

Classical Arabic Poetics in Andalusia: The Question of Style and Originality

ANIMASHAUN, Maruf Suraqat (PhD)
(Senior Lecturer)
Department of Foreign Languages (Arabic)
Faculty of Arts
Lagos State University, Ojo
Lagos- Nigeria
Email: maruf.animashaun@lasu.edu.ng
H/P: +2348032962216

Abstract

The enormous amount of prose writing in Andalusia was matched by an equally enormous amount of poetical composition. In the meantime, the full development of the Arabic language along with its pre-eminent position would not have been possible had it not been for the parallel evolution of an extensive literature written in it. Arabic remained not only the instrument of religion, but developed into the language of state and that of culture. The present day Spain, known to be Andalus in medieval period, had witnessed an enormous amount of literary surge, mostly in prose writing and poetical composition in the Arab West of the medieval period. Is there any traces of originality in the poetical forms and language dictions of Andalusia literary poem of the medieval Arabic? If we notice positive answer to this question, what about the originality in its poetic style? I mean, in a more elaborate means, it happens, then, this research paper shall clarify the authenticity of this proof and also shed more lights on the poetic culture, literary style, originality in poetic composition, and finally, the intellectual currents of Andalusia.

Keywords: classical Arabic, poetic culture, poetic originality, intellectualism.

Introduction

In pre-Islamic times poetry ruled supreme over the hearts and minds of the people, overshadowing both oratory and prose writings. Only after the rise and expansion of Islam did the orator and scribe gain importance owing to the religious, political, social, and administrative needs of the Islamic community. They were able to compete with the pre-eminent position of the poet, whose mode was no longer viable for expressing the multifarious concepts of a rapidly growing society. This notwithstanding, the poet was able to hold his own against the strong competition of the scribe and continued to occupy an important place in Islamic society in spite of the fact that his poetry remained, by and large, worldly and profane.

Meanwhile, if the orator, scribe, and storyteller were important figures in Islamic society, so was the poet. In fact, the poet was a permanent figure at the court of rulers and was admired for his art of versification and excellence of language. He often occupied a high post and received ample rewards from his patrons. It was against this background that the scribe strove for excellence in his writings and aimed at innovating and embellishing his style to create the artistic effect as well as wonderment and suspense. No doubt he attempted to please the ear and the mind through the use of elegant language in expectation of high rewards. However, in doing so, the scribe could

hardly displace the poet and had instead to learn the art of versification, which enabled him to assume the role of both a scribe and a poet. In consequence, if Al-Andalus was united with the East in language and literature, it was also united with it in poetry.

Poetic Culture

The literary culture in Andalusia had a development parallel to that of prose writing. In consequence, Hispano-Arabic poetry cannot be studied without due consideration of the poetry which developed in the Arab East. From pre-Islamic times up to the present, the poetry has occupied a prominent place in Arabic literature.¹ It constitutes the earliest literary and artistic manifestation of Arabic culture. In pre-Islamic as in Islamic times, it played an important role in Arabian society and represented the most eloquent expression. It preserved Arabic deeds, values, and vices. The poet, who was said to be possessed by a *jinn* (spirit), was a leader of his tribe and, as such, exerted great influence on it. He sang its glory, praised its virtues, encouraged it in the war to defend cherished values such as honor, bravery, loyalty, and hospitality. Arabic poetry (*shi'r*) falls under the heading of the science of prosody (*'ilm al-'arüd*). It is designated by the term, *nazm* (ordering) as opposed to *nathr* (scattering), which is applied to prose. It contains both rhyme (*qafiyah*) and meter (*wazn*, or *bahr*). There are sixteen Arabic meters.² An Arabic verse or line is called *bayt* (plural *abyat*), .and consists of two halves or hemistichs (*misra'*).

Poetry was highly developed in pre-Islamic times. It may have started with a rhymed form without a meter (*saj'*). One may assume that from this rhymed prose a poetical form with meters evolved. This form, known as *rajaz*, consists of four to six feet to the line; the lines rhyme.

On the basis of these two forms, poetry reached a high development with strict laws for rhyme, quantity, and manner of introduction. Although no fixed date is agreed upon regarding this development, it is best represented by the *qasidah* (ode), which had already matured in the sixth century. The meaning of the word *qasidah* is not clear. Some Arab grammarians explain it as meaning a poem with an artistic purpose; others suggest that it means “aiming at,” for instance, reward in return for praise and flattery; and still others associate it with a form of *qasada* meaning “to break,” since the *qasidah* consists of verses, each one of which is divided into hemistichs.³

The *qasidah* has a complicated meter and preserves the same rhyme throughout. As a rule, the poet stands with his companion at deserted campsite and reminisces about by gone days, recalling

¹Abu I-Khashab. (1966). *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi fil Andalus*. Cairo..

