. 1821
Sabīl, 'Um-Salama	1975	Tape no. 1824
ᶜUmar, Fāṭima	1975	Tape no. 1821

Oral Tradition, 4/1-2 (1989): 254-65

Oral Transmission in Arabic Music, Past and Present

George D. Sawa

In this article I shall study the nature, process, and problems of oral transmission in Arabic music in medieval Iraq and twentieth-century Egypt. The choice of areas and eras is dictated by the present state of scholarship pertaining to the subject of oral transmission in Arabic music, particularly the work of my colleague Salwa el-Shawan, my own research in medieval Arabic music, and my training in early twentieth-century Arabic music.

The Medieval Period

For the medieval period I shall rely on one source: the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*[1] (*Book of Songs*) of al-Iṣbahānī (d. 967). This anthology, written in anecdotal form, covers, in approximately ten thousand pages, poetical and musical practices as well as social and cultural history from the fifth to the tenth century in Arabia, Persia, Syria, and Iraq. Among the many musical practices described in the *KA*, the processes of oral transmission are relevant to this study, and also the fact that the oral medium was by far the most popular.

1. Written Transmission

Though the most popular, oral transmission was not the only medium used. Written transmission is also known to have been employed, though in very rare circumstances. We learn of two such unique occasions in the *KA* when Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (d. 850), the ᶜAbbāsid composer-singer-historian-theorist, sent a notated song to Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī (d. 839), the ᶜAbbāsid prince-singer-composer (X:105-6, 110). The notation must have been quite accurate, for, if we believe the *KA*, Ibrāhīm was reported to

[1] Abbreviated hereafter as *KA*.

have sung both songs exactly as Isḥāq himself had composed and performed them. The precise nature of musical notation in the ninth century is not entirely clear to us: pitches were precisely delineated in terms of lute fretting, as in theoretical treatises of the ninth century, but durations, and subsequently rhythms, were not as exact as pitches. In the tenth century, however, al-Fārābi produced a very accurate system of notation which included not only pitches and durations but also dynamics and timbre.[2]

The very meager use of notation in the medieval era can be ascribed to the fact that most musicians were not as well versed in music theory as were Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī. Thus the oral medium was the rule in music transmission, whereas the visual medium (i.e. notation) was a very rare exception indeed, and it remained confined to the field of music theory.

2. Oral Transmission

At first glance the process of oral transmission seems to be very straightforward: a singer [transmitter] transmits through many repetitions his or her composition—or compositions transmitted to him or her—to another singer [receiver]. The accuracy of oral transmission presupposes both an accurate "transmitter" and an accurate "receiver" who in turn shall accurately transmit a repertoire to future accurate "receivers." Though this ideal situation obtained to some extent (see X:69-70), it was often jeopardized by inaccurate "transmitters" and/or inaccurate "receivers" and further threatened by memory erosion.

(a) *Music Transmitters*

In the *KA* one can isolate two distinct types of transmission: direct and mediated.[3] In direct transmission the composer personally transmitted a song directly to a student or a colleague. In mediated transmission, the transmitter was a singer who had learned a song directly from its composer, or indirectly through a chain of other transmitters going back to the original composer. In either case, the success of an accurate transmission depended upon the reliability of the transmitter.

A requisite of a good transmitter, whether original composer or

[2] Al-Fārābī borrowed, in his notation system, concepts and terminologies from grammar, prosody, arithmetics, and Euclidean geometry. This is detailed in his *Kitāb al-Mūsīqī al-Kabīr* (Grand Book of Music), *Kitāb al-Iqāᶜāt* (Book of Rhythms), and *Kitāb Iḥṣā' al-Iqāᶜāt* (Book for the Basic Comprehension of Rhythms). See Sawa 1983-84:1-32.

[3] I am borrowing the terms direct and mediated transmissions from el-Shawan (1982).

performer, was to reproduce a song as originally composed and not alter it in the least in the many successive repetitions needed during a musical lesson. According to the testimony of Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī, the ᶜAbbāsid singer ᶜAllūyah (d. 850) was a trustworthy transmitter because he never changed a song no matter how many times he sang it. On the other hand, Mukhāriq (d. ca. 845) was untrustworthy and difficult because of his constantly changing creative performances. The following anecdote from the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* vividly depicts these points and also points out the following dichotomy:

> A good transmitter was uncreative, and often considered not so excellent a performer; a bad transmitter was creative, and often considered an excellent performer.
>
> "I [al-Iṣbahānī] was informed by Muḥammad ibn Mazyad who said: Ḥammād the son of Isḥāq informed us saying: I asked my father: In your opinion who is better, Mukhāriq or ᶜAllūyah? He said: My son, ᶜAllūyah is more knowledgeable as to what comes out of his head and more knowledgeable in what he sings and performs [on the lute]. If I were to choose between them both as to who will teach my slave singing girls, or if I were asked for advice, I would choose ᶜAllūyah: for he used to perform vocal music [well] and compose with artful mastery. Mukhāriq, with his [masterly] control over his voice and his [consequent] overabundance of ornaments, is not a good transmitter because he does not perform even one song as he learned it and does not sing it twice the same way because of his many additions to it. However, should they meet with a Caliph or a [wealthy] commoner, Mukhāriq would win the favor of the assembly and get the reward because of his nice[r] voice and abundant ornamentation."
>
> (XI:334)

Mukhāriq's musical twin was Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah, an excellent singer whose constantly changing interpretation made him likewise an impossible and useless teacher (XV:359).

In addition to performance creativity there was another factor which hampered the flow of oral transmission, and which pertained to the capriciousness of ᶜAbbāsid musicians, who often gave themselves the freedom to alter the repertoire of the ᶜAbbāsid (750-1258), Umayyad (661-750), and pre-Umayyad periods (X:69-70), in order to suit their musical dispositions in style, taste, or musical abilities. This is documented in an epistle written by the one-day Caliph and proficient musician ᶜAbd-Allāh ibn al-Muᶜtazz (d. 909) to the musician ᶜUbayd-Allāh ibn ᶜAbd-Allāh ibn Ṭāhir (X:276; see also Sawa 1983:238-39). The alterations consisted of melodic and rhythmic ornaments: note replacement, addition and removal of notes, metrical expansion and contraction, and addition of ornaments as well as simplification and elimination of ornaments. They also consisted of repetitions of sections and additions of new melodic sections (Sawa 1983:235-37).

A third factor is what I shall term the competitive economic factor. A court musician who had exclusive knowledge and mastery over a repertoire of songs, and who in addition wished to keep a monopoly over such a repertoire, resorted to musical alteration at every concert performance so as to prevent his colleagues or rivals from learning any of it. By keeping a monopoly over a set of songs, a court musician was assured of being constantly in demand among the aristocracy and of being generously remunerated for performing such songs. One of the many documented examples of such economically motivated practices was that of Prince Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī who purposefully distorted one song at each repetition to prevent the gifted singer Mukhāriq from learning it (X:102).

