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Andalusian Strophic Poetry Between the Spoken and the Written: The Case of the Moroccan Andalusian Music

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Muwashshah

**Proceedings of the Conference on Arabic and Hebrew Strophic
Poetry and its Romance Parallels, School of Oriental and African
Studies [SOAS], London, 8-10 October 2004**

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*Si forte aliquid repertum fuerit quod lima correctionis indigeat,
corrigatur ut dicit Augustinus: "Talis volo essere in scripturis aliorum
quales exspecto correctores meorum et haec est caritas".*

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ANDALUSIAN STROPHIC POETRY BETWEEN THE SPOKEN
AND THE WRITTEN: THE CASE OF THE MOROCCAN
ANDALUSIAN MUSIC

Carl Davila [Yale University]

Was the Andalusian *muwashshah* originally intended to be sung? Whatever one believes about this proposition, it is certain that at some stage in history composers began to write songs using *muwashshahāt*. When this happened, the demands of musical composition and performance, and the social contexts in which they take place, became interwoven with the already complex web of oral and written modes of poetic production and presentation. *Mixed orality*,¹ the persistence of oral processes within literate discourse, was a feature of all aspects of medieval Arabic literature, both scholarly and poetic, and in many cases it has resulted today in a proliferation of manuscripts, which often present us with quite different versions of a given text. But what might be said of the modern context? What happens when old, often arcane poetic material that has been set to music and handed down both orally and in writing, is then “frozen” in printed form? Do we still find traces of oral and written influences in the texts, evidence that might tell us something about the role played by these two modes of transmission within that musical tradition itself? This paper discusses one of the modern descendants of the musical culture of al-Andalus as a tentative step toward answering questions such as these.

Moroccan Andalusian music, usually referred to as *al-āla* (“instrumental music”), contains examples of textual variations that recur throughout the printed corpus, some of which may be seen as the result of oral and literate processes coexisting within the musical tradition. Through examining modern anthologies/songbooks current among *āla* musicians, I want to suggest a simple typology of the changes which the processes of composing, singing and oral transmission have produced in the written text.

We may begin with a note of caution to avoid certain assumptions about the nature of the poetic contents of *al-āla*. Both Western and Arab scholars trace the roots of *al-āla* to the musical genre that emerged among the aristocracy in ninth-century al-Andalus.² Yet the precise relationship of many of the poems in the tradition to the classic strophic forms of al-Andalus is far from clear. Despite what some Western scholars suggest, the *muwashshah* is not the only poetic genre found in *al-āla*. In fact, there are at least four different types of poem in the tradition, not all of them strophic in nature.

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Of course, we do indeed find songs (*ṣanā'īʿ*, sing. *ṣanʿa*, lit. "work of art") that contain portions of *muwashshahāt* of Andalusian origin, some of which belong to well-known *washshāḥūn* of al-Andalus such as Ibn Sahl (d. 1251) and ash-Shushtarī (d. 1269). We also find portions of *azjāl*, some of them belonging to Andalusian poets such as Ibn Zamrak (d. 1393). In addition there are *ṣanā'īʿ* of a strophic genre composed in Moroccan colloquial Arabic called *barwala*, and selections of two to six lines from non-strophic poetry, some of them by Mashriqī poets such as Abū Nuwās (d. 813 or 815) and Abū Tammām (d. 845 or 846).

However, when we consider specifically the Andalusian strophic poetry in *al-āla*, we encounter significant problems with terminology. Apart from *ṣanā'īʿ* whose authors are known, we may identify two other categories whose relationship to the Andalusian genres is not so clear. We find *tawshīh* and *azjāl* in the anthologies which plainly answer to the same complicated metrical rules that have been the subject of debate among Western scholars, and often they are displayed on the page in a manner that reflects this, with lines of varying length sometimes broken into several segments. Many such *ṣanā'īʿ* are of unknown authorship. Alongside these however, the tradition is awash with poems of five to seven lines, which are constructed using one of the classical poetic metres, and which have a varying rhyme scheme in the following general form

Figure 1:

