

## THE ANDALUSI KHARJAS: A Courtly Counterpoint to Popular Tradition?<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The subject of this article is the interaction or interference of popular and courtly or 'learned elements' in Andalusī strophic poetry. Since many scholars have considered the *kharjas* to be manifestations of popular lyric, the first objective of this article is to determine to what degree we can classify these texts as 'popular'. The second objective is to relate these texts to the 'courtly' context where they were performed. The multicultural and multilingual character of Andalusī society is reflected in Andalusī strophic poetry, as well as the rivalry between Berber and Arabic-Andalusī culture. Languages and alphabets of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish populations were used in the final lines, the *kharjas*. We notice a great discrepancy in the aesthetic judgments of Andalusī Arabic strophic poetry and in its popularity in different periods. These non-classical genres are usually not included in the anthologies of prestigious literature. During the Berber dynasties this literary tradition reached the status of 'court literature' and we see that 'innovation' became a new 'tradition'. Later, we see even that this 'popular' poetry became the 'classical' Maghribi musical tradition. The higher esteem these poems earned in al-Andalus contributed to their wide diffusion in the Maghrib and other regions of the Islamic world.

### 2. Andalusī strophic poetry

In al-Andalus two new forms of poetry, the strophic *muwashshaḥ* and the *zajal*, developed within Arabic literature. The *muwashshaḥ* is

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1 This text is an elaborated version of my lecture at the 31st International Congress on Medieval Studies. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo (May, 1996). The lecture was based on my then forthcoming monograph, *Love Songs from al-Andalus: History, Structure and Meaning of the Kharja*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997). Some of the data presented here also appeared in my article "Berbers in al-Andalus and Andalusis in the Maghrib as reflected in *tawshih* Poetry," in *Poetry, Politics and Polemics: Cultural Transfer between the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa*, ed. O. Zwartjes, G. J. van Gelder and E. de Moor (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 1996).

written in classical Arabic and closes with a *kharja* which can be written in classical, colloquial Arabic or in 'non-Arabic' diction, in most cases in Romance or in a mixture of Romance and colloquial Arabic. The *zajal* is mainly written in one of the Hispano-Arabic dialects. The 'inventor' of the *muwashshais*, according to Ibn Bassām's *Kitāb al-dhakhīra*,<sup>2</sup> the blind poet Muqaddam b. Muʿāfa al-Qabrī who lived at the end of the ninth century in the period of the Umayyad Cordoban *amīr* ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Marwānī (888 to 912). This literary innovation is posterior to the musical innovations introduced by Ziriyāb, who immigrated from the East to al-Andalus where he founded a 'conservatory'. It is probable that these strophic compositions infiltrated the repertoire of poets and musicians of the 'school of Ziriyāb', so that soon a musico-poetical 'tradition' was born. We still can hear remnants of this tradition in the Maghribi-Andalusi *nawbas* where *tawshīḥ* poetry (*muwashshaḥand zajal*) form the most essential component of the texts and their musico-rhythmical structures.

The earliest sources of the region, both Andalusi and Maghribi, do not leave any room for doubt in their evaluation of these non-classical compositions. Abū l-Ḥasan b. Bassām al-Shantarīnī (Ibn Bassām), who was born during the Banū l-Aftās in the Taifa period, did not include *muwashshaḥāt* in his anthology. In the Maghrib we see the same: ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿAlī al-Tamīmī al-Marrākushī (1185-1249), although admiring the poet Ibn Zuhr, apologised for not including *muwashshaḥāt* in his work, because it was not customary to do so in such sizeable respectable works. Al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān, a literary historian and also a *kātib* of the Almoravid governor of Granada Abū Yūsuf Tāshufīn b. ʿĀlī, wrote his *Qalāʾid* excluding the *muwashshaḥāt*. Some of the great *aficionados* and theoreticians of the genre are not Andalusis. Ibn Khaldūn lived in Tunisia (fourteenth century), Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk in Egypt (end of the twelfth and the first decade of the thirteenth century) and Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Hillī (fourteenth century) lived in Iraq (fourteenth century). These literary historians admired the Andalusis and through their sources we know that these Andalusis compositions were very popular in the East already in the twelfth century. The Hispano-Hebrew poets imitated their Hispano-Arabic colleagues and brought their Hebrew imitations (*muʿāraḍāt*) also to the East.