A fourth factor affecting the accurate transmission of songs was intoxication resulting from wine consumption. Tired, relaxed, and intoxicated musicians unconsciously altered the contents of their songs as evidenced in the following anecdote about the singer Ḥakam al-Wādī (d. 809):

> Hārūn ibn Muḥammad and Yaḥyà ibn Khālid said: We have not seen among the singers anyone who is a better performer than Ḥakam (al-Wādī). And no one [among the singers] has heard a song and sang it but altered it, adding [here] and curtailing [there], except Ḥakam. This was mentioned to Ḥakam who said: "I do not drink, others do." If they drink, their rendition changes.
>
> (VI:285)

(b) *Music Receivers*

Music receivers were students learning a repertoire from a composer or teacher/transmitter; or they were musicians learning from colleagues. Transmitters were paid in money or in kind. Remunerations were, however, waived when there was an exchange of songs (XIX:221).

Singers' learning skills varied a great deal from accurate to inaccurate, and accuracy in turn depended on the relative difficulty of a repertoire. Inaccurate learning made a receiver a future inaccurate transmitter. After generations of exponentially compounded inaccurate transmissions, the final product came to be quite different from the original one, hence making—in the words of the enlightened music historian al-Iṣbahānī—the transmitters the composers of the new product:

> This change, al-Iṣbahānī informs us, was compounded from generation to generation of teacher/student so that, after five such generations, the final version of a song had so little in common with the original that the musicians who caused changes had virtually become the composers of the final music product (Sawa 1983:238).

Two classic pages in the *KA* list a chain of accurate transmitters/receivers and a chain of inaccurate transmitters/receivers (X:69-70). Among the accurate ones were the renowned slave singing girls of al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar; Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī advised Mukhāriq to relearn his songs from them (XII:48). Another accurate repository was Muḥammad (d. 847), the son of the above-mentioned al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar. Hibat-Allāh, the son of Prince Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdi, reported that Muḥammad had learned all of Ibrāhīm's compositions from Ibrāhīm himself and that he altered none of them (XXIII:177). Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar was also able to learn some of Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī's songs known for craftsmanship and extreme sophistication:

> I [al-Iṣbahanī] was informed by Jaḥẓah who said: Abū ᶜAbd-Allāh al-Hāshimī told me: I heard Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muṣᶜab saying to [the Caliph] al-Wāthiq (d. 847): Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī said to me: No one has yet been able to learn[4] from me a song correctly[5] except Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥarīth ibn Buskhunnar. He has learned a number of songs from me as I sing them…. (XII:48-49)

The proverbial difficulty of Isḥāq's songs was related in two anecdotes in which top musicians were still at a loss after the song was repeated two hundred times. It was reported that, by the time Isḥāq died, the singers knew only its skeleton (*rasm*; V:314, 417-18). Regarding another difficult song of Isḥāq, it was reported in a second anecdote that even Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Buskhunnar was unable to learn the song accurately, though it was repeated seventy times. Particularly illuminating in this anecdote, partially translated below, is the statement Muḥammad made about the problem inherent in oral transmission:

> I myself counted more than seventy repetitions and everyone [among the singers] thought that they had learned it [correctly], but by God none [of them] did. I, the first among them, was not able to learn it accurately though I am—God knows—the fastest learner. I don't know [the reason]: is it because of its many ornaments or because of its extreme difficulty . . ..
>
> (V:315-16)

As to what is meant by the "extreme difficulty" of Isḥāq's song, one can only conjecture that it refers to unorthodox melodic movement and rhythm, chromaticism and changes of melodic modes, and virtuositic cadences.

The relative degree of difficulty of a piece was one factor affecting the learning accuracy. Another equally important factor was the learning

---

[4] Lit. "take."

[5] *mustawiyan*, lit. "straight."

speed. Some virtuosi needed to hear a piece once or twice only to memorize it accurately (XII:48; XIV:187-89; XIX:221). Others required very many repetitions before they could learn a piece. One such musician was Zalzal (d. after 842), the famous virtuoso lutenist who accomplished the singing of Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 804) (the father of Isḥāq) at the court of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 809). Zalzal was also the lute teacher of Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī. The latter described his teacher's slow learning speed as follows:

> Until he knew and understood a new song, Zalzal was slow [to learn it], so that if he and his *ghulām* [slave boy or servant] accompanied a song neither of them knew from before, his *ghulām* would be the better [accompanist]. Yet when he [Zalzal] comprehended it he would come up with a performance none could attain.
>
> (V:275)

Short of a minimum required number of repetitions, musicians in Zalzal's category could not learn a piece accurately, though they were outstanding in every other respect.[6] For this reason they often had recourse to musicians with a proverbial memory, those who could learn a song after one or two hearings only. Muḥammad al-Zaff (d. ca. 809), ᶜAbd-Allāh ibn al-ᶜAbbās al-Rabīᶜī (d. ca. 861), and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥarīth ibn Buskhunnar were renowned as quick and accurate memorizers (XIV:187-189; XII:48; XIX:221).

Muḥammad al-Zaff was so skilled as a quick memorizer that he made a lucrative profession of it. Musicians paid him to steal songs which performers attempted to monopolize. Conversely, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī bought him off with a monthly stipend in order not to divulge his compositions. The following anecdote, describing events that took place in the *majlis* of Hārūn al-Rashīd, illustrates Muḥammad al-Zaff's skills at stealing a newly composed song of Ibn Jāmiᶜ (d. before 804) in front of his nose and then accusing Ibn Jāmiᶜ, the original composer, of plagiarism. The humor of the episode much delighted the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd:

> I was informed by Ibn Jaᶜfar Jaḥẓah who said: We were told by Ḥammād ibn Isḥāq on the authority of his father who said: One day Ibn Jāmiᶜ sang in the presence of al-Rashīd:
>
> Bold to forsake me, cowardly about union with me/
> Habitual liar, one given to following a promise by procrastination.
> Setting one foot forward towards union but withdrawing/
> The other, he mixes seriousness in this matter with jest.
> He is concerned for us, but whenever I say "He has come close [to us]/
> And shown generosity," he turns away and leans toward avarice.

[6] It is worth noting here an important musical concept which transpires from this anecdote as well as from many pages of *KA*, namely that slow learning speed was not regarded as poor musicianship.

His abstention becomes greater as my passion grows/
And my desire intensifies as he grudges giving.