---- * . ---- a
---- * . ---- a
---- * . ---- a
---- * . ---- b
---- * . ---- b

Moroccan musicians and scholars refer to these poems as *khumāsiyya* (or *sudāsiyya* or *subāʿiyya*, according to whether they have five, six or seven lines). Certainly, this general form looks quite like *ghuṣn* and *qufl* from a *muwashshah* (or a *muwashshah*-like *zajal*), but we should be cautious about leaping to conclusions, because although we do find some songs labeled "tawshīh" and "zajal" which fit the *khumāsiyya* pattern, we also find many *khumāsiyyāt* identified simply by their poetic metre (*bahr*) with no label that suggests either of the Andalusian strophic forms. Thus *khumāsiyya* refers to a set of formal characteristics which apply to some *tawshīh* and *azjāl*, but also apply to many strophic poems which may not fit either category. Moreover, the use of the labels *tawshīh* and *zajal* varies considerably from one songbook to another, and even within the same songbook. Some of these *khumāsiyyāt* are referred to as *tawshīh* in one songbook and as *zajal* in another.

In a few cases, *khumāsiyyāt*, which are identified simply by their *bahr* in one part of the corpus, also appear in a different place identified as *zajal* or *tawshīh*.

The language of the *khumāsiyya* provides no easy solution to this problem. Although we usually distinguish a *zajal* by its being composed in colloquial Arabic, such diction is not unknown in *muwashshahāt* as well.³ And unfortunately omission of *iʿrāb* and insertion of colloquial items into otherwise classical Arabic text is quite common in *al-āla*.

So whatever is meant by the terms *tawshīh* and *zajal*, in the context of the Moroccan *āla* they do not necessarily refer to something like “collapsed” *muwashshahāt* or *azjāl*.⁴ Until we have more detailed comparison of large numbers of these *khumāsiyyāt* with the *dīwāns* of known poets, and careful study of their language and metrical features, it seems wisest to err on the side of caution and refer to *khumāsiyyāt* – whether “*tawshīh*” or “*zajal*” or otherwise – as “Andalusian-style strophic poems”, unless a genre has been clearly identified by some other means.

The role of mixed orality in many facets of Arabic literary production has been well documented for the 7th through the 9th centuries, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that it continued in one form or another for a very long time afterwards as well. The standard medium for the presentation of knowledge in the Arabic-speaking world was the spoken word, usually in combination with the written word, which was considered more reliable than the written word alone for a variety of reasons.⁵ In a similar fashion, in the early Islamic period a poet relied upon oral presentation for the dissemination of his works, whether the audience be members of the aristocracy at a princely *majlis*, or some unknown object of affection whose suitor had purchased a few lines of verse. The poet’s *rāwī*, or reciter, served not only as “publisher” but as editor as well, smoothing out the occasional awkward phrase, improving diction and correcting grammar. (Indeed, not a few *ruwāt* were fine poets in their own right.) Nevertheless writing played a role in transmission as well, for although oral presentation was the rule the *rāwī* often kept a written version as a memory aid. Moreover, an important patron might request a corrected copy of a poet’s works for his personal use, and later such collections circulated among philologists.⁶ One result of all these interactions between spoken and written processes, as Gregor Schoeler suggests, was the proliferation of multiple versions of the same written text, stemming either from slightly different renditions of the same original text, or from different emendations and redactions by various receivers of that text.⁷

The situation for composers and musicians was much the same. We have no sources for al-Andalus that compare with the *Kitāb al-aghānī* of al-

Iṣfahāni (d. 967), but there is no reason to assume that the basic format of musicians and composers competing in the *majlis* for aristocratic patronage differed in significant detail. Indeed, the courtly milieu of al-Iṣfahāni's time was built upon a pattern adopted nearly three centuries earlier by the Umayyads from earlier Sassanid and Ghassanid practice.⁸ Of course, after their expulsion from the caliphate, the Umayyads established their own courtly society in Cordoba, which formed the basis for such practices in al-Andalus. We may assume that the Umayyad and Tā'ifa patrons of al-Andalus created a similarly competitive (if perhaps less opulent) environment in which a successful performer needed a varied repertoire of songs from many composers. For composers, then, oral rendition of their songs involved memorisation and performance by several musicians, not only themselves, very likely in a wide variety of contexts.