² These metres are called *mutaqarib*, *rajaz*, *hajaz*, *ramal*, *wafer*, *kamil*, *tawil*, *sari'*, *basit*, *muhtathth*, *munsarih*, *khafif*, *madid*, *mudari'*, *mutadarik*, *muqtadab*. See Charles Lyall. (1985). *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. 14ff. See also Nicholson, R. (1950). *Literary History of the Arabs*, pp. 71ff.

³ Nicholson, R. *Literary History of the Arabs*, London: CUP. pp.73.

his intense feeling for his beloved and the anguish of his separation from her and the detailed hardship of a journey by horse or camel. He ends the poem by vilifying the enemy or praising the hearer in expectation of reward.

The classical *qasidah* of pre-Islamic times is represented in the famous seven *Mu'allaqāt*⁴ (the Suspended Ones). The term is supposed to have originated when the pre-Islamic bards entered a contest at 'Ukāz and the best poem was suspended on the Ka'bah for all to see. It is also suggested that such poems were written on cloth with golden letters — hence, their other appellation as *Mudhahhabāt*. It is unlikely that either of these meanings was the actual one inasmuch as writing, on the whole, was scarce in the sixth-century Arabia, let alone writing in gold. On the other hand, *mu'allaqah* also means “necklace” and was used, perhaps in a figurative sense, to imply that the poem had an artistic unity and was self-contained.

Although Prophet Muhammad attacked the poetry of his time, its form and content continued to be popular not only in the early Islamic period but also in centuries afterward, despite great changes in environmental, social, and religious conditions. Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd poets had long taken the pre-Islamic poet as a model for their inspirations. This was true also among Hispano-Arabic poets of the Iberian Peninsula. However, here as elsewhere, poetry in its old garment was influenced by the chanced environment and new perspectives.

The Arabic-speaking people have a great fascination for and love of poetry. It has been regarded as the highest artistic attainment of the Arab and the mark of his culture, and as such has occupied a prominent place in the Arabic curriculum. Rulers, princes, scholars, and women have tried their hand at it, either as versifiers or reciters. At the parties and public gatherings the extemporaneous compositions or recitation of the works of leading poets were common. Arabic poetry has a great wealth of vocabulary, similes, and metaphors. Although its content is often vaguely understood or not understood at all, the poetry has an impact on the audience as great as that of music. In essence, Arabic poetry appeals more to the ear and heart than to the mind. More often than not it caters to the vanity of a patron and the emotion of the hearer.

⁴ Lyall, C. A. *Commentary on the Ancient Arabic Poems*, p. 101.

It would be harsh to suggest that Arabic poetry as a whole lacks sincerity and substance. It possesses great artistry, and often conveys intense and noble feelings. This is true, perhaps, more in al-Andalus than elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking world. This may be due to the fact that the Andalusian enjoyed life intensely and was uninhibited, expressing his feelings about his favorite subjects – love and nature in beautiful and moving poems. In another context, Arabic poetry offers valuable insight into the history of Arab-Muslim society. Moreover, early Arabic poetry served as a valuable means for codifying the language and was considered second only to the Qur'an as a medium for the most eloquent expression. As a consequence, poetry has been preserved with care in the oral tradition as well as in the writing throughout the centuries. The enormous number of poetical collections (sing. *diwān*) that have come down to us from pre-Islamic and Islamic times attest to the pride the Arab took in poets and poetry.

On the other hand, Arabic poetry was in some measure dissociated from life itself, and, as such, it remained formal, rigid and austere in form, artificial and stereotyped in content. This was due principally to the role of the poet in society. He was often a tool of the patron or a captive of the audience. In such a capacity, the poet's task was to impress and please; he was compelled to indulge in insincere imitation, particularly when he was asked to compose poems of praise, satire, or elegy. Under the circumstances, the lot of the professional poet was not an easy one. His success depended as much on his willingness to accommodate his audience as on his artistry. He depended on his patron for a livelihood and, unless he was a wealthy man, he had to succeed in affluent circles through a great deal of tribulation and hardship. He began his career wandering from one place to another reciting his poems to anyone who was willing to listen and in expectation of some reward. The poet hoped eventually to reach the court of a ruler. Once at court, he was given generous stipends and even land in fief. He was ordinarily provided with special vestments befitting his rank at the court. And, depending upon his educational preparation, he might be appointed to an important office.⁵

Both the form and content of Arabic poetry were standardized to the point of rigidity. Due regard for these requirements was observed among the Hispano-Arabic poets, although they introduced some new images and metaphors drawn from the Spanish soil. Whereas 'Abd al-

⁵ Rikabi, *Fi-l-Adab al-Andalusi*, p. 63ff.