[Ibn Jāmiᶜ] went on to excel and beautify his rendering in whatever way he wished. At this point I [Isḥāq] made a sign about him to the singer Muḥammad al-Zaff, who immediately understood my intention. Al-Rashīd liked Ibn Jamiᶜ's singing, drank to it, and asked for two or three encores.

I then got up to pray, made a sign to al-Zaff who followed me, and I motioned the singers Mukhāriq, ᶜAllūyah, and ᶜAqīd, who also joined me. I asked al-Zaff to repeat the song: he not only did but performed it as if [Ibn Jāmiᶜ] were singing it. Al-Zaff kept on repeating it to the group until they sang it correctly.

I then returned to the *majlis*, and when my turn came to sing, I started first of all by singing the aforementioned song. Ibn Jāmiᶜ stared at me blankly whereas al-Rashīd turned to me and said: "Did you use to transmit this song?" I replied: "Yes, my Lord." Ibn Jāmiᶜ then said: "By God he has lied, he got it from none other than me just now!" I said: "This song I have been transmitting for a long time, and every singer attending this *majlis* once learned it from me.

I then turned towards al-Rashīd, and ᶜAllūyah sang it, then ᶜAqīd, and then Mukhāriq. Ibn Jāmiᶜ jumped up and sat in front of al-Rashīd, swore by his life and at the risk of divorcing his wife that he had composed the melody only three nights ago, and that it had not been heard from him till that time. Al-Rashīd turned to me and said: "By my life, tell me the truth about this whole business." I did and this caused him to laugh and clap and say: "Everything has its fated end, and Ibn Jāmiᶜ's is al-Zaff."

(XIV:187-88; Sawa 1984:41-42)

(c) *Memory Erosion*

Whether one deals with an accurate or inaccurate performer, a fast or slow learner, or an easy or difficult repertoire, memory erosion was bound to set in, especially when a musician had not heard or performed a repertoire for a period of time. In one anecdote, Mukhāriq asked the singer Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah to refresh the memory of the slave girls whom Mukhāriq had originally bought from Muḥammad. The slave girls had been out of practice for a while and needed to hear a repertoire of songs which their former teacher had taught them (XV:360). In another anecdote which occurred in the *majlis* of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn (d. 833), the memory problem is mentioned in a figurative sense. Mukhāriq had performed a song in front of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, but Prince Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, who was present, was not pleased with the performance, so he asked Mukhāriq to repeat it. Mukhāriq repeated it and did better, but his performance was still wanting. Prince Ibrāhīm then, at the request of the Caliph, performed it himself, thus enabling Mukhāriq to come up with a better performance. When asked by al-Ma'mūn what was the difference between the performances, Prince Ibrāhīm said that there was much difference and turning to Mukhāriq observed:

> Your example is like that of a superb garment: if its owner forgets about it, dust sets in it and its colors change [and become dull]. If shaken [however] it will return to its original state.
>
> (X:102)

The odds against accurate oral transmission were too high and seriously impeded the survival of a repertoire. The process of change within a large repertoire is inevitable because of the following compounded factors: performance creativity, musical capriciousness, musical dispositions (taste, style, performing and learning abilities), relative difficulty of songs, intoxication, economically motivated alterations, and, most seriously, memory erosion. By the time al-Iṣbahānī compiled his anthology in the middle of the tenth century, total memory erosion had taken over, so that both accurate and altered versions of the Umayyad and early ᶜAbbāsid repertoire had been obliterated (X:69-70).

The Modern Era

In the modern period, the transmission medium varies according to the musical category being transmitted. In rural music the transmission is oral, in urban music it is a mixture of written and oral transmissions and a reaction to them.

l. Rural Music

Folk singers and instrumentalists learn orally through many years of apprenticeship in an ensemble. Singers often start as chorus members; then, if endowed with a good voice and with general musicianship, they become virtuoso vocalists. Likewise, an instrumentalist starts as an apprentice in a *tutti* backing up a virtuoso singer, or virtuoso instrumentalist such as a *rabāb* (spike fiddle), *salamiyyah* (end-blown flute), or *mizmār* (oboe) player. In the case of the *ṭabl baladī* ensemble consisting of three *mizmārs* and a double-headed drum, there are three levels of sounds and proficiencies: a high-register melody performed by the lead virtuoso, the same melody but less ornamented and played in unison or an octave lower, and a drone by the apprentice who learns circular breathing and slowly increases his repertoire and musical abilities by listening to the musicians of the first and second level. As in the case of the medieval era, alteration is due to performance creativity, disposition, and memory erosion.

2. Urban Music

In her 1982 article, Salwa el-Shawan "documents the changes throughout the twentieth century in the processes of transmission of musical compositions from composers to performers in the Cairene musical category of *al-mūsīḳà al-ᶜarabiyyah*" (54).[7] The repertoire in this category includes late nineteenth-century compositions: the *dawr*, an Egyptian vocal genre; the *muwaṯḥṯḥaḥ*, a vocal genre of mainly Syrian origins; and an instrumental repertoire that is predominantly Ottoman. The repertoire also includes early twentieth-century vocal genres, the above-mentioned *dawr* and *muwaṯḥṯḥaḥ*, as well as other vocal genres such as *qaṣīdah, ṭaqṭūqah, ugḫniyah*, and so forth.

(a) *First Half of the Twentieth Century*

Salwa el-Shawan informs us that direct repertoire transmission predominated throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and that it occurred on three levels:

(i) The composer (*mulaḥḥin*) was at the same time the vocal soloist (*muṭrib*). In this case he transmitted his work orally to the chorus and instrumentalists.

(ii) A professional singer or songstress (*muṭrib* or *muṭribah*), who was not a composer, learned the song directly from the composer. In this case the singer worked together with the composer and the poet to adapt the work to the singer's preference and vocal abilities. The adaptation included the following changes to the composer's work: "increase or decrease of range of the *laḥn* (melody); the addition, elimination or simplification of ornaments and cadential formulae; and changes in lexical items" (el-Shawan 1982:56). When the song was thus consolidated the composer then taught it to the instrumentalists and the chorus.

(iii) A professional singer learned from a recording made by a singer or composer/singer, should the composer not be available. Since the music product was set in the recording, the singer had little freedom to alter the song as in case (ii) above (*ibid*.:56).

(b) *Second Half of the Twentieth Century*

Since musicians—especially instrumentalists—performing urban Egyptian music are a product of conservatory-type training, a short

[7] The term *al-mūsīḳà al-ᶜarabiyyah* used in Egypt since 1930 "signifies all musical idioms that are composed and performed by Arabs, provided that these idioms do not transcend the boundaries of Arabic musical styles as perceived by native musicians and audiences" (el-Shawan 1982:54). The term also refers to an Egyptian category of secular urban music which was the subject of el-Shawan's study.

introduction to this training is in order here.