Such a situation is bound to have interesting effects upon the poems themselves. Not only might a well-known poem still undergo a degree of alteration in the dynamic moment of musical performance, but the composition process itself may well have shaped how the text was used. Ibn al-Qūṭiyya (d. 977) in his *Ta'rikh iftitāh al-Andalus* offers us a glimpse into just such an occasion. The famous musician Ziryāb (d. 857), was performing for the Umayyad emir of Cordova ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān II (d. 852) while the poet ʿUbayd Allāh b. Qarlamān Ibn Badr ad-Dākhil was present. Ziryāb sang two verses by the poet Ibn al-Aḥnaf (d. > 808), but the emir remarked that the two verses made no sense together. ʿUbayd Allāh promptly sang a verse that connected the two Ziryāb had just sung, and thus was the emir satisfied.⁹

One of the chief ways that material deriving from the old Andalusian poets has been altered in the modern Moroccan Andalusian music is reduction. Although the typical Andalusian *muwashshah* was five strophes in length, rarely do we find any Andalusian-style *ṣanʿa* in *al-āla* of more than two strophes, the norm being only one. Moreover, a *ṣanʿa* in the *āla* repertoire may not follow the internal structural boundaries of the original as found in the *dīwān* of the author. The following is an example drawn from Nawbat Ramal al-Māya:

Figure 2:

فِي عَيْونِ نَسْرِي	وَتَلُوخُ لَكَ صُورٍ
فِي سَمَاكَ الدَّرِّي	التَّفْتِ إِن ظَهَرَ
وَيُضِي وَيَلْمَعُ	الْقَلْكَ فِيكَ يَدُورُ
فِيكَ تَغِيْبُ وَتَطْلَعُ	السُّمُوسُ وَالْبُدُورُ
الَّتِي فِيكَ أَجْمَعُ	إِقْرَأْ مَعْنَى السُّطُورُ

Carl Davila

لَا تُغَادِرْ سَطْرٌ
أَشُّهُوَ مَعْنَى الْقَمَرِ
مِنْ سَطُورِكَ وَأَذْرِي
الَّذِي فِيكَ يَسْرِي

<i>wa-talūḥu laka šuwar</i>	<i>fī ʿuyūni tasrī</i>
<i>iltafit in zahar</i>	<i>fī samāka d-durrī</i>
<i>al-falak fīka yadūr</i>	<i>wa-yuḏī' wa-yalma'</i>
<i>ash-shumūs wa-l-budūr</i>	<i>fīk taghib wa-taṭla'</i>
<i>iqra' ma'nā s-suṭūr</i>	<i>al-latī fīk ajma'</i>
<i>lā tughādir saṭr</i>	<i>min suṭūrik wa-drī</i>
<i>āsh huwa ma'nā l-qamar</i>	<i>al-ladhī fīka yasrī.</i>

Forms appear to you // in eyes that wander the night
Turn (to him), if he appears // in your shining sky
The celestial sphere in you turns // and glitters and shines
The suns and full moons // in you set and rise
Read the meaning of (these) lines // which I put together about you
Do not leave out a single one // of (these) lines (about you), and know
What is the meaning of the moon // which wanders the night in you?¹⁰

This is a portion of a longer poem by the Andalusian poet and mystic Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Numayrī ash-Shushtarī. This version of the *ṣanʿa* comprises the second strophe of the poem, but a reader familiar with the original may notice that it actually begins with the first *qufl* of the poem, acting as a kind of *maṭlaʿ* as if the poem began here. This and other similar examples show that, at least within *al-āla*, the demands of musical composition and presentation have at times carried more weight than the formal or semantic characteristics of the poetry itself. Moreover, extensive use of nonsense syllables (*tarāṭīn*) throughout the *āla* repertoire helps composers adapt text to melody. Their presence highlights the subordination of text to musical composition. So, liberties taken with an established text need not be viewed merely as carelessness on the part of the composer or performer, but may have served a musical purpose.

Despite the existence of printed songbook-anthologies of the poetry, the Moroccan *āla* remains strongly influenced by the sung and performed word. The sole method of teaching *al-āla* at beginner level in the National Conservatory of Music and Dance is rote memorisation by oral repetition.¹¹ Written texts are sometimes used for reference when beginning to teach a new *ṣanʿa*,

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but each *ṣanʿa* is dictated to the student (sometimes more than once) as part of the teaching process. Then the instructor demonstrates the song so that the students can hear not only the melody and text together, but also whether *tarāʾīn* are present and how they fit with the poetry and the melody. After the *ṣanʿa* has been introduced in this way, the process of repetition and memorisation follows, a gradual reshaping of the students' performance to approximate more and more closely the *ṣanʿa* as the instructor learned it. At the end of the process the student will have memorised the *ṣanʿa* – that is: poetry-as-sung, nonsense syllables and melody together – and will not rely upon whatever written materials may have been used in the early stages. This is as true for the first-year students as it is for those at the more advanced levels. Performance of *al-āla* from any kind of written text is extremely rare.