Rahmān I had sung nostalgically to a palm tree in the manner of the old bards, his successors in Andalusia addressed themselves to the gardens, brooks, rivers, and monuments. Moreover, whereas the pre-Islamic poet had sung the saga of inter-tribal wars, the Andalusian poet celebrated the victories of Islam in its wars against Christian rulers. This notwithstanding, the language remained essentially akin to the classical or “pure” Arabic. However, new popular forms known as *zajal* and *muwashshah* began to appear in the tenth century and differed substantially from the classical in the form, language, and even content.

Arabic poetry in general and Hispano-Arabic poetry in particular contain the ‘following major themes:

Love (*nasib*, or *ghazal*), in which the poet sings the joy of a reciprocal love, the thrill of a rendezvous, or the beauty of the beloved. The poet laments the suffering of an unhappy love and separation from the beloved.

Praise (*madh*), in which the poet indulges in praise for his patron’s superior qualities, which often are imaginary.

Satire (*hijā*), in which the poet depicts, often with exaggeration, the blemishes and evil qualities’ of an enemy.

Elegies (*marāthi*), in which the poet emphasizes the deceased’s qualities, such as generosity, courage, nobility, and wisdom.

War poems (*hamāsah*), in which the poet laments reverses at the hand of the enemy or celebrates the victory of his benefactor.

Ascetic (*zuhd*) and mystical poetry’, in which the poet dwells on the transitory character of this world; on fate, virtue, or the merit of knowledge; on union with God.

Descriptive poetry (*wasf*), in which the theme of love found the most eloquent expression among the Hispano-Arabic poets. Here the poet showed his intense feeling for and love of nature. Cities, rivers, mountains, valleys, palaces, monuments, gardens, promenades, fruits, and flowers were favourite themes. The night dawn’, sunset, wind, snow. The planet, animals and plants were also objects of his attention, as were ruins, which reminded the poet of bygone greatness.

Wine poetry (*khamriyāt*), in which the poet extolls wine and its effects.⁶

Poetic Originality

Hispano-Arabic poetry depended for a long time on that produced in the East. Eastern poets, from pre-Islamic times down to the tenth century, were the models and sources of inspiration for the Hispano-Arabic poet, or lover of poetry. More often than not the Hispano-Arabic poet was considered successful if his poetry closely imitated that of leading Eastern poets. Among the latter were, Shanfara, Samaw’al, Hatim al-Tayy’, and Imru’-I-Qays of pre-Islamic times; Ibn Abi Rabi’ah (d. 719 A.D.), Jarir (d. 728 A.D.), al-Farazdaq (d. 728 A.D.), and al-Akhtal’ (d. ca. 710

⁶ Rikabi, *Fi-l-Adab al-Andalusi*, Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah. p. 141=ff.

A.D.) from the ' Umayyad period; and Bashshar b. Burd (d. -783A.D.), Abū Nuwas (d. 810 A.D.), Abū al-'Atahiyah (d. 828 A.D.), al-Buhturi (d. 897 A.D.), al-Mutanabbi (d. 965 A.D.), and al-Ma'arri, to mention only a few, from 'Abbāsīd times. All of these poets were well known' in al-Andalus and were considered consummate poets. Their poetry was widely studied, commented on, and recited.

Despite its dependence on the East, Hispano-Arabic poetry reached its full development in the eleventh century when the Andalusians became fully conscious of their own poetical gift and were not satisfied with comparison with Eastern poets. At this point, the Andalusian desired to be equal or even superior to the Easterner, as is evidenced by the several treatises of Ibn Hazm,⁷ Ibn Bassām,⁸ Ibn Khāqān,⁹ and al-Shaqundī,¹⁰ who extolled the poetical talents of their compatriots.

The development of Hispano-Arabic poetry may be analyzed according to the following major periods: the formative period, which extended from 711 A.D. to 1031 A.D., or the rule of the Umayyads; the flowering of poetry or its golden age, particularly under the petty-kings (1031—1090 A.D.) and shortly thereafter; the eventual decline and ultimate disappearance of such poetry from Spanish soil, which was completed by the sixteenth century.

It is hardly possible to do justice to the enormous number of poems written by a staggering number of individuals from all walks of life. The sample of the poetical compositions included here falls short of conveying both the actual content and the form of the original Arabic.

Intellectualism

The Umayyad rulers, not to mention the poets who came to Spain during and after the conquest, had considerable knowledge of poetry and even composed poetry in the best classical tradition of the *qasidah*. For one 'Abd al-Rahman I (756-788 A.D.)¹¹ is said to have composed various poems, outstanding among which is one addressed to a palm tree. He gives the tree personalized human feelings not unlike his own and he expresses a strong feeling of nostalgia for his Syrian homeland:

A palm tree I beheld in Ar-Rusāfa,
Far in the West, far from the palm tree land:
I said: You, like myself, are far away, in a strange land;
How long have I been far away from my people!

⁷ Ibn Hazm, *Risalah*, pp. 154-170.