In the Alexandria Higher Institute for the Studies of Arabic Music, where I studied between 1966 and 1970, music theory and solfeggio were taught, to student instrumentalists and singers alike, through the medium of adapted Western music notation. Instrumental instruction of *ʿūd* (lute), *qānūn* (psaltery), violin, and cello was achieved by means of written exercises, and notated pieces which belonged to the Ottoman and Arabic repertoire of *dūlāb*, *samāʿī*, *bashraf* (all three acting as preludes), as well as *longā* (acting as a postlude), and modern pieces of "Franco-Arabic" character. The notated pieces were given in skeletal form; it was thus the duty of the instructor to teach ornamentation techniques idiosyncratic to each instrument. This was achieved orally, and in the absence of tape recorders, which many teachers would not allow in class, it was a case of "catch as catch can." Students with quicker learning ability caught more ornamentation techniques than those who learned more slowly, and the problem was further compounded, much as in the medieval era, by the teacher changing his ornamentation constantly out of personal creativity and out of a desire to monopolize a set of ornamentation techniques. Vocal music, consisting of the *muwashshaḥ* and *dawr* genres, was strictly orally transmitted up to 1970 in Alexandria.[8] This was due to the fact that the voice teacher could not read Western notation. After giving the text of the song, the voice teacher sang to his own lute accompaniment and students repeated in chorus until the song was memorized to a certain degree of accuracy. Again, students who learned quickly had an advantage over the slower ones, and the creative voice teacher confused both, though to varying degrees.

Instrumentalists and singers trained in such a mixture of oral and written traditions took up positions in urban ensembles. One such ensemble that performed the conservatory-type repertoire was Firqat al-Mūsīqà al-ʿArabiyyah. El-Shawan informs us that the process of mediated transmission took place in this ensemble and involved one or more mediators between composers and performers. The mediators were the *ḥāfiẓ* (preserver), the *mudawwin* (music transcriber), and the *qā'id* (conductor). The *ḥāfiẓ* is an elderly musician who has learned the repertoire directly from composers, indirectly from other performers, or

8 Most *muwashshaḥat* and *adwār* have been transcribed into Western notation, albeit in skeletal form, in a number of publications which appeared in the late 1960's. I am not aware, however, if they have been used in the instruction of vocal music in Egypt. It seems unlikely, however, because, according to el-Shawan (1982:57), the chorus of Firqat al-Mūsīqà al-ʿArabiyyah still learns orally.

from old recordings.[9] His job is to transmit selected compositions to the chorus. His interpretation—remarks el-Shawan—is influenced by his memory, vocal abilities, and musical tastes (not unlike his medieval predecessor). His interpretation leaves the skeletal melody unchanged, but alters the following: "ornaments, cadential formulae, pitch order, rhythmic values, phrasing, repetitions of phrases and sections, and lexical items. Some of the changes most frequently made. . . include: (1) assigning specific rhythmic values to *ad libitum* sections; (2) the simplification, standardization, or elimination of ornaments and cadential formulae; (3) assigning definite pitches to sections previously performed with indefinite pitches" (el-Shawan 1982:60).

A further factor causing change is that the compositions which were originally intended to be sung by a solo virtuoso vocalist are now adapted for large chorus singing. The music product thus altered is then transcribed by the *mudawwin* for the use of instrumentalists and conductor. Because of the constraints of Western music notation and because of instrumental limitations a further altered version is produced by the transcriber with the assistance of the *ḥāfiẓ*: "The rendition which lends itself best both to the notation system and to the capabilities of the vocal and instrumental ensemble is then chosen and consolidated in the transcriptions" (el-Shawan 1982:57). However, the chorus which learned the oral version will inevitably clash with the instrumentalists' and conductor's written version. The conductor settles the differences—often orally transmitting elements which Western notation cannot represent—and a final version is consolidated (57, 59).[10]

El-Shawan concludes that in the twentieth century, in direct or mediated transmission, the musical composition "is treated as a flexible entity which is reshaped by composers, performers, and mediators at every step of the transmission process" (*idem*). The three mediators play a dual role: preserving some elements of the tradition and reshaping others.

Concluding Remarks

Though this article treats music transmission in two different geographical areas separated moreover by ten centuries, it is possible to offer a few concluding remarks, albeit of a provisional nature.

The tradition of a *ḥāfiẓ* as memorizer and transmitter is a very old

[9] For instance, my *muwashshaḥat* teacher, Professor Marghanī, had learned directly from the composer Ibrāhīm al-Qabbānī and from other senior performers.

[10] The above situation obtains also in the category of urban music known as *mūsīqà shā'iyah* ("widespread music") (el-Shawan 1982:59, 73, n. 7), where the modern composer, and not the *ḥāfīẓ*, works closely with the transcriber and conductor.

one. Inevitably the transmitters—and likewise the receivers—will reshape a repertoire according to their memory, performing and learning abilities, taste, style, and creativity. The ensuing changes are manifold, and the modern seem to parallel the medieval, though for different reasons stemming in part from the differing medium of transmission.

Written notation appears to have been more precise in the ninth century than it is in the twentieth century. The latter can certainly help "preserve" some aspects of a tradition, namely its skeleton. Because of the skeletal limitation, the written medium needs to be supplemented by the oral one. Ironically, the written medium, besides preserving a tradition, has been a factor causing change in that tradition, not only because of its constraints but also because it added two extra mediators to the chain of transmission: the transcriber and the conductor.

University of Toronto

References

Al-Iṣbahānī 1963-74 — Abū al-Faraj Al- Iṣbahānī. *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. 24 vols. 4th ed. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub.

Sawa 1983 — George Dimitri Sawa. "Music Performance Practice in the Early ᶜAbbāsid Era. 750 A.D. - 932 A.D." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto.

Sawa 1983-84 — _____. "Al-Fārābī's Theory of the Iqāᶜ: An Empirically Derived Model of Rhythmic Analysis." *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology*, 1, 9:1-32.

Sawa 1984 — _____. "Musical Humour in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Book of Songs)." In *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*. Ed. by Roger M. Savory and Dionisius Agius. Papers in Medieval Studies, 6. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies. pp. 35-50.

el-Shawan 1982 — Salwa el-Shawan. "The Role of Mediators in the Transmission of *al-Mūsīkà al-ᶜArabiyyah* in Twentieth-Century Cairo." *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 14:55-74.

The Merchant of Art: An Egyptian Hilali Oral Epic Poet in Performance, Susan E. Slyomovics. University of California Publications in Modern Philology, 120. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988. pp. ix + 298.