Alongside this kind of formal teaching, informal instruction in the music is quite common. Not a few *āla* musicians have had no training at all in the conservatory. They have learned the music through listening to recordings and radio broadcasts, and through contact with other musicians. The tradition thereby passes from one musician to another as performed text presented completely orally in much the same way as is done in the conservatory.

The apotheosis of the mixed-oral method is the master-apprentice relationship, which still exists to some degree in orchestras led by highly respected masters.¹² When we realise that the conservatory system itself is barely 70 years old, we can see that the conservatory method represents an adaptation of the old teaching method in the master-apprentice format to a modern, institutionalised framework. The conservatory system has attempted in this way to preserve the ancient oral-based method of teaching in a new, more fully literate context.

And so we find a rather different kind of mixed orality in the modern *āla* than existed prior to the 19th century. More extensive literacy, along with the appearance of comprehensive anthologies of the poetry, have by degrees reduced the importance of oral transmission in preserving the songs. At least where the text is concerned, canonical anthologies made possible the perpetuation of the whole poetic corpus (in principle limited only by access to the manuscript) in the form and organisation specific to *al-āla*, without reliance upon either pure rote memorisation or memorisation aided by *ad hoc* notes. Even more, the canonical anthologies provided a reference for what could be considered "authentic", thereby clearly defining the boundaries of the tradition and reducing much of the potential for textual variation among established masters. Printed songbooks have, since the 1970s, allowed even wider access to the poetry in the tradition and further

reduced the necessity for oral transmission. Thus, there would seem to be no obvious practical reason for oral, rote memorisation to persist. Yet it has, chiefly because musicians and aficionados of *al-āla* value the intimate familiarity with the *ṣanāʿī* that memorisation by repetition cultivates. It is analogous to the emotional effect of rote memorisation of the Qurʾān (which most children are exposed to at an early age) and bears a similar affective power.

The first step toward a canonical text was taken at the end of the 18th century, when Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāʾik compiled the songs circulating among leading musicians of his time. This *Kunnāsh al-Ḥāʾik* eventually became the standard reference work for the texts of *al-āla*. In addition, it standardised the tradition's organisation into eleven large suites (*nawbāt*, sing. *nūba*), each *nūba* in turn being divided into four movements or rhythmic phases called *mayāzīn* (sing. *mīzān*).

A century later, a second anthology was assembled by the *wazīr* al-Jāmiʿī. This corpus contains much of the same material as *Kunnāsh al-Ḥāʾik*, but there are also *ṣanāʿī* that appear in one or other of the two anthologies but not in both. The most striking difference in the al-Jāmiʿī corpus was the inclusion of a fifth *mīzān* in all the *nawbāt* and another *mīzān* not connected with any *nūba*. It is likely that al-Jāmiʿī had access to different local branches of the tradition, so that at least some of his unique material was in circulation a century earlier, but not among those experts consulted by al-Ḥāʾik.¹³

These two manuscript anthologies provided the basis for the printed songbooks that appeared in the late 20th century, the three most important being those of Ibn Maṣṣūr (1977), Ibn Jallūn (1979) and ar-Rāyīs (1982). The former two are based upon *Kunnāsh al-Ḥāʾik*, although both supplemented this primary source with extra verses attaching to *ṣanāʿī* already found in al-Ḥāʾik, rarely-heard *ṣanāʿī* and al-Jāmiʿī's fifth *mīzān*. Ar-Rāyīs based his songbook, which is by far the most widely available today, on the al-Jāmiʿī corpus, as well as various informal notebooks at his disposal. These three songbooks thus cover the range of poetic material accepted as part of *al-āla*, and by virtue of their availability embody what we may describe as the authentic *āla* corpus today.

We have noted already one kind of text variation that recurs within this corpus when we looked at the fragment of the *zajal* by ash-Shushtarī: editing by reduction. Only one strophe of this *zajal* appears in any of the songbooks, as is the case with the majority of *muwashshahāt* and *azjāl*. Clearly this kind of editing comes from the process of musical composition. The composer probably made use of written materials, but the form of the *ṣanāʿī* as we find

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it today has been conditioned by the requirements of oral presentation.