⁸ Ibn Bassam, *al-Dhakhirah fi Mahasin ahl al-Jazira*. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah.

⁹ Ibn Khaqan, *Qala'id and Matmah al-anfus*.

¹⁰ Al-Shaqundi, *Risalah*

¹¹ Ibn Abbar, *al-Hullah*, vol. 1., pp. 35ff.

You grew up in a land where you are a stranger,
And like myself, are living in the farthest corner of the earth:
May the morning clouds refresh you at this distance,
And may abundant rains comfort you forever!¹²

He had a passion for hunting, and his companions tried to tempt him at the sight of herons to go hunting instead of pursuing a campaign against the enemy. But ‘Abd al-Rahman, who had been driven from his homeland to taste the hardship and bitterness of exile, did not fall to the temptation. He reminded his companions that his task was to hunt felons and he admonished his companions that the path to glory is attained only through hardship and effort; following are the last two verses of the poem:

Tell those who like to sleep on cushions
That glory is forged by effort, nought else!
So ride toward it through hardships’ straits,
Else will you be the lowest of all beings!¹³

To the emir al-Hakam I also are attributed a number of poems - one celebrating his crushing a revolt at Toledo and another appeasing five rebellious members of his harem!¹⁴ Also ‘Abd al-Rahmān II,’ who “orientalized” his court in the fashion of Baghdad, composed some verses, as did some of his immediate descendants. It was during his reign that the famous singer- musician Ziryāb came to Spain from Baghdad. Ziryāb seems to have aroused the jealousy of many, among them the poets Ibn Habib and al-Ghazāl.¹⁵ Ibn Habib also sought reward from ‘Abd al-Rahmān II through praise but the satirical vein of his poetry reminded the ruler that he, as a scholar, was more deserving of munificence than the musician Ziryāb:

I am hard pressed, yet what I wish
Is an easy thing for the Merciful’s power
One thousand red ones, even less would accept
A scholar, whose wish may have been too great:
Ziryāb was given this sum, ‘no more, no less
Yet my profession is surely nobler than his.¹⁶

¹² Nyki, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p.8.

¹³ Nyki, p.21.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Abbar, *al-Hullah*, vol. p. 50.

¹⁵ Al-Maqarri, *Nafh al-Tibb*, vol. 1. p. 449.

¹⁶ Nyki, p. 23.

Likewise, the satirist Yahyā b. al-Hakam, known, as al-Ghazāl by virtue of his extreme beauty, composed venomous satire against Ziryāb'. These satires earned him exile: he went to Iraq, where he met leading poets. As a poet, he had great ability to charm ladies by flattery — especially those whom he encountered on his diplomatic missions to the Normans' and Byzantines. His poetry of wine strongly resembled that of the famous' Baghdādi poet of wine, Abū Nuwās (d. 810 A.D.).

Sa'id b. Jūdi¹⁷ is an example of the knight poet. Appearing during the rebellion of Umar b. Hafsun, he composed war verses¹⁸ and others express in his tender feelings for a certain Jayhān, a fictitious name for the Umayyad prince's songstress, with whom he was madly in love. Some of his verses are:

My ears refused to leave my soul, in my body:
Because of them, my heart was filled with sadness;
I gave Jayhān my soul merely because
I recalled her song, without having seen each other:
It seems that I and her name— while the tears flow
From my eyes — are like a monk who prays to his idol.¹⁹

The fame of Ibn Hāni al-Andalusi (b. ca. 932 A.D.—937/d. 973 A.D.)²⁰ rests on his *adab* work. He first led a licentious life in Seville; he was banished from the city and went to North Africa, where he received the patronage of the Fātimid ruler. Ibn Hani preferred to return with his family, but he died en route under obscure circumstances. In honor of the Fātimid Mu'izz (952 A.D.— 975 A.D.) he composed a famous *qasidah*, which by its quality could be compared with the best poetry in East or West, according to the evaluation of the biographer Ibn Khallikān. However, it is an example of panegyric which lacks both sincerity and a sense of proportion. Following is a part of the poem praising the Fātimid ruler:

By God, if equinoctial rains were like him,
Despair of famine would never arise in the world:
In the light of his person Time made appear
An empire free from weaknesses and baseness!
An *imam* just and honest in every respect,
Such as a just *imam* should be and is expected to be:

¹⁷ Sa'id bn Judi, p. 30.

¹⁸ Ibn Abd Rabbihi, *al-'Iqd al-Farid*, vol. 4, pp. 501-527.

¹⁹ Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 30.

²⁰ Nykl, p. 28.