2 Ibn Bassām, *Al-Dhakhīra fī Maḥāsīn ahl al-Jazīra*, ed. Ihsān ʿAbbās (Beirut, 1979) 469.

### 3. Andalusī strophic poetry under the Taifa rulers, the Almoravids and the Almohads, and its diffusion in North Africa

In the Taifa period, poets worked at the numerous courts of the 'petty' kings who belonged to different ethnicities. The dynasty of Taifa Toledo, the Banū dhī-l-Nū n were of Berber origin, and the *washshāḥ* Ibn Arfa' Rā'suh worked for them. Some courts were more interested in poetry than others. For example, the court of Saragossa under the Banū Hūd was more a scholarly than a poetic centre, but we find nevertheless some authors of *muwashshahāt* in the North, such as al-Aṣbāḥī al-Lāridī (Lérida),<sup>3</sup> or al-Jāzzār from Saragossa. The Taifa kingdom of Granada, where the Ṣinhāja Berbers ruled, was an important centre of poetic activities, in particular of Hebrew poetry. The Jewish vizier Shemū'el b. Naghreyḷā (or: Naghrillah) is one of these celebrated poets. The main poetic centres were the former capital of the Caliphate of Cordoba, Badajoz under the Banū al-Aḥṣas, Almería under the Banū Ṣumādih, Murcia, first under the slave-dynasty Khayrān, but later annexed by Valencia under the Banū 'Abd al-'Azīz, and of course Seville under the Banū 'Abbād.

Andalusī Arabic urban secular culture in al-Andalus was menaced by the puritan orthodox Islamic culture of the Almoravids. The King of Seville, al-Mu'tamid b. 'Abbād, requested their assistance against the expansion of the Christians from the North. When the Almoravids came to al-Andalus, they defeated the armies of King Alfonso VI at Zallāqa (Sagrajas) and they immediately deposed all the Taifa Kings, except the Taifa of the Banū Hūd of Saragossa. The new Berber rulers from the Sahara tried to 'purge' Andalusī culture and exiled al-Mu'tamid to Aghmāt in Southern Morocco. Al-Mu'tamid of Seville spent the rest of his life in jail there and wrote nostalgic poems, his so-called *aghmātiyyāt*. Others followed him, voluntarily or not, and settled in North Africa. Among the most important, I mention the poets Ibn al-Labbāna and Ibn Ḥamdīs. Ibn al-Labbāna, who wrote earlier panegyrics to the 'Abbādids of Seville in al-Andalus, visited the de-throned king in the Sahara (Aghmāt) and he continued to compose panegyrics in the manner of the *muwashshāḥ* praising the Banū Hammād in Algeria;<sup>4</sup> he died in Mallorca. The second poet is Ibn Ḥamdīs, who is

3 We must be aware of the fact that we cannot ascertain the real background from the *nisba* only; the person in question may be a member of a family which migrated many generations earlier from Lérida.

4 Jaysh al-Tawshih, no. 41.

mentioned as a composer of *muwashshaḥāt* by al-Ṣafadī.<sup>5</sup> He was born in Sicily in 1056<sup>6</sup> and emigrated to Seville in 1078 where he was 'rediscovered' by King al-Mu'tamid. Ibn Ḥamdīs followed the King to the Maghrib after the fall of Taifa Seville, where he dedicated panegyrics to the prisoner, elegiac and consolatory compositions. He passed his last years at the court of the Ḥammūdids of Bijāya (Bougie). He died as a blind poet in 1133 in Mallorca or in Bijāya.<sup>7</sup>

The unification of Maghribi and Andalusi territories undoubtedly favoured the diffusion of *tawshīḥ* poetry. This appears to be a contradiction, since we know that the Almoravids rejected Andalusi-Arabic secular cultural products. Poets complained that they could not find a maecenas, whereas Almoravids complained that they could not find poets who were willing to compose panegyric compositions for them.<sup>8</sup> Here, a considerable discrepancy is felt between two different cultures. When the Almohads replaced the Almoravids, many poets had no problems in continuing to write panegyrics for their new rulers.<sup>9</sup>

I have examined Andalusi strophic poetry in general and the *kharja* in particular. My central concern now is whether the Romance and/or the bilingual *kharjas* are representations of poetry 'at the crossroads of two systems'. I shall attempt to answer the following question: Are these *kharjas* invented texts by Andalusi poets who wrote according to the Arabic system, or did the poets reproduce or imitate *primitiva lírica temprana*?

#### 4. Structure

Many scholars have compared the structure of the Hispano-Arabic *zajal* and *muwashshaḥ* with Romance poems with identical or similar structure. In the Romance tradition a generic term as *zajal* is missing and we find *zajal*-like features in *strambotto*, *estribote*, the *lauda* and the *ballata*, the *villancico*, the *cantigas*, etc. The criteria for making such a comparison are generally speaking the existence of a tripartite section of the strophe with monorhyme, preceded or followed by a section with

5 *Tawshī ḥal-tawshīḥ*, ed. A.H. Muṭlaq (Beirut, 1966).