Moreover, several *ṣanāʿīʿ* use a two-line *maṭlaʿ* in one instance but not another. For example, *Bākīr ilā shādinin* is found with *maṭlaʿ* in two places (*mīzān* Basīṭ al-Māya and *mīzān* Qāʿim wa-Niṣf al-ʿUshshāq) and “*aqraʿ*” (as the *khumāsiyya* *Yā ṣāḥī kam dhā arāka ṣāḥī*) in *mīzān* Basīṭ ʿIraq al-ʿAjam.¹⁴ Such cases provide important indications of mixed oral influences on the strophic poetry in *al-āla*: the persistence of different versions of the same poem in different parts of the tradition. Several *ṣanāʿīʿ* appear at least twice in the corpus, and we frequently find differences in spelling or vocalisation among the different versions. Most of these are in keeping with common poetic licences, such as rendering *tāʾ marbūṭa* as *alif* at the end of a hemistich in one location but not the other. Other variants appear to stem from copyist errors, either in a *diwān* that supplied the text for a *ṣanʿa*, or perhaps in the process of recopying the *Kunnāsh* itself. Most such variations are trivial; however some of them are more interesting.

Figure 3 presents the three printed versions of one *ṣanʿa* (*Yā mudirī...* from *mīzān* Darj al-Iṣbahān): the first version is from ar-Rāyis, the middle one from Ibn Jallūn and the bottom one from Ibn Maṣṣūr.¹⁵ We see three rather different versions of the first line: ar-Rāyis (from al-Jāmiʿī) addresses the beloved in the plural, while Ibn Jallūn and Ibn Maṣṣūr (al-Hāʾik) give the singular; Ibn Maṣṣūr adds a cup (*kās*) for serving up the passion (*al-muḥayyā*). In the third line, al-Hāʾik gives us a *shining star* or a *star of the Pleiades*, but al-Jāmiʿī presents the *shining sun* instead.

Figure 3:

صنعة		
عَلَى خَلْعِ الْعِدَارِ فِي هَوَاكَ يَا قَمَرَ يَا هَيْلَالَ بَيْنَ الْب	قُولُوا لِي بَشْرِي هَنِيئًا كُلُّهُمْ شَهَدُوا عَلَيَّ يَا طَلْعَةَ شَمْسِ الْمُضِيئَا	يَا مُدِيرِي الْحُمَيَّا النُّجُومَ مَعَ الثَّرِيَّا سَيِّدِي وَاعْطِفْ عَلَيَّا
صنعة		
عَلَى خَلْعِ الْعِدَارِ فِي هَوَاكَ يَا قَمَرَ يَا هَيْلَالَ بَيْنَ الْبَشْرِ	قُلْ لِي بَشْرِي هَنِيئًا كُلُّهُمْ شَهَدُوا عَلَيَّ يَا طَلْعَةَ نَجْمِ الْمُضِيئَا	يَا مُدِيرِ الْحُمَيَّةِ النُّجُومَ مَعَ الثَّرِيَّةِ سَيِّدِي وَاعْطِفْ عَلَيَّ

		صنعة
على خلع العذار	فقل لي بشري هنيا	يا مدير كاس الحميا
بهواك يا قمر	كلهم شهدو عليا	النجوم مع الثريا
يا هلال الب	يا ضيا نجم الثريا	سيدي واعطف عليا

We find several such variant readings of the same *san'a* coexisting in more than one place within the Moroccan *āla* corpus. There are even cases of meaningful textual variations within the same anthology. Figure 4 shows the three occurrences of the *san'a* “*Shajānī qumārī*” in ar-Rāyis.¹⁶ In the last line of the third version, *muhibbu l-milāhi* has become *man yahwā l-milāh[a]*. Note that the change not only represents a small semantic shift, but it alters both the metre and the rhyme scheme, in theory forcing the *qufl* here to be rendered in pausal form if the pattern is to be preserved.