Dwight F. Reynolds
Harvard School of Fellows

At the very heart of *The Merchant of Art* lies an evening's performance of Southern Egyptian oral epic singing, recorded, transcribed, and painstakingly redacted and explicated by Susan Slyomovics. She strives for a "co-authored" text (24), that is, one where the input of poet, audience members, and even variant texts coexist in a multi-vocal reading of the central text. To achieve this, she rapidly builds, in four brief chapters, a context for the text we are to examine in detail.

In the first chapter the poet as outcast is examined: his biography, his family's tradition of epic singing, and the sensitive issue of "gypsy" origins are treated. In chapter two the relationship between the informant and the female ethnographer comes into focus. Slyomovics sees her anomalous presence as Westerner, and as female, researching an Egyptian, male tradition, as part of a structure which informs the encounter of Western female and Arab male in modern Arabic literature. However, she suggests that her relationship to the epic poet, ᶜAwadallah, was significantly structured by "quite a different set of literary protocols" which may best be understood ". . . in terms of the literary and linguistic tension that obtains between literary or classical Arabic (*fuṣḥā*) on the one hand, and colloquial Egyptian Arabic (*ᶜāmmiyya*) on the other" (22). As part of this analysis she contrasts the Arabic written literary motif of the death of the Western female following the encounter of East and West, with the oral epic theme of the foreign female who becomes Arab following the defeat of her menfolk. The encounter of ethnographer and poet is thus set in frames of orality and literacy, sexuality, and the discourse of western Orientalism.

Chapter three, "The History of the Arabs," consists almost entirely of genealogies of the epic heroes as presented by the Poet ᶜAwadallah, and a summary of the plot of the epic up to the point of the performance in question. The fourth chapter gives summaries of variant texts from a number of different sources. Some of these texts are explicitly of the tale we are about to read in full, others share only a few key motifs; the variant texts represent both written and oral sources, as well as a broad geographical spread.

The key to Slyomovics' analysis of the central text, "The Story of ᶜAmir Khafājī," and indeed the entire middle third of the overall epic, lies in her postulation of father-daughter incest as the keystone to the tale. In it, the hero Abū Zeyd the Hilālī rescues the daughter of the King of Iraq, ᶜAmir Khafājī. Instead of the typical folktale conclusion, where the hero then marries the daughter, the King proceeds to fall in love with one of the Hilālī women and abandons family and kingdom to ride forth with the Hilālī tribe. In Slyomovics' words (56),

> The hero thereby "marries," so to speak, the father by assigning him tribal affiliation through a promised marriage into the hero's own family. It is in this context, I argue, that the father-daughter incest explicitly framing the middle section of the epic acquires its psychological significance. My claim is that the tale is designed to resolve problematic tensions relating to a strong, but unspoken, taboo on father-daughter incest.

This is a highly unusual but fascinating reading of the epic. Unfortunately, this motif of the King "giving himself in marriage" does not occur in the text which forms the body of this study, but rather is only part of the well-known background understood by the audience members but not realized in this performance. This particular text ends with the successful rescue of the daughter.

The main text is presented with ample cultural notes and an intervening narrative describing peripheral events. The text itself is closely translated with interlineal transcription. Since puns form an essential part of this poet's concept of the epic and the

art of epic singing, puns are distinguished by capitalization in both English an Arabic texts. The detailed account of the performance is quite intimate, extending even to the moment of consternation which results when the "honorary male" researcher has to go to the bathroom —thus reminding everyone, forcibly, of her femaleness (239).

The most extraordinary aspect of the performance is that the tale, analyzed by Slyomovics as motivated by father-daughter incest taboo, is reversed in performance, and becomes one of mother-son sexuality. In a complex interpolation, the poet inserts the recent death of the village blacksmith into the tale with the line, ". . . and Zakiyya weeps the day long" (110-11 and 138). Zakiyya is, however, the name not only of the blacksmith's widow, but also one audience member's mother. The audience member's angry reaction is read by Slyomovics as motivated by mother-son incest taboo (264):

> What initially appears to be a tale of father-daughter incest in the narrative of the tale, is recast during ʿAwadallah's performance of the tale to his male Egyptian audience, in terms of a mother-son constellation. In the context of the performance, in the relationship of the poet performing the oral recitation of a (father-daughter incest) text, ʿAwadallah rebukes a member of the audience by a scandalous allusion embedded in the epic narrative, one which brings up the possibility of the mother's eroticism.

For Slyomovics, this male narrative art form is one where "…both audience and poet parade linguistic ingenuity to cover a dark secret, namely female and maternal eroticism" (265).

Without discounting this reading, it must be allowed that it is only somewhat weakly supported by the evidence Slyomovics produces to prove her case. In her summary of the epic, she finds it virtually self-evident that the middle portion of the epic is inspired by father-daughter incest taboo, based on the existence of the "giving oneself in marriage" motif described above. Some readers will probably not find this so. Several of the variant texts summarized scarcely mention this motif, and the main text itself is quiet on this account. As for the brief exchange between poet and audience member which forms the centerpiece of her performance analysis, it seems possible to imagine a much less sexually charged sub-text. More significantly, we are never presented with the poet's motivation for deliberately antagonizing an audience member in such a savage manner, nor do we learn if indeed he intended to do so. Since the very patricipants themselves are socially bound to deny the sexual analysis, the issue must rest in the realm of the possible.

However debatable her interpretations, Slyomovics has provided us with the best example yet of Egyptian epic singing in English translation, and has offered a rich and multi-vocal performance text which, it is to be hoped, will provide the stimulus for the use of similar research methods and similar meticulous and innovative analysis.

About the Authors

Issa J. Boullata (Professor of Arabic Literature and Language at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal) is the author of several studies on modern Arabic literature and has translated a number of literary works from Arabic into English. He was editor of *The Muslim World* and *AI-ᶜArabiyya,* and is currently editor of *Mundus Arabicus* in cooperation with others.

Bridget Connelly (Associate Professor of Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley) studies Arabic, medieval French, and English oral traditions. She is the author of *Arab Folk Epic and Identity,* which analyzes the rhetorical, performance dynamic of the living migration epic, *Sīrat Banī Hilāl,* in Egypt, the Maghreb, the Sudan, and the Chad region.

Frederick M. Denny teaches Islamic studies and the history of religions at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He has conducted field research on Qur'ān recitation and related matters in Egypt and Indonesia. His book, *An Introduction to Islam,* is used widely in North American college courses. He has published numerous articles on various aspects of Qur'ānic studies.

Adnan F. Haydar (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) has lectured and published studies on the applicability of Parry's and Lord's theories to classical and modern Arabic poetry. His forthcoming book, *The Metrics of Lebanese Zajal Poetry,* highlights the relationship between musical and poetic meter and studies the rhetorical strategies used in verbal dueling.