6 Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, ed. Iḥsān ḥAbbās (Beirut, 1968), I, pp. 345 and 357.

7 Schack, Adolf Friedrich, *Poesía y arte de los árabes en España y Sicilia*, trans. Juan Valera (1988). Trans. of *Poesie und Kunst der Araber in Spanien und Sicilien* (Stuttgart, (1877) 239.

8 Pérès, Henri, 'La poésie à Fès sous les Almoravides et les Almohades.' *Hespéris* 18(1934): 19.

9 For instance, Ibn Ḷabʿs wrote panegyrics for the Almoravid rulers (*Lamtʿna*) and later for the Almohads. He was called the official poet of the new dynasty (*shāʿir al-khilāfa l-mahdiyya*, Pérès 1934: 22 and 32).

a common rhyme. The prelude normally has the function of the refrain, which can be omitted. This does not always mean that the composition is refrain-less, since the refrain can be written at the end. There are also differences between the Andalusī *muwashshaḥāt* and the Romance *zajal*-like compositions. The use of more elaborate rhyme schemes is more common in Andalusī poetry than it is in the Romance tradition. Although Romance *zajal*-like poems are found in all regions of Europe, this is not *a priori* proof of the fact that Andalusīs were inspired by such non-Arabic Iberian substrate, nor that poets from Occitania were inspired by Andalusī poetry. If Occitanian poets were influenced by the Andalusīs, they probably borrowed the *zajal*-form. The fact that the *musammaṭ* and the *zajal*-type is found much more frequently than the *muwashshaḥ*-type makes it probable that, if influence occurred, *azjāl* were in existence much earlier than the extant manuscripts demonstrate; but we do not have any evidence for this assumption. The *tasmīṭ* theory which explains the origins of the *muwashshaḥ* as a direct evolution from the *qaṣīda simṭiyya* is based on firmer soil, because it is better documented. A serious problem is that very few *musammaṭāt* have been handed down which are earlier than the oldest *muwashshaḥāt*. The fact that Hebrew poets already used the *musammaṭ*-form frequently in the tenth century makes the existence of Arabic parallels likely. The *muwashshaḥ* was recorded first, because these texts were more prestigious than the *zajal*, since they are written in classical Arabic. This does not explain why there are so few surviving *musammaṭāt* from this early period, since these poems were also written in classical Arabic.

The *kharja* as the final unit of the *muwashshaḥ* has many parallels in later Romance lyricism. The *finida* and other similar units share some features of the *kharja*, but the exact analogous form of the *kharja* is non-existent. The *finida* and the *tornade* can share with the *kharja* the recurring rhyme scheme of the prelude, although the *finida* can be an entire strophe of the poem, and not only the section with common rhyme. The consequence is that the *finida* must rhyme with the preceding strophe, while the *kharja* rhymes with the lines with common rhyme. Romance literary tradition does not have an exact analogous form of the *muwashshaḥ* with its *kharja*, which allows us to consider this form as culture-specific.

## 5. Prosody and rhyme

Quantitative patterns form the basis of all Arabic *muwashshaḥāt* and *azjāl*, although not all of these patterns are pure Khalilian metres. Iso-

syllabism does not mean that Romance versification is involved; anisosyllabism does not mean that the Arabic system is used.

Romance poetry can be anisosyllabic and the Arabic system can be isosyllabic. As long as ‘arūḍ-patterns can be found in the Romance, or partly Romance *kharjas*, we can assume that this system predominates, since ‘arūḍ-patterns can be compatible with the Romance system, whereas Romance poetry is not always explained by *carūḍ*-patterns. The fact that ‘arūḍ-patterns are used even in the Romance texts implies that these texts are either new creations by the Andalusī poets, or adaptations of real Romance fragments of poetry, rebuilt and remoulded according to Arabic conventions. For Romance *kharjas* from the Hebrew series, the situation is not basically different, except for those texts which are written in the *mishqā l ha-tʿnūʿot* which is impossible in the Arabic system, since the opposition between long and short syllables has disappeared. In some cases, the Arabic system provides an inadequate explanation of the metrical system of the *kharjas*, namely when too many *ziḥāfāt* or *ʿilal* have to be posited. Nevertheless, this does not constitute proof of the application of a Romance system. Musical practice might be an explanation for all irregularities, but this cannot be supported by evidence.