Figure 4:

		صنعة
كأَمَّ الحَسَنُ	شَجَانِي قُمَارِي	
وَطَارَ الوَسْنُ	وَطَابَتْ قُمَارِي	
وَذَاكَ حَسَنُ	خَلَعْتُ عِدَارِي	
عَلَى مَنْ عَشِقُ	فَأَيُّ جُنَاحِ	
حَاشَا يُحْتَرَقُ	مُحِبُّ المِلاحِ	

		صنعة
كأَمَّ الحَسَنُ	شَجَانِي قُمَارِي	
وَطَارَ الوَسْنُ	وَطَابَتْ قُمَارِي	
فِي ذَاكَ الحَسَنُ	خَلَعْتُ عِدَارِي	
عَلَى مَنْ عَشِقُ	فَأَيُّ جُنَاحِ	
حَاشَا يُحْتَرَقُ	مُحِبُّ المِلاحِ	

		صنعة
كأَمَّ الحَسَنُ	شَجَانِي قُمَارِي	
وَطَارَ الوَسْنُ	وَطَابَ قُمَارِي	
فِي ذَاكَ الحَسَنُ	خَلَعْتُ عِدَارِي	
عَلَى مَنْ عَشِقُ	فَأَيُّ جُنَاحِ	
حَاشَا يُحْتَرَقُ	مَنْ يَهْوَى المِلاحِ	

The actual variations in these two examples are probably not important, since the three songbooks draw from different manuscript traditions and an unknown number of informal resources. What is interesting is that these different readings have survived at all. A recurring theme in the discussions on literacy and orality is the idea that literacy makes possible a more analytical and reflective relationship to language. Through reflection and comparison, literate transmission, especially in print traditions, tends to iron out heterogeneities in text. This is not as true in texts from oral traditional sources. Slippage survives and irregularities are preserved, because the text itself depends upon the social-cultural context in which it operates. The Moroccan *āla* thus shows at least one characteristic of “oral-traditional” texts: the survival of such variants suggests that the content of the *āla* tradition is not the text, but rather *the text within its musical-performed context*.

We conclude this brief survey with an example that illustrates well the dynamic aspect of the interplay of orality and literacy. On page 202 of ar-Rāyis, in *mizān* Quddām ar-Rasd we find the “*tawshih zajal*” (at the top of Figure 5).

Figure 5:

صنعة

وَجِسْمِي فَنَى عَائِشٌ فِي الْهَنَى يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَنَا فِي الْحَاضِرِ وَالْبَادِ وَرَضَى بِالْعِبَادِ	أَنَا قَدْ عَيَى صَبْرِي وَأَنْتَ يَا مَنَى قَلْبِي لِقَاضِي الْهَوَى نَشْكِي يَشْهَدُ الْعِبَادُ جُمْلَهُ عَلَى مَنْ ظَلَمَ فِينَا
--	---

صنعة

وَجِسْمِي فَنَا عَتَّى فِي هَنَا يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَنَا وَارِضَ الْبِعَادِ	أَنَا قَدْ عَيَا صَبْرِي وَأَنْتَ يَا مَنَى قَلْبِي لِقَاضِي الْهَوَى نَشْكِي يَشْهَدُوا الْعِبَادُ عَلَى مَنْ ظَلَمَ
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Ana qad[°] ayā šabrī wa-jismī fanā
wa-anta yā munā qalbī °āyish fī l-hanā

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li-qāḍī l-hawā nashkī yaḥkum bayna-nā
yashhadu l-^ʿibād jumlā fī l-hādir wa-l-bād
^ʿalā man ḡalam finā wa-rḡā bi-l-bi^ʿād

My patience has worn thin // and my body has withered away
You, the desire of my heart, // live well in good health
To the Judge of Love I appeal // to judge between us
All the people bear witness together // in the present and the past
Against one who has done wrong to us // and is content with the distance
(between us).

This poem does not appear in Ibn Jallūn, but Ibn Maṅṣūr gives it in a footnote, noting cryptically that it “is circulating now”. The text of this “*tawshīḥ zajāl*” varies, *but only in performance*. The ^ʿ*ajuz* of the fourth line is always sung this way:

^ʿalā man ḡalam ḡalam

[Against one who did wrong, did wrong]

The reason for this shift is not obvious from the songbook text itself. (It does not significantly affect the poetic metre, it disrupts the rhyme scheme, and does not add anything new to the semantic meaning of the poem.) A clue to this variation may be found in manuscripts. The *ṣan^ʿa* is found in the Bennūna edition of an al-Ḥā’ik manuscript.¹⁷ That version is at the bottom of Figure 5. It is formed differently, with the *quṣl* as a single line of three segments. Neither of these two versions contains all the material of this *ṣan^ʿa* as it is performed. The *ṣan^ʿa* as sung lies between these two versions; it is an orally-preserved rendition of what was probably a written text at some time in the past. Such variations are probably common, but they cannot be uncovered from the printed text alone.