Simon Jargy is Chairman of the Arabic and Islamic Studies department at the Faculty of Arts, University of Geneva. Since the 1950's, he has recorded a large amount of oral poetry and songs, mostly Bedouin, all over the Arab Near East. He has published *La poésie populaire traditionnelle chantée au Proche-Orient arabe* (Paris: Mouton, 1970), *La musique arabe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2nd ed., 1977; 3rd ed. forthcoming), and many articles dealing with ethnomusicology and Arab oral poetry.

Muhsin Mahdi is James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic at Harvard University. His most recent work is *The Thousand and One Nights (Alf Layla wa-Layla) from the Earliest Known Sources,* published by E. J. Brill, Leiden. The third volume of this work, which deals with the history of the text, is in preparation.

Henry N. Massie, M.D. directs the child psychiatry training program at St. Mary's Hospital, San Francisco, and is on the faculty of the University of California School of Medicine. He has done cross-cultural studies of mother-child interaction in North Africa, Bali, and the United States. He is the author of *Childhood Psychosis in the First Four Years of Life (1984).*

James T. Monroe teaches in the departments of Comparative Literature and Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He has written several books and even more articles on medieval Arabic literature, ranging from Pre-Islamic poetry to the *maqāmāt,* while specializing in the literature of Arab Spain, which he studies from a comparative perspective that takes into account the native Romance tradition.

Harry Norris, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, teaches a course unit on Arabic popular literature to undergraduates. He has published a study of *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and has recorded Exeter University Tape, A 961, on this literature. He has participated in conferences in Cairo, Dublin, and Tunisia.

Dwight F. Reynolds holds a Ph.D. in Folklore and Folklife from the University of Pennsylvania. He has conducted research on *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* in Egypt and is currently a Junior Fellow at Harvard University.

George D. Sawa studied music at the Higher Institute for the Studies of Arabic Music in Alexandria, Egypt between 1966 and 1970, and received his Ph.D. in 1983 from the University of Toronto. He as a joint appointment at the Department of Music and Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies at Toronto, where he teaches the history of Arabic music.

Ḍirgham Ḥ. Sbait of Portland State University is a researcher of contemporary Arabic poetry, oral Arabic poetry, folk songs, and folk proverbs. He is an expert on the improvised-sung colloquial poetry of the Palestinian poet-singers, with special emphasis on the analysis of genres, techniques of improvisation, and the sociocultural context of the poetic texts.

Teirab AshShareef is Assistant Professor of Arabic at the University of Minnesota. He conducted fieldwork among the Banī Halba of the Sudan. His research interests include contemporary Arabic oral and written literature, Arabic-European and American literary relations, and literary theory and criticism.

R. Marston Speight, historian of religions, adjunct faculty of Hartford Seminary, has a particular interest in the Ḥadīth literature of Islam, from the standpoint of its nature as oral expression. His doctoral dissertation and several subsequent journal articles have treated various aspects of the Ḥadīth. Most recently he has been working on rhetorical analysis of that material.

Saad A. Sowayan (King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in interdisciplinary studies. His doctoral dissertation, *Nabaṭi Poetry: The Oral Poetry of Arabia,* treats the recording of the oral traditions of Arabia and the interpretation of traditional Arabian culture and literature.

Patricia M. Arant: *Russian for Reading,* 214 p., 1981.

Howard 1. Aronson: *Georgian: A Reading Grammar,* 526 p., 1982.

James E. Augerot and Florin D. Popescu: *Modern Romanian,* xiv + 330 p.,1983.

Natalya Baranskaya: Неделя как неделя *Just Another Week,* edited by L. Paperno *et aI.,* 92 p., 1989.

Adele Marie Barker: *The Mother Syndrome in the Russian Folk Imagination,* 180 p., 1986.

R. P. Bartlett, A. G. Cross, and Karen Rasmussen, eds.: *Russia and the World of the Eighteenth Century,* viii + 684 p., 1988.

John D. Basil: *The Mensheviks in the Revolution of* 1917, 220 p., 1984.

Henrik Birnbaum & Thomas Eekman, eds.: *Fiction and Drama in Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Evolution and Experiment in the Postwar Period,* ix + 463 p., 1980.

Henrik Birnbaum and Peter T. Merrill: *Recent Advances in the Reconstruction of Common Slavic* (1971-1982), vi + 141 p., 1985.

Marianna D. Birnbaum: *Humanists in a Shattered World: Croatian and Hungarian Latinity in the Sixteenth Century,* 456 p., 1986.

Feliks J. Bister and Herbert Kuhner, eds.: *Carinthian Slovenian Poetry,* 216 p., 1984.

Karen L. Black, ed.: *A Biobibliographical Handbook of Bulgarian Authors,* 347 p., 1982.

Marianna Bogojavlensky: *Russian Review Grammar,* xviii + 450 p., 1982.

Rodica C. Boţoman, Donald E. Corbin, E. Garrison Walters: *Îmi Place Limba Română/A Romanian Reader,* 199 p., 1982.

Richard D. Brecht and James S. Levine, eds: *Case in Slavic,* 467 p., 1986.

Gary L. Browning: *Workbook to Russian Root List,* 85 p., 1985.

Diana L. Burgin: *Richard Burgin A Life in Verse,* 230 p., 1989.

R. L. Busch: *Humor in the Major Novels of Dostoevsky,* 168 p., 1987.

Catherine V. Chvany and Richard D. Brecht, eds.: *Morphosyntax in Slavic,* v + 316 p., 1980.

Jozef Cíger-Hronský: *lozef Mak* (a novel), translated from Slovak, 232 p., 1985.

J. Douglas Clayton, ed.: *Issues in Russian Literature Before* 1917 *Selected Papers of the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies,* 248 p., 1989.

Julian W. Connolly and Sonia 1. Ketchian, eds.: *Studies in Russian Literature in Honor of Vsevolod Setchkarev,* 288 p. 1987.

Gary Cox: *Tyrant and Victim in Dostoevsky,* 119 p., 1984.

Anna Lisa Crone and Catherine V. Chvany, eds.: *New Studies in Russian Language and Literature,* 302 p., 1987.

Carolina De Maegd-Soëp: *Chekhov and Women: Women in the Life and Work of Chekhov,* 373 p., 1987.

Bruce L. Derwing and Tom M. S. Priestly: *Reading Rules for Russian: A Systematic Approach to Russian Spelling and Pronunciation, with Notes on Dialectal and Stylistic Variation,* vi + 247 p., 1980.

Dorothy Disterheft: *The Syntactic Development of the Infinitive in Indo-European,* 220 p., 1980.

Thomas Eekman and Dean S. Worth, eds.: *Russian Poetics* Proceedings of the International Colloquium at UCLA, September 22-26, 1975, 544 p., 1983.

Mark J. Elson: *Macedonian Verbal Morphology A Structural Analysis, 147* p.,1989.