He surpassed in glory all past and present eras,
 Like a necklace whose center excels its ends in worth:
 He finds not enjoyment in accumulating wealth,
 Nor does he take pleasure in this world's joys:
 Lions are trembling with fear in their dwellings.
 Before his sword which, once unsheathed, is bound to win:
 When all the kings together are compared to thee,
 Thy greatness equals a sea, they are mere drops! ²¹

From the tenth century onward Hispano-Arabic poets became numerous, and the list of eleventh-century poets is staggering indeed. "Everybody" Says, Garcia Gomez, "from the poorest farmers to kings, is a poet and everything serves and is put into poetry."²² One may single out some of the leading poets such as al-Ramādi, Ibn Darrāj, Ibn Shuhayd, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Zaydun, al-Mu'tamid, Ibn 'Ammār, Ibn Labbāna, and Abū Ishāq of Elvira. Some of these poets are mentioned in connection with courtly love.²³ By and large, their poetic talent went beyond love poems, and comprised the various contents of Arabic poetry: panegyrics, satire, elegies, wine poems, description of nature and so forth.

Al-Ramadi (d.1015 A.D.)²⁴ was born in a village in the Algarve and studied in Cordova, where he later taught. He became the leading poet at the court of the caliph al-Hakam II. However he was imprisoned on charges of having ridiculed his patron in a poem. While in prison, he composed a number of poems and gave them the title of the "Book of the Bird" in which he praised the ruler and pleaded for mercy. Subsequently he served at the court of Ibn Abi 'Amir al-Mansur for a time but seems to have fallen into disfavor'. His poems include panegyrics to his patrons, lamentations, wine poetry, satire, and love poetry.

Ibn Darrāj al-Qastalli has been mentioned along with Ibn Shuhayd in connection with epistolary compositions.²⁵ Ibn Darrāj was the secretary and court poet of Ibn Abi 'Amir al-Mansur

²¹Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 29.

²² Qasidas, p. 8.

²³ See Ibn Hazm and Ibn Zaydun.

²⁴ On al-Ramadi, see al-Maqqari, *Nafh al-tib*, vol. 2, p. 440.

²⁵ On Ibn Darrāj, see Abbas, *Tarikh al-Adab al-Andalusi*; ; 'Asr Siyadat Qurtubah, pp. 237ff.

and earned the surname of al-Mutanabbi' by virtue of his excellent poetry. Ibn Shuhayd, an able poet, equated himself with leading poets of pre-Islamic and early 'Abbāsid times.²⁶

These poets flourished in the city of Cordova at a time when Seville began to emerge as the important political and intellectual center of al-Andalus. In Seville as elsewhere in al-Andalus, an array of poets served at the courts of petty rulers. The most important and colorful poets were, perhaps, ibn 'Ammār and his patron al-Mu'tamid, the poet-king of Seville.

Ibn 'Ammār (1031_1086 A.D.)²⁷ was of Arab origin, belonging to a humble family. He received literary training in Silves and Cordova and showed a great inclination for poetry at an early age. He started as a vagabond poet and composed poems of praise for whomever paid for them. His fame must have been widespread when he was introduced to the Abbadid al-Mu'tamid, ruler of Seville, for whom he composed a *qasidah* of praise on the occasion of the latter's victory over the Berbers. Ibn 'Ammār soon became the intimate friend of al-Mu'tamid's son, al-Mu'tamid himself an accomplished poet of wine and song. Both young poets enjoyed a good time and an adventurous life, a relationship that caused al-Mu'tamid to exile Ibn 'Ammār. However he was reinstated to the 'Abbādid court at the accession of his companion, and was appointed governor of Silves.

Because of his humble origin, perhaps, and a life of deprivation, Ibn 'Ammār tended to skepticism and certain feeling that he would sooner or later lose the friendship of al-Mu'tamid. This conscious awareness may have been the result of his own behavior, which was often radical and indiscreet. For instance, he was prone to pomposity and showmanship; he appeared to arrogate to himself functions that actually belonged to his benefactor. This situation led to suspicion and ended in tragedy when Ibn 'Ammār made the fatal mistake of inciting the people of Valencia to rebellion. The hitherto tolerant al-Mu'tamid composed a poem to Ibn 'Ammār reminding him of his low origin and baseness. To make matters worse, Ibn Ammār, in turn, composed a venomous satire against al-Mu'tamid and his family. This destroyed once and for all the old friendship. Ibn 'Ammār had to flee to the North and finally was sold to the highest bidder; al-Mu'tamid bought him and brought him to Seville. Ibn 'Ammār asked the ruler's pardon in a poem that became

²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 75-79.

²⁷ Nykl, Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, pp. 154-162.

famous, but to no avail. The enemies of Ibn ‘Ammār were pressing for his death, and al-Mu‘tamid, in a fit of anger, seized an ax and killed his former friend with repeated blows.