The relationship between *ṣan^ʿa*-as-printed and *ṣan^ʿa*-as-sung within the Moroccan Andalusian music is quite complicated. Andalusian-style strophic poems have been selected and given a shape conditioned by the formal aspects of the music and its performance, and in some cases the poetry-as-sung differs significantly from the written text, without any indication at all in the surviving printed version. These variant renderings have been preserved in a way and a context that strongly suggest that oral presentation played a part in forming the texts as we find them today. Finally, their survival as variants within a redacted, printed corpus strongly suggests that there is some other impetus at work beyond the simple preservation and standardisation that printing makes possible. The value placed upon oral

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transmission, rote memorisation and presentation of the corpus as it has been received from the past has militated against ironing out heterogeneities and “fixing” problematic readings of some *ṣanāʿī*. Mixed-oral practices, characteristic of medieval Arabic literature both western and eastern, persist today in the transmission of *al-āla* from one generation of musicians to the next, even though such practices are no longer “necessary”.

NOTES

1. The expression *mixed orality* originated with Walter Ong (1982), although the general debate goes back to early studies of the oral dimensions of Homer and Plato by Havelock (1963) and Parry (1971). Goody (1977, 1987), Goody and Watt (1968) and Ong produced a body of work that essentially argues for a radical separation between oral and literate culture, and even the forms of consciousness that underlie the two. This “Great Divide” theory has been the object of critique from a number of perspectives, notably by Finnegan (1988), Foley (1995), Roberts (1997), Harris (2000, 2002), and Brockmeier and Olson (2002). These critiques have in common the insight that context – whether cultural or semiotic (which are perhaps the same thing) – is essential to any understanding of the role of literacy and the written word in shaping discourses in society.
2. See for example: Chottin (1929), García Barriuso (1941), Ibn ʿAbd al-Jalīl (1988) and Guettat (2000).
3. Monroe (1989) p. 38.
4. For a contrasting view, see the discussion in Liu and Monroe, esp. p. 24.
5. See for example: Schoeler (1985) pp. 226-8 and (1989a) pp. 38-40.
6. Zwettler (1978), Chapter 2, esp. p. 85; also Schoeler (1997), pp. 426-9. Schoeler describes the use of writing for formal documents as *essential*, but among poets (and presumably other literati) as merely *auxiliary*. (428)
7. On processes of oral teaching and transmission of knowledge in medieval Islam, see: Weisweiler’s introduction to the *Kitāb al-implāʾ wa-l-istimlāʾ* of al-Samʿānī (1952), Ahmed (1968), Makdisi (1981), Vajda (1983); for similar processes in Arabic poetry, see: Zwettler (1978). These and other works on oral and written transmission in early Islam have been integrated by Gregor Schoeler in an important series of articles (1985, 1989a, 1989b, 1997) and in his book, *Écrire et transmettre dans les débuts de l’islam* (2002).
8. Sawa (1989), pp. 111-12, 171 and 176-83
9. *Taʾrīkh...* p. 76. In fact the 2 verses appear in Ibn al-Aḥnaf’s *dīwān* exactly as Ziryāb originally sang them! It was the emir and the poet who concocted the altered version. My thanks to Dwight Reynolds for steering me to this story.
10. Ibn Jallūn p. 51; see also: al-Makkī p. 23; Ibn Maṣṣūr p. 49; ar-Rāyis p. 38; Bennūna (1999) p. 346. *Dīwān ash-Shuṣṭarī* (al-Nashshār, 1960), p. 165; Corriente (1988) pp. 74, 240-1.
11. While instruction may be available in some cases at private conservatories, this is

actively discouraged by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in its communications with the private conservatories. Moreover, the National Conservatory employs only specialists in the Andalusian music – master musicians who learned the art from other masters. The private conservatories tend to be specialised for Western music instruction; masters of the Andalusian music are rarely found in them.

12. On the various teaching models among musicians in Morocco, see: Schuyler (1979).

13. In fact, so little is known about either anthologist that this question cannot be resolved. For an alternative hypothesis, see Cortés García (1996) p. 49.

14. See: ar-Rāyis pp. 82, 312, 340; Ibn Jallūn pp. 81, 297, 321; Ibn Maṣṣūr pp. 71, 253, 353.

15. Ar-Rāyis p. 76; Ibn Jallūn p. 79; Ibn Maṣṣūr p. 111.

16. Ar-Rāyis, top: p. 158; middle: p. 268; bottom: p. 314.

17. Bennūna (1999) p. 396.

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