Michael S. Flier and Richard D. Brecht, eds.: *Issues in Russian Morphosyntax,* 208 p., 1985.

Michael S. Flier and Alan Timberlake, eds: *The Scope of Slavic Aspect,* 295 p., 1985.

John Miles Foley, ed.: *Comparative Research on Oral Traditions: A Memorial for Milman Parry,* 597 p., 1987.

John M. Foley, ed.: *Oral Traditional Literature A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord,* 461 p., 1981.

Diana Greene: *Insidious Intent: An Interpretation of Fedor Sologub's* <u>*The Petty Demon*</u>*,* 140 p., 1986.

Charles E. Gribble, ed.: *Medieval Slavic Texts, Vol*. 1, *Old and Middle Russian Texts,* 320 p., 1973.

Charles E. Gribble: *Reading Bulgarian Through Russian,* 182 p., 1987.

Charles E. Gribble: *Russian Root List with a Sketch of Word Formation, Second Edition,* 62 p., 1982.

Charles E. Gribble: *A Short Dictionary of 18th-Century Russian*/Словарик Русского Языка 18-го Века, 103 p., 1976.

Charles E. Gribble, ed.: *Studies Presented to Professor Roman Jakobson by His Students,* 333 p., 1968.

George J. Gutsche and Lauren G. Leighton, eds.: *New Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Russian Prose,* 146 p., 1982.

Morris Halle, ed.: *Roman Jakobson: What He Taught Us,* 94 p., 1983.

Morris Halle, Krystyna Pomorska, Elena Semeka-Pankratov, and Boris Uspenskij, eds.: *Semiotics and the History of Culture In Honor of Jurij Lotman Studies in Russian,* 437 p., 1989.

Charles J. Halperin: *The Tatar Yoke,* 231 p., 1986.

William S. Hamilton: *Introduction to Russian Phonology and Word Structure,* 187 p., 1980.

Pierre R. Hart: G. *R. Derzhavin: A Poet's Progress,* iv + 164 p., 1978.

Michael Heim: *Contemporary Czech,* 271 p., 1982.

Michael Heim, Zlata Meyerstein, and Dean Worth: *Readings in Czech,* 147 p., 1985.

Warren H. Held, Jr., William R. Schmalstieg, and Janet E. Gertz: *Beginning Hittite,* ix + 218 p., 1988.

M. Hubenova & others: *A Course in Modern Bulgarian, Part* 1, viii + 303 p., 1983; *Part* 2, ix + 303 p., 1983.

Martin E. Huld: *Basic Albanian Etymologies,* x + 213 p., 1984.

Charles Isenberg: *Substantial Proofs of Being: Osip Mandelstam's Literary Prose,* 179 p., 1987.

Roman Jakobson, with the assistance of Kathy Santilli: *Brain and Language Cerebral Hemispheres and Linguistic Structure in Mutual Light,* 48 p., 1980.

Donald K. Jarvis and Elena D. Lifshitz: *Viewpoints: A Listening and Conversation Course in Russian, Third Edition,* iv + 66 p., 1985; *Instructor's Manual,* v + 37 p.

Leslie A. Johnson: *The Experience of Time in Crime and Punishment, 146* p., 1985.

Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, ed.: *East European History: Selected Papers of the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies,* 183 p., 1989.

Emily R. Klenin: *Animacy in Russian: A New Interpretation,* 139 p., 1983.

Andrej Kodjak, Krystyna Pomorska, and Kiril Taranovsky, eds.: *Alexander Puškin Symposium II,* 131 p., 1980.

Andrej Kodjak, Krystyna Pomorska, Stephen Rudy, eds.: *Myth in Literature,* 207 p., 1985.

Andrej Kodjak: *Pushkin's* 1. *P. Belkin,* 112 p., 1979.

Andrej Kodjak, Michael J. Connolly, Krystyna Pomorska, eds.: *Structural Analysis of Narrative Texts (Conference Papers),* 203 p., 1980.

Demetrius J. Koubourlis, ed.: *Topics in Slavic Phonology,* vii + 270 p., 1974.

Ronald D. LeBlanc: *The Russianization of Gil BIas: A Study in Literary Appropriation,* 292 p. 1986.

Richard L. Leed, Alexander D. Nakhimovsky, and Alice S. Nakhimovsky: *Beginning Russian, Vol.* 1, xiv + 426 p., 1981; *Vol.* 2, viii + 339 p., 1982.

Richard L. Leed and Slava Paperno: *5000 Russian Words With All Their Inflected Forms: A Russian-English Dictionary,* xiv + 322 p., 1987.

Edgar H. Lehrman: *A Handbook to Eighty-Six of Chekhov's Stories in Russian,* 327 p., 1985.

Lauren Leighton, ed.: *Studies in Honor of Xenia Gąsiorowska,* 191 p.

R. L. Lencek: *The Structure and History of the Slovene Language)* 365 p.

Jules F. Levin and Peter D. Haikalis, with Anatole A. Forostenko: *Reading Modern Russian,* vi + 321 p., 1979.

Maurice 1. Levin: *Russian Declension and Conjugation:* A Structural Description with Exercises, x + 159 p., 1978.

Alexander Lipson: *A Russian Course. Part* 1, ix + 338 p., 1981; *Part* 2, 343 p., 1981; *Part* 3, iv + 105 p., 1981; *Teacher's Manual* by Stephen 1. Molinsky (who also assisted in the writing of Parts 1 and 2), 222 p.

Yvonne R. Lockwood: *Text and Context Folksong in a Bosnian Muslim Village,* 220 p., 1983.

Sophia Lubensky & Donald K. Jarvis, eds.: *Teaching, Learning, Acquiring Russian,* viii + 415 p., 1984.

Horace G. Lunt: *Fundamentals of Russian,* xiv + 402 p., reprint, 1982.

Paul Macura: *Russian-English Botanical Dictionary,* 678 p., 1982.

Thomas G. Magner, ed.: *Slavic Linguistics and Language Teaching,* x + 309 p., 1976.

Amy Mandelker and Roberta Reeder, eds.: *The Supernatural in Slavic and Baltic Literature: Essays in Honor of Victor Terras,* Introduction by J. Thomas Shaw, xxi + 402 p., 1989.

Vladimir Markov and Dean S. Worth, eds.: *From Los Angeles to Kiev Papers on the Occasion of the Ninth International Congress of Slavists,* 250 p., 1983.

Mateja Matejić and Dragan Milivojević: *An Anthology of Medieval Serbian Literature in English,* 205 p., 1978.

Peter J. Mayo: *The Morphology of Aspect in Seventeenth-Century Russian (Based on Texts of the Smutnoe Vremja),* xi + 234 p., 1985.

