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CONVENTION AND ORIGINALITY IN THE POETRY OF ELEVENTH-CENTURY MUSLIM SPAIN: RECEPTION OF EASTERN POETRY IN THE WEST

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It is possible to follow the development of Andalusian poetry up to the tenth century by means of anthologies such as the *Kitāb al-tashbīhāt* by Ibn al-Kattānī, a book which rivaled its Eastern counter-part the *Kitāb al-tashbīhāt* by Ibn Abī 'Awn.[1] We also have other sources for the development of Andalusian poetry during the eleventh century, namely the *Kitāb al-dhakhīra* by Ibn Bassām[2] and the *Qalā'id al-'iqyān* by al-Fatḥ ibn Khāqān.[3] These books give a good impression of existing opinions about eleventh century Andalusian poetry, since they are almost contemporary sources.

Later sources include the anthologies compiled by Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, such as *'Unwān al-murqiṣāt wa-al-muṭribāt* («Patterns of verses which make dance and sing»)[4], the *Rāyāt al-mubārizīn* («The banners of the Champions»)[5] and the *Kitāb al-mughrib fi ḥulā al-Maghrib* («The relator of extraordinary things about the jewels of the West»).[6] In these and even later anthologies such as al-Maqqarī's *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*[7] (which, as we know, was originally meant as a kind of biography of Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb, of which the first part is an introduction to Andalusian history and poetry) we often see the same poems being quoted.

Apparently the quoted poems were regarded as the best poems by contemporaries of these eleventh century poets. They were found to be the most original poems, although the anthologists were not blind to the fact that the themes and motifs of Andalusian poetry were deeply influenced by the models of the East. The Eastern models were often quoted in the context of a passage devoted to some original lines by a poet from the West, in this case Andalusia.

In addition to the Arabic anthologies, we possess another source of information about eleventh century poetry. That is the secular Hebrew poetry which flowered during the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth century and then virtually died out. Hebrew Andalusian poetry was a poetry based on Arabic motifs and Biblical Hebrew. This type of poetry is a good example of the reception of Classical Arabic poetry in Moslem Spain itself. In most cases we

find conscious imitations of the great poets of the East such as Abū Tammām, al-Mutanabbī, and al-Ma'arrī. In some cases we also find translations of successful lines of contemporary Andalusian poets.

In this paper I wish to give a brief survey of some of the successful lines and themes of the period, which is called in political terms the period of the «petty» or «party kings» (*mulūk al-ṭawā'if*). I want to base myself principally on Ibn Bassām's *Dhakhīra*.

The *Dhakhīra* is divided according to geographical regions. Part I comprises Cordoba and surrounding territories; part II the Western regions of al-Andalus including Seville; part III includes the Eastern region, i.e. the region of Murcia, Denia and Valencia; part IV includes an anthology of poets who came from foreign lands who praised Andalusia. There are also sections dedicated to Eastern poets who visited Andalusia. Ibn Bassām was also interested in commenting upon the poems in his anthology. The four main parts of the *Dhakhīra* are split up into sections dealing with individual poets. In many places narrations of historical events of the eleventh century are inserted, which are based on the authority of the contemporaneous historiographer Ibn Ḥayyān.

In most cases Ibn Bassām first lists love poetry (*nasīb*), then *madīḥ*, and finally various kinds of descriptive poetry (as did Lisān al-Dīn in his *Iḥāṭah* later on).[8] Often he tried to determine the origin of a certain motif within Arabic literature. As a result his book contains many excurses on themes of poetry as treated by Oriental Arabic poets and other predecessors. The subjects of these kinds of excurses include poems about down on the cheeks of boys (the beginning beard); descriptive passages on doves, chameleons, pens, flies, the Pleiades, and fleets. Below I will try to give some samples of Ibn Bassām's view on the Oriental origin of motifs as used by Andalusian poets of his time.

A well-known topic is the distinction between the two kinds of love: the so-called chaste love, sometimes called 'Udhrī, and impudent love. Part Two, 1: 141 deals with poetry on «chaste love» (*al-ḥubb al-'afīf*) by Andalusians, Part Two, 1: 144 with poetry on *al-ḥubb al-mājin* («impudent love»). The reason behind this excursus is Ibn Abbār's impudence, which is dealt with in Part Two, 1:150. Interest in this distinction also occurs in other contemporary sources. In an unedited part of his *Dīwān* for example Ibn Khafāja also amply deals with this distinction.[9]

In the section about Idrīs ibn al-Yamānī (Part Three, 1: 336 sqq.) two famous wine lines belonging to a laudatory poem rhyming in *ḥā'* composed by this poet are discussed. The lines go as follows:

> 1 Cups which come to us empty are heavy until they are filled with pure wine.
> 2 Then they have turned light, yes, they almost fly away with their contents. Thus are bodies light with souls.

The fact that Hebrew imitations of these lines were composed by the Hebrew Andalusian poets Moses ibn Ezra[10] (no. 72, lines 22–23) and Yehudah Halevi[11] (various poems, no. 45) proves the popularity of these lines, which were quoted in Arabic anthologies like the *Rāyāt al-mubārizīn* (no. 264) and the *Murqiṣāt* (78 [pp. 20–21]).