The poet-king al-Mu‘tamid (1040-1091 A.D)²⁸ was one of the most renowned poets of Muslim Spain. He was the poet of nostalgia, love, gaiety, and suffering. As a ruler he assumed first the governorship of Silves in the name of his father al-Mu‘tamid, and he then succeeded to the throne of Seville at the age of twenty-nine. He was an able ruler and he could have become a great one had it not been for difficult circumstances beyond his control -namely, the internal struggle among the party-kings, the successful inroads of the Christians, and finally the emergence of the African kingdom of the Almoravids, who put an end to his kingdom and humiliated him. It was he who invited the Almoravid ruler to check the victorious Alfonso VI. The final outcome was that the proud ruler was taken captive from Spanish soil to the desert at Aghamāt in Morocco, where he lived his last days in poverty and humiliation. Al-Mu‘tamid ceased to be a king, but he remained a great poet with an outlook quite different from that of his youth when he led a life of joy and splendor.

On the whole, al-Mu‘tamid’s poetry may be divided into two periods: that composed during a time of prosperity and ease, and that composed during exile and suffering. In many respects, his poetry has an autobiographical character pertaining to his youth, adventure, reminiscences, and the like. His merit as an outstanding poet has been widely recognized in the East and West.

When he was in trouble as the result of a military fiasco, he composed flattering verses to soothe his father’s anger; he sang passionate and tender verses to his beloved I’timād; and he composed many other love verses, some celebrating his victories. In captivity, his various elegies were marked with nostalgia, sorrow, and a deep feeling of humiliation. At times he complained about his state of inactivity, and at others he reminisced about the good old days, expressed his concern for the conditions of his family, or lamented his suffering.

He lived a life full of contrast: a seemingly lasting and sincere friendship with Ibn ‘Ammār ended in violence by his own hand; a relatively strong kingdom was taken away because of an invitation he had made and for which he blamed himself later on. All of these sad and dramatic situations were food for poetry. Aside from them, his poems addressed to his wife I’timād, whom

²⁸ Garcia Gomez, *Qasidas*, pp. 75-81.

he had bought from a muleteer; are quite famous. He had a strong attachment to I‘timād, who appears to have been beautiful and gracious, but witty and capricious. If she wanted to see snow in the hot days of summer, al-Mu‘tamid planted almonds to simulate a snow setting. A famous poem was addressed to his friend Ibn ‘Ammar on the occasion of the latter’s nomination to the governorship of Silves. Here al-Mu‘tamid recalls the days he had spent there as governor. He wonders if the dwellings and castle remember the young man who longs for them and sighs for the nights spent with round-hipped maidens: with a girl who poured out wine for him from her bewitching glances, “from her glass and from her mouth”; who thrilled him by the tunes of her lute; and who resembled a blossoming rose when she let fall her mantle!

In contrast to a life of luxury, parties, and passion is the life of exile, humiliation, and suffering which he describes in moving poems. He bemoans his lamentable condition as a captive in chains which clasp him” like serpents and bite like lions.’’ In one poem he nostalgically reminisces about his beloved Seville — its flower gardens, pools, groves, and palaces — and he ponders his fate:

A stranger, a captive in the Maghrib: over there,
 The throne will mourn him and the pulpit also,
 Sharp, cutting swords, and the lances likewise,
 Will shed, profusely, bitter tears of grief!
 There was a time when power was his friend,
 A very close one, but today it eschews him,
 By the decree of a misguided, corrupt Fate:
 Has Fate e’er dealt justly with those who’re just?
 Ma as-Samā’s sons, destiny has humbled them;
 Great, indeed, is the shame of Ma as-Samā’s sons!
 Her waters, made of tears shed o’er their misery,
 Flow over all regions of the sky like oceans!
 I wonder whether I ever shall spend a night,
 With flower gardens and water pools is around me,
 Where green olive groves, far famed, are planted,
 Where the doves sing, the warbling of birds resounds,
 In the Zāhir on the height, refreshed by soft rain,
 The Thurayyā pointing at us, we pointing at it,
 The Zāhi looking at us with its round Sa’d as-Su‘ud,
 Jealous of each other, like a beloved and a lover!
 All this is now hard, not easy to attain:
 Yet, whatever God wishes to pass, is easy to bear!²⁹

²⁹Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 149.