In my examination of rhyme, I came to the conclusion that all Romance rules for rhyme are compatible with the Arabic rules, except the existence in Romance literature of assonant rhyme. In my thesis, I have demonstrated that all the *kharjas* with assonant rhyme are compatible with the Arabic licence of *ikfāʿ*. *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* (“requiring what is not compulsory”) is an Arabic technique which explains the rhyme-practice of the *muwashshaḥāt* and their *kharjas*. To sum up, prosodically the Romance *kharjas* are not situated at the ‘cross-roads of two systems’. These texts have been composed in perfect agreement with the Arabic prosodic system of ‘arūḍ-patterns and rhyme-techniques and their licences.

## 6. Thematic features

The *muwashshaḥ* is used, like the *qaṣīda*, for erotic and laudatory poetry. Like the *qaṣīda*, many *muwashshaḥāt* are polythematic, as is attested by Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk. According to the prescriptions of the theoreticians, the panegyric *muwashshaḥ* must start with a *nasīb*, and the transition to the next section, the *madīḥ*, must be realised abruptly. The poet then made a transition to the final section in the *tamhīd*, the penultimate unit in which we find the transitional and introductory

formulas preparing the shift of focus (style, register, *dramatis personae*). The technique of constructing the *muwashshaḥ* with its particular accumulation of topics and themes can be explained from intra-Arabic features and is inherited directly from the pre-Islamic period and the urban Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid *qaṣīda*,

The Hebrew *corpus* has been better documented than the Arabic *corpus*. We know almost all authors of Hebrew poems by name, whereas anonymous compositions form the major part of the ‘Uddat. In other Arabic collections the number of anonymous compositions is high. We can reconstruct with more precise details the socio-historical background of the Hebrew *corpus* than we can that of the Arabic collection. The names of the individuals who are honoured in encomiastic poetry are normally mentioned by name, whereas many panegyrics of the Arabic series cannot be traced exactly.

In my description of thematic typology of these *kharjas* I observed that:

- Some *kharjas* indeed conform to the lyrical tradition of the Arabs. Even pre-Islamic themes are recorded in the *kharjas*. Since the *kharja* is usually a quotation or a semi-quotation of older examples, it does not surprise us that the Andalusī poets took their examples from their own stock-imagery.
- The earliest *canciones de confidente* are recorded in both series. The earliest Romance example is written by Ibn Labbūn, who was Lord of Murviedro in the Taifa-period (second half of the eleventh century). The oldest Arabic example of a *canción de confidente* has been written by Ibn Sharaf, who wrote in Almería for al-Mu‘taṣim. It is impossible to determine who imitated whom.
- The invocation to the mother is never expressed in Arabic (*ummī*) in the Hebrew *corpus* and only exceptionally in the Arabic series, whereas the word *mamma* is used frequently in both series.
- Poets of *muwashshaḥāt* with Romance or bilingual *kharjas* introduce more frequently a female voice than in the *muwash-shaḥāt* with Hispano-Arabic endings. This is an important difference, but we must restrain ourselves from jumping to conclusions by considering these Hispano-Romance as genuine Iberian *Frauenlieder*, alien to Arabic tradition: although in the *muwashshaḥāt* with Hispano-Arabic endings the female voice is an exception, still the woman’s voice *has* been recorded in the Arabic tradition.

- Many expressions in Romance have Arabic translations or vice versa from the same period. One example is the expression ‘come, my lord come’, which has been recorded in Romance (*ben, sydy ben*) in a composition written by Y<sup>h</sup>ū dā h ha-Lêbî, and in the Arabic language in an eleventh century composition written by al-Jazzār. This may also reflect one lyrical tradition that was present in two languages.
- The expression ¿*Qué farey?* has been recorded more frequently in Romance *kharjas* from Hebrew *muwashshaḥāt* than in Arabic *muwashshaḥāt* with Romance or bilingual endings. However, it is surprising that Yehūdāh ha-Lebî does not use the Romance expression ‘¿*Qué farey?*’ as do his later Hebrew and Arabic colleagues such as Ibn Ruḥaym (Almoravid), Aḥrāhām b. ‘Ezrā (Almoravid) in Romance; and al-Manīshī and Ibn ‘Isā (Almohad) in Arabic. Yehūdāh ha-Lebî opted for either the Arabic expression *fa-yā rabb mā aṣna‘* or, when he composed in Romance, *ya rabb, como viveré yo*.
- There is no Romance equivalent for *ḥabībī* recorded, such as *amigo*.
- The *raqīb* has been recorded in all series, but more frequently in the Romance *kharjas*. The watcher, however, also has parallels in Romance poetry (*gardador*). The word *gilós*, which recalls the Provençal *cançon de gilós*, cannot be supported in the palaeographical edition of Jones (1988).
- The most specific Arabic metaphors, which we saw in the Arabic *corpus*, are not to be found in the Romance *corpus*. This is a strong argument for the theory that the Romance texts are not a mere translation of Arabic examples.
- The concept of *buen amor* has no equivalent in Arabic.
- The expression *filyól alyéno* (‘someone else’s child’) is only recorded in Romance and does not have Arabic parallels.