Moreover, in the section about Idrīs ibn al-Yamānī (especially Part Three, 1: 345) poems about doves by various poets are quoted along with selections from the letters of the Eastern poet al-Ma'arrī in rhymed prose. The author of the *Dhakhīra* seems justified in quoting al-Ma'arrī in this respect, since this motif often occurs in his poetry and rhymed prose, as Margoliouth remarked in his edition of the *Letters*[12]. Other examples of dove descriptions, such as the one by Ibn Khafāja (Part Two, 2: 578) and the one by 'Ali ibn al-Ḥiṣn (see below) also occur in the *Dhakhīra*.

The dove description by Idrīs ibn al-Yamānī has the merit of making the description of the sadness of his heart into a visual element of the external description of the dove, namely the red colour in her eyes. The dove's own cooing is responsible for the colour of its face. This descriptive technique perhaps constitutes the originality of the lines and the innovative nature of the motif. The poem goes as follows:

> 1 The grey dove whose neck is surrounded by a lace of silk brocade, whose texture can not be copied by the weaving of an imitator;
> 2 She coos on the green branches with [such] sounds that her face is coloured without a (colour or *kuḥl*) stick;
> 3 It is as if her deep-red feet are clothed with shoes of pearls without shoelaces;
> 4 It is as if she is painted with the *kuḥl* of the fire of my heart, so that you see your inner flame in her eyes.

According to Ibn Bassām, Idrīs ibn al-Yamānī took this motif from a line by Ibn Hānī al-Andalusī, which goes as follows:

> 1 Nothing moves me like the crying of the son of a grey dove in whose eyes burn live coals from my chest.

According to Ibn Bassām another poet, Abū al-Rabī' al-Quḍā'ī, also tried to follow the path of Idrīs, but went astray. Ibn Bassām reproaches this poet for his coolness instead of charm in his descriptions. Ibn Bassām thinks that the verses that follow are too cool, and he does not want to belong to the ones that relate these lines.

The famous dove description by 'Alī ibn al-Ḥiṣn begins with the same formula as Ibn Hānī's poem. 'Alī ibn al-Ḥiṣn's poem is mentioned in the *Dhakhīra* (Part Two, 1: 146) and several other anthologies such as some by Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī. We quote his famous description which shows a mosaic of colours:

1 Nothing moves me like the son of a grey dove crying on a branch between the island and the river;
2 His collar is pistachio coloured, he is azure blue of breast, embroidered his neck; his forefeathers and his back are dark green.
3 He turns around the rubies [of the eyes] eyebrows of pearls; on his hair he has forged a ring of pure gold.
4 The iron of the point of his beak is dark as if it was the point of a pen of silver provided with ink.
5 He leans on the branch of an *arak* tree as if it was a kind of couch and bows with his neck towards his folded wing.
6 And when he sees how my tears are shed, then he is moved by my weeping and takes possession of the green branch.
7 Then he urges his wings and strikes them flying and my heart flies away to where he is flying, but I do not know [this place].

Perhaps here the combination of colours was appreciated. The innovation must be the use of colour as part of the description of the dove as reflecting the poet's mood.

Another famous descriptive motif is the pen riddle by the poet Ibn Khafāja. This type of poetry has many antecedents in Abbasid poetry (see Ibn Bassām, Part Three, 2: 580). A further excursus is devoted to a riddle about the pen (no. 274, 342).[13] The poet addresses himself to a friend evoking the pleasant life they shared in the past.

2 Those were the days that the necklace of the *rendez-vous* was strung
3 Between a branch of splendid freshness and a full moon of beauty.
4 It was becoming morning whereas the camphor of the forehead was moist and the musk of the hair was black.
5 The myrtles of the juvenile down did not really appear yet in his garden [on the beloved's cheek], but were on the point of doing so.
6 We went around a Ka'bah of temptation in which there was a Zamzam well for our benefit.

After this introduction Ibn Khafāja offers a riddle to his addressee.

7 Here you have a riddle. It is nodded at by the poem which speaks incoherently.
8 What is one who is shedding tears without being sad and a moon fading away which never becomes full.
9 It is telling lies without knowing it; knows a lot of things without being conscious of it.
10 You will meet in its chest the spearhead of Rabī'ah ibn Mukaddam [a warrior] and the tongue of Aktham ibn Sayfī [an arbiter].
11 When its lightning flies, the face of the morning is darkened by him and clouded. It marches without a raised foot and does not walk but it speaks [without talking].
12 You see it as the sixth of five, which express themselves clearly by speech whereas it is dumb.
13 There where no ear can contain speech nor anyone opens a mouth.

Some of Ibn Khafāja's images are borrowed from the Eastern poet Abū Tammām[14] (no. 129, line 30; 3: 123), who addressed his Maecenas:

34 He is eloquent, when you want him to speak while he is riding on horseback; he is speechless when you speak to him, while going on foot.
35 When he is riding on the thin five, whereas the gulfs of thought are poured out over him and they are abundant,
38 Both little fingers support him and [other] three fingers press from three directions.
39 You see how his situation is glorious, while he is thin from weakness, whereas his conditions are fat, and he himself meager.