In another poem, an epitaph, he asks the stars to dampen with their tears the tomb that encloses his remains and describes his qualities' of wisdom, mercy, generosity, bravery, and justice:

Tomb of a stranger, my evening and morning dew refresh thee!
Truly, thou has won the mortal rests of Ibn 'Abbād:
Wisdom and knowledge, and munificence, all in one,
Opulence for the poor, the water stream for the thirsty,
The lance, the sword, the arrow in fierce affray,
The giver of death to the enemy lion,
One who was like Fate in vengeance, a sea of generosity?
A moon in the darkness, the leader of courtly gatherings!
Yes, it is true, God's decree thus has attained unto me,
Heavenly decree thus has brought me to my appointed time. And before seeing
this bier I never could imagine
That high mountains could be placed on wooden boards!
Do not ask for more: be kind to the nobility entrusted to thee,
And may the storm-laden clouds pour rain amidst lightnings
Over thee, who hidest their brother, whose streams now rest
Under the stone slab; each evening, each morning,
Let the tears of the dew fall upon thee, descending
From the eyes of the bright stars that failed to help him!
May the blessings of God be poured with outnumber
Upon him who lies here, forever and forever!³⁰

Many were the poets at the court of the 'Abbāids of Seville. Prominent among them were Ibn Labbāna (d. 1113 A.D.),³¹ who, having received the favors of al-Mu'tamid, remained faithful to his patron and visited him in exile at Aghamāt. In one poem, he describes with verses that touch the heart the departure of al-Mu'tamid from al-Andalus. He ponders on the inevitability of destiny; he pictures the unforgettable- sorrowful scene of departure with unveiled girls sobbing and giving their last farewell to the sons of 'Abbād.

The eleventh century produced other outstanding poets who received the patronage of the party-kings of Toledo, Murcia, Badajoz, Almeria, Granada, and others. Mention should be made of Abu Ishāq al-Ilbiri (Sp. *Elvira*) of twelfth-century Granada,³² who is famous for his ascetic poetry and a long poem written about 1066 A.D. inciting the people to rise against the Jews, who he believed had arrogated to themselves too much power and wealth. In other poems he reflects on the

³⁰ Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 136.

³¹ Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, pp. 163ff.

³² On Abu Ishaq Ilbiri, see Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, pp. 197ff.

transitory character of this life, finds solace in seclusion, and condemns the conceit and ‘vanity of rich people.

The poet-king al-Mu‘tasim (1051-1091A.D.)³³ of Almeria surrounded himself with great poets of the time, such as Ibn al-Haddād (d. 1087 A.D.)³⁴ a poet of love and praise, who fell in love with a Christian girl and composed tender verses for her. His daughter Umm al-Kirām³⁵ is known for her passionate verses addressed to the handsome youth, al-Sammār.

At this juncture, it is important to mention that, at the coming of the Almoravids in 1090 A.D., Arabic poetry in its classical form began to decline. This may be due to the lack of appreciation by the Berber rulers for poetry and to the gradual and steady decline of Muslim power in the Peninsula. Moreover, new poetical forms as represented by the *zajal* and *muwashshah* were making inroads, and the pre-eminent position of classical poetry was challenged. Nevertheless, the deeply rooted poetical tradition did not suddenly halt. The philosopher Ibn Bājjah³⁶ from Saragossa composed a number of poems; Ibn ‘Abdūn (d. 1134 A.D.)³⁷ from Badajoz is famous for his elegy, the *‘Abdūniyyah*, and for his prodigious memory; the-exiled poet Abu al-Salt (d. 1134 A.D.)³⁸ author of an anthology of Andalusian poets, was known for his poems of the descriptive (*wasf*) and love (*ghazal*) types.

Perhaps the leading poet of the first half of the twelfth century was Ibn Khafājah (d. 1139 A.D.)³⁹. In his youth he was a poet of love and pleasure. He later became the great poet of nature, for which he received the appellation of *al-jannan* (the Gardener); he composed many poems describing flowers, gardens, rivers, and mountains. Late in life he turned to asceticism (*zuhd*) and wrote several poems on that subject.

³³ On Mu‘tasim, see Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, pp. 183.

³⁴ On Ibn Haddad, see Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 194ff

³⁵ On Umm al-Kiram, see Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 186.

³⁶ On Ibn Bajjah, Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 251-254.

³⁷ On Ibn Abdun, *Ibid.*, pp. 175-179.

³⁸ On Abu al-Salt, see Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 238-240.

³⁹ On Ibn Khafajah, *Ibid.*, pp. 227-231.

The classical tradition was continued by the grammarians Ibn Mālik⁴⁰ and Abu Hayyan,⁴¹ and by the great thinker and statesman Ibn al-Khatib, who composed a number of *zajals* and *muwashshahāt*⁴². But the great poetical talent of the fourteenth century was Ibn Zamrak (1333 — 1392 A.D.),⁴³ called “the poet of Alhambra.” He was ‘born to a poor family in eastern Spain and moved to Granada, where he became the pupil of Ibn al-Khatib. Ibn Zamrak distinguished himself as a poet, scholar, and prose writer. Like his master, he served the Nasrid rulers of Granada, gaining prominence in state affairs through the help of his teachers. He composed a number of panegyric and lyric poems in eloquent and polished language which must have earned the admiration of his patron since he chose to have some of them inscribed on the walls of the Alhambra as a testimony of Ibn Zamrak’s poetical genius.