The Romance and bilingual *kharjas* do not form an isolated *corpus*, which is clearly distinguishable from the Arabic *corpus*. Most themes, which in earlier studies are supposed to be ‘Romance’, ‘Iberian’, ‘Hispanic’, or even ‘Spanish’, have been recorded also in the Arabic *kharjas*. There are some exceptions, since some Romance words or themes have not been recorded in the Arabic *corpus*. In reproducing or imitating the voices of Romance speaking or singing girls—often Christian girls—the Andalusī authors incorporated in some cases extra-Arabic realities. But these cannot be regarded as genuine Romance thematic features. The Romance material shares the features of the Hispano-Arabic *kharjas*; there are no significant thematic differences be-



tween the Romance and the Hispano-Arabic *kharjas*, with few exceptions. The only important difference between the two series is the language. It would probably be impossible to tell the two collections apart if they were translated into a third language.

The *muwashshaḥ* shares many thematic features with the *qasīda*. There are no Romance parallels of *zajal*-like poems with the same tripartite structure and with its specific themes. Some *kharjas* apparently conform to the lyrical tradition of the Arabs, in particular those where pre-Islamic themes are used. As Fish has demonstrated, even taking into account the 'new material' of Ibn Bishrī, *muwashshaḥāt* with Romance or bilingual *kharjas* are more often expressed by a female than in the Arabic *kharjas*. Nevertheless, the female voice is no evidence for extra-Arabic theories.

### 7. Stylistic features

The Arabic rhetorical system is an adequate model for the description of the rhetorical devices which occur in the *kharjas*. This means that Andalusis used, whether deliberately or not, their knowledge from their education. Arabic rhetorical devices, such as *tajnīs*, are even used in the Romance *kharjas*. The functions of code-switching in natural speech, as described in modern linguistics, such as reiteration, opposition, emphasis, focalisation are also used as stylistic features in the *kharjas*. This means that Andalusī poets, Arabs and Jews, tried to represent the style and register of non-prestigious speech, adapting it in accordance with the high prestigious techniques. The frequent use of Arabic and Romance diminutives, the use of onomatopoeias, 'Ibn Quzman-like' or even thieves' slang (*lughat al-dāssa*) reflects non-official language. Rhetorical embellishment made such expressions more acceptable for the literate courtly audience.

### 8. Conclusion

Most *muwashshaḥāt* date from the Taifa-period, the Almoravid and Almohad period. Arabic and Hebrew poets described the Taifa-period as the literary apogee of al-Andalus and later poets imitated the poets from this age. Many scholars, for example Ibn Bassām, mentioned this type of poetry, but yet they did not include them in their anthologies; they despised strophic poetry, for being non-classical. When the *muwashshaḥa* had found its way into court-literature the situation changed. One of the main factors which contributed to its success and popularity is the great number of courts and the cultural prestige of the

Taifa-Kings. Many poets competed in verse with their colleagues and they were surrounded by learned musicians and professional poets. When the Almoravids supplanted these little Kingdoms, many poets were forced to leave the country or to choose other jobs. It has been stated that the Almoravids did not have a thorough knowledge of Arabic language and culture and in many studies since Dozy there is an emphasis on the intolerance of their politics. Their book burnings have been often compared to the Spanish Inquisition. This image must be corrected, because we know in the first place that these Berbers were arabised very quickly and had a great admiration of Arabic-Andalusi culture. The *muwashshahāt* continued to be popular during the Berber dynasties and for the first time the *zajal*, which is probably older than the *muwashshah*, as I tried to demonstrate, entered court literature. Ibn Quzmān and Madghallīs are the most representative composers of *azjāl* during these Berber dynasties. The Andalusi poets tried to demonstrate that they were perfectly able to compose both *‘āmmMī* and *‘ajamī*-utterances, while using the model they were familiar with. To summarise, Andalusian strophic poetry and the *kharja* are a further development of conventional techniques. The poets probably tried to reproduce the vernaculars as best as they could, except in those cases where they deliberately misrepresented the original speech for humoristic purposes.

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