As I said at the beginning of this paper, Hebrew Andalusian poetry is a good example of the reception of Classical Arabic poetry in Moslem Spain itself. The Hebrew Andalusian poet Moses ibn Ezra composed a pen description similar to the one mentioned above. It looks very much like a riddle. Poem 95, a laudatory poem on Abū Ayyūb Solomon Ibn al-Mu'allim, begins with a description of his colleague's poem. Thereupon follows the pen description:[15]

6 Although [the pen] is weak, those who are girded with swords in the struggle are too weak for the edge of his teeth like a champion [I Sam. 17: 4, 23];
7 Although a foot-warrior, it smells the battle with chariots from afar, and is well equipped for it,
8 Speaking without tongue and taking without finger yet running as a gazelle without feet.
9 Although it is dumb, the inhabitants of the islands of the sea as well as the land of Sepharvaim hear the purity of its sayings.
10 It gains understanding of the thoughts of all the learned men of a book; it is a calamity for the stupid without a book and a smiting together of the knees [because of fear];
11 It is as an arrow, and when Solomon throws it, the darkness of a stupid man will be covered with a mantle of lights;
12 [Solomon], on the neck of whose book it arranges necklaces, with which the gold of the Indians from Parvaim can not be compared.

In the above mentioned examples appear some of the themes which were popular in eleventh century Andalusia. These themes were not only popular

in Arabic but also in Hebrew Andalusian poetry. The poetical descriptions have in common frequent references to colours and comparisons with precious metals and clothes. Furthermore, paradoxes are stressed, such as «the pen is weak, but its power enormous.»

It is clear that Andalusian poets had Oriental examples in mind as is shown by the Arabic Andalusian anthologies which appear immediately after the eleventh century. In this paper I have tried to deal in a general way with the selection of themes popular in the eleventh century. If we would go deeper into the question of tradition and innovation, or convention and originality, we need to make a difference between conscious *mu'āraḍāt* or imitations of oriental Arabic poets by Arabic as well as Hebrew poets, and mere elaborations of well-known motifs.

NOTES

1 Ibn al-Kattānī, *Kitāb al-tashbīhāt*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1967); W. Hoenerbach, *Dichterische Vergleiche der Andalus-Araber* (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1973); Ibn Abī 'Awn, *al-Tashbīhāt*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān (London: Cambridge University Press/Luzac, 1950).

2 Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Bassām, *Kitāb al-dhakhīra fī maḥāsin al-Jazīra* (The Book of the Treasure about the Good Characteristics of the Peninsula) ed. Iḥsan 'Abbās, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1399/ 1979).

3 Al-Fatḥ ibn Khāqān, *Qalā'id al-Iqyān* (The Golden Necklaces) (Tunis: al-Maktaba al-'atīqa, 1966).

4 Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī (d. 673/1274), *al-Murqiṣāt wa-al-muṭribāt* (Cairo: Jam'īyat al-Ma'ārif, 1286/1869–70, reprint Beirut: Dār Ḥamad wa-Muḥyu, 1973), idem, *'Unwān al-murqiṣāt wa-al-muṭribāt ou Modèles de vers [à danser et à rire]*, ed. and trans. Mahdad Abdel Kader (Alger: Éditions Carbonel, 1949).

5 Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, *El libro de las banderas de los campeones* (*Kitáb Ráyát al-Mubárizín*), ed. Emilio García Gómez (Madrid: Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, 1942).

6 Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, *al-Mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib*, ed. Shawqī Ḍayf, 2 vols (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1953–55).

7 Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalūs al-raṭīb* (The Fragrance of Perfume from the Humid Bough of Andalusia), ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, 8 vols, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1388/1968).

8 Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭa fī akhbār Gharnāṭa* (The Comprehensive Book About the Affairs of Granada), ed. Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh 'Inān, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1393/1973).

9 Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, Leiden MS. Or. 14.056, 8 ab.

10 Moses ibn Ezra, *Dīwān (Shire ha-Holl)*, ed. Hayyim Brody (Berlin: Schocken, 1935) vol. 1.

11 Yehudah ha-Lewi, *Dīwān*, ed. H. Brody (Berlin: H. Itzkowski, 1909) vol. 2.

12 D. S. Margoliouth, ed., *The Letters of Abū 'l-'Alā' of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man* (Oxford: Clarendon/Frowde, 1898) 19.

13 Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, ed. S. M. Ghāzī (Alexandria: Mansha'at al-Ma'ārif, 1960).

14 Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abduh 'Azzām, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1960).

15 Moses ibn Ezra, poem no. 92; see on pen descriptions Israel Lewin, «Ha-et we-hap-parash (al ‹Shirah Yetomah› shel Yosef Ibn Hasday, we-al haq-Qasidah be-shirat ha-Holl bi-Sfarad), in *Shay le-heman* (Festschrift Habermann), ed. Sebi Malakhi (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977) 143–74, and G.J. van Gelder, «The Conceit of Pen and Sword,» *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32 (1987) 329–60.