Conclusion

The contribution of Al-Andalus to Arabic poetry in general can hardly be overstated. In addition to popular innovations al-Andalus remained faithful to the classical poetry with respect to poetical forms and language, thereby preserving the integrity of the *qasidah*. On the other hand Andalusian poets drew their themes and raw materials from the resources of al-Andalus, without the artificiality and obscurantism of the neo-classicist poets of the East. Their poems could stand a favourable comparison within the best compositions produced in the east. Ibn Zaydun, al-Mu‘tamid, Ibn Khafajah – to mention only a few – rank among the leading Arab poets. Their lyrical compositions as well as their poems describing nature have enjoyed great popularity among the Arab-speaking people and have been anthologized in both the eastern and western parts of the Arab world.

Finally, from the foregoing, this research paper has discussed and elaborated on the intellectual and cultural life as well as originality in poetic forms and composition of poetry in al-Andalus and has given detailed attention to literary activities of some poets of this period such as their proper use of similes and metaphors, beside genuine sentiments, contribute to the greatness of their poetry, which remains urbane and sophisticated, drawing inspiration from the fauna and flora of Al-Andalus.

⁴⁰ On Ibn Malik, see Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 207.

⁴¹ On Abu Hayyan, Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 178.

⁴² Ibn al-Ahmar, *Nathir fara'id al-Juman fi nazm fuhul al-zaman*, pp. 86-120. The work consists of an anthology of thirty-one Andalusian and Maghribi poets.

⁴³ On Ibn Zamrak, see Nykl, *Hispano Arabic Poetry*, p. 366.

References

- ‘Abbas, Ihsan. (1969). *Tarikh al-Adab al-Andalusi: ‘Asr Siyadat Qurtubah*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- .(1962). *Tarikh al-Adab Al-Andalusi: ‘Asr al-Tawa’if wal Murabitin*. Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma‘arif.
- Abu al-Khashab, I. (1966). *Tarikh al-Adab al- ‘Arabi fi-l-Andalus*. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-al-Misriyyah.
- Abu al-Walid al-Himyari. (1940). *Al-Badi‘ fi Wasf al-Rabi‘*. ed. H. Peres.
- Al-Maqqari. *Nafh Tib min Ghusn Al-Andalus al-Ratib*. ed., Muhyi al-Din Abd al-Hamid. Cairo: Matba‘at Dar al-Kutub.
- Al-Qayrawani, al-Husri. (1982). *Zahr al-Adab*. Cairo: Maktaba al- Wahba.
- Arberry, A. J. (1975). *The Seven Odes*. London: OUP.
- (1971). *Anthology of Moorish Poetry*. England: Cambridge University Press.
- Ibn Abd Rabbihi. (1953). *Kitab al- ‘Iqd al-Farid*. ed. Ahmad Amin et-al. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub Lil-Malayin.
- Ibn al-Ahmar, (1997). *Nathir fara’id al-Juman fi nazm fuhul al-zaman*. ed. Muhammad Ridwan Dayah. Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘arif.
- Ibn al-Kattani. (2002). *Kitab al-Tashbihat*. ed. Abbas, I. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Ibn Bassam. (1945). *Al-Dhakhirah fi Mahasin ahl al-Jazira*. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah.
- Ibn Khaldun. (1965). *The Muqaddimah*. Trans. F. Rosenthal. vol.3. New York:
- Ibn Khallikan. (1972). *Wafayat al-A‘yan wa Anbau Abna’ Zaman*, vol.8. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Ibn Khaqan. (1277 A.H). *Qala’id*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘arif.
- Ibn Sa‘id, al-Maghribi. (1942). *Kitab Rayat al-Mubarrizin wa-Ghayat al-Mumayyizin*. ed. Garcia Gomez. Madrid:
- Kanun, A. (1961). *Al-Nubugh al-Maghribi fi-l-Adabi al- ‘Arabi*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah.
- Muhammad, Khafajah. (1962). *Qissat al-Adab al- ‘Arabi fi l-Andalus*. Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘arif

- Muhammad, R. al-Shabibi. (1961). *Adab al-Mugharibah wal- Andalusiiyin*. Cairo: Matba'at Dar al-Kutub.
- Kilani, K. (1924). *Nazarat fi Ta'rih al-Adab al-Andalusi*. Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Khanji.
- Rikabi, J. (1966). *Fi-l-Adab al-Andalusi*. 2 nd ed. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah.
- Nicholson, R. (1956). *Literary History of the Arabs*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Nykl, A.R. (1946). *Hispano-Arabic Poetry and Its Relations with the Old Provençal Troubadours*
Baltimore: n.p.
- Lyall, C. (1894). *A Commentary on the Ancient Arabic Poems*. Calcutta: n.p.
- Yaqut. (1927). *Irshad al-Arib ila Ma'rifat al-Adib*. ed. D.S. Margoliouth, vol. 7.
London: Oxford University Press.