Arnold McMillin, ed.: *Aspects of Modern Russian and Czech Literature Selected Papers of the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies,* 239 p., 1989.

Gordon M. Messing: *A Glossary of Greek Romany As Spoken in Agia Varvara (Athens),* 175 p., 1988.

Vasa D. Mihailovich and Mateja Matejic: *A Comprehensive Bibliography of Yugoslav Literature in English, 1593-1980,* xii + 586 p., 1984.

Vasa D. Mihailovich: *First Supplement to* A Comprehensive Bibliography of Yugoslav Literature in English 1981-1985, 338 p., 1989.

Edward Mozejko, ed.: *Vasiliy Pavlovich Aksenov: A Writer in Quest of Himself,* 272 p., 1986.

Edward Możejko: *Yordan Yovkov,* 117p., 1984.

Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Richard L. Leed: *Advanced Russian, Second Edition, Revised,* vii + 262 p., 1987.

Felix 1. Oinas: *Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology,* 183 p., 1985.

Hongor Oulanoff: *The Prose Fiction of Veniamin Kaverin,* v + 203 p.

Temira Pachmuss: *Russian Literature in the Baltic between the World Wars,* 448 p., 1988.

Lora Paperno: *Getting Around Town in Russian: Situational Dialogs,* English translation and photographs by Richard D. Sylvester, 123 p.

Slava Paperno, Alexander D. Nakhimovsky, Alice S. Nakhimovsky, and Richard L. Leed: *Intermediate Russian: The Twelve Chairs,* 326 p.

Ruth L. Pearce: *Russian For Expository Prose, Vol.* 1 *Introductory Course,* 413 p., 1983; *Vol.* 2 *Advanced Course,* 255 p., 1983.

Jan L. Perkowski: *The Darkling A Treatise on Slavic Vampirism,* 169 p.

Gerald Pirog: *Aleksandr Blok's* Итальянские Стихи *Confrontation and Disillusionment,* 219 p., 1983.

Stanley J. Rabinowitz: *Sologub's Literary Children: Keys to a Symbolist's Prose,* 176 p., 1980.

Gilbert C. Rappaport: *Grammatical Function and Syntactic Structure: The Adverbial Participle of Russian,* 218 p., 1984.

David F. Robinson: *Lithuanian Reverse Dictionary,* ix + 209 p., 1976.

Don K. Rowney & G. Edward Orchard, eds.: *Russian and Slavic History,* viii + 303 p., 1977.

Catherine Rudin: *Aspects of Bulgarian Syntax: Complementizers and WH Constructions,* iv + 232 p., 1986.

Gerald J. Sabo, SJ., ed.: *Valaská Škola, by Hugolin Gavlovič, with a linguistic sketch by L. Ďurovič, 730 p., 1988.*

Ernest A. Scatton: *Bulgarian Phonology,* xii + 224 p., 1975 (reprint: 1983).

Ernest A. Scatton: *A Reference Grammar of Modern Bulgarian,* 448 p.

Barry P. Scherr and Dean S. Worth, eds.: *Russian Verse Theory Proceedings of the 1987 Conference at UCLA,* 514 p., 1989.

William R. Schmalstieg: *Introduction to Old Church Slavic, second edition,* 314 p., 1983.

William R. Schmalstieg: *A Lithuanian Historical Syntax,* xi + 412 p., 1988.

R. D. Schupbach: *Lexical Specialization in Russian,* 102 p., 1984.

Peter Seyffert: *Soviet Literary Structuralism: Background Debate Issues, 378* p., 1985.

Kot K. Shangriladze and Erica W. Townsend, eds.: *Papers for the V Congress of Southeast European Studies (Belgrade, September 1984),* 382 p., 1984.

J. Thomas Shaw: *Pushkin A Concordance to the Poetry,* 2 volumes, 1310 pages total, 1985.

Efraim Sicher: *Style and Structure in the Prose of Isaak Babel',* 169 p., 1986.

Mark S. Simpson: *The Russian Gothic Novel and its British Antecedents,* 112 p., 1986.

David A. Sloane: *Aleksandr Blok and the Dynamics of the Lyric Cycle,* 384 p.,1988.

Greta N. Slobin, ed.: *Aleksej Remizov: Approaches to a Protean Writer,* 286 p.,1987.

Theofanis G. Stavrou and Peter R. Weisensel: *Russian Travelers to the Christian East from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century,* L + 925 p.

Gerald Stone and Dean S. Worth, eds.: *The Formation of the Slavonic Literary Languages, Proceedings of a Conference Held in Memory of Robert Auty and Anne Pennington at Oxford* 6-11 *July* 1981, 269 p.

Roland Sussex and J. C. Eade, eds.: *Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe,* 158 p., 1985.

Oscar E. Swan: *First Year Polish, second edition, revised and expanded, 354* p., 1983.

Oscar E. Swan: *Intermediate Polish,* 370 p., 1986.

Jane A. Taubman: *A Life Through Verse Marina Tsvetaeva's Lyric Diary,* 296 p., 1989.

Charles E. Townsend: *Continuing With Russian,* xxi + 426 p., 1981.

Charles E. Townsend and Veronica N. Dolenko: *Instructor's Manual to Accompany Continuing With Russian,* 39 p., 1987.

Charles E. Townsend: *Czech Through Russian,* viii + 263 p., 1981.

Charles E. Townsend: *The Memoirs of Princess Natal'ja Borisovna Dolgorukaja,* viii + 146 p., 1977.

Charles E. Townsend: *Russian Word Formation, corrected reprint,* viii + 272 p., 1975.

Janet G. Tucker: *lnnokentij Annenskij and the Acmeist Doctrine,* 154 p.

Boryana Velcheva: *Proto-Slavic and Old Bulgarian Sound Changes,* Translation of the original by Ernest A. Scatton, 187 p., 1988.

Walter N. Vickery, ed.: *Aleksandr Blok Centennial Conference,* 403 p.

Essays in Honor of A. A. Zimin, ed. D. C. Waugh, xiv + 416 p., 1985.

Daniel C. Waugh: *The Great Turkes Defiance On the History of the Apocryphal Correspondence of the Ottoman Sultan in its Muscovite and Russian Variants,* ix + 354 p., 1978.

Susan Wobst: *Russian Readings and Grammatical Terminology,* 88 p.

James B. Woodward: *The Symbolic Art of Gogol: Essays on His Short Fiction,* 131 p., 1982.

Dean S. Worth: *Origins of Russian Grammar Notes on the state of Russian philology before the advent of printed grammars,* 176 p., 1983.

Что я видел *What I Saw* by Boris Zhitkov, Annotated and Edited by Richard L. Leed and Lora Paperno, 128 p. (8.5 x II" format), 1988.