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To cite this version:
Otto Zwartjes. The Andalusi Kharjas: A Courtly Counterpoint to Popular Tradition?. Scripta Mediterranea, Canadian Institute for Mediterranean studies, 1999, 19-20, pp.45-54. hal-03307018

HAL Id: hal-03307018
https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-03307018
Submitted on 30 Jul 2021

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THE ANDALUSI KHARJAS: A Courtly Counterpoint to Popular Tradition?¹

1. Introduction

The subject of this article is the interaction or interference of popular and courtly or 'learned elements' in Andalusi 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 Andalusi society is reflected in Andalusi strophic poetry, as well as the rivalry between Berber and Arabic-Andalusi 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 Andalusi 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. Andalusi strophic poetry

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

SCRIPTA MEDITERRANEA, Vols XIX-XX 1998-1999, 45

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 Bassam's Kitāb al-dhakhira,² the blind poet Muqaddam b. Muṣafā 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 Ziryāb, 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 Ziryāb', 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 (muwashshāḥat and zajal) form the most essential component of the texts and their musico-rhythmic 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-Shantarini (Ibn Bassām), who was born during the Banū ʿAftās in the Taifa period, did not include muwashshāḥat 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 muwashshāḥat in his work, because it was not customary to do so in such sizeable respectable works. Al-Fatḥ b. Khāqān, a literary historian and also a kāṭib of the Almoravid governor of Granada Abū Yūsuf Tāshufin b. ʿĀli, wrote his Qalāʾīd excluding the muwashshāḥat. 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-Hilli (fourteenth century) lived in Iraq (fourteenth century). These literary historians admired the Andalusis and through their sources we know that these Andalusian 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 (muʿāradāt) also to the East.

² Ibn Bassām, Al-Dhakhīra fī Maḥāsīn aḥl al-Jazīra, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut, 1979) 469.
3. Andalusi 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 dhi-l-Nūn 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 muwashshāʼāt in the North, such as al-Aṣbāḥī al-Lāridī (Lerida), 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. Naghreylā (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-Aftas, Almería under the Banū Šumādiḥ, Murcia, first under the slave-dynasty Khayrān, but later annexed by Valencia under the Banū ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, and of course Seville under the Banū ‘Abbād.

Andalusi 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’ Andalusi culture and exiled al-Mu‘tamid to Aghmāţ in Southern Morocco. Al-Mu‘tamid of Seville spent the rest of his life in jail there and wrote nostalgic poems, his so-called aghmāţiyāţ. 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 ‘Abbadids of Seville in al-Andalus, visited the de-throned king in the Sahara (Aghmāţ) and he continued to compose panegyrics in the manner of the muwashshāḥ praising the Banū Hammād in Algeria; 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 Lerida.

4 Jaysh al-Tawshīḥ, no. 41.
mentioned as a composer of *muwashshaḥ* by al-Ṣafadi.\(^5\) He was born in Sicily in 1056\(^6\) and emigrated to Seville in 1078 where he was 'rediscovered' by King al-Muʿtamid. 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 Ḥammūḍids of Bijāya (Bougie). He died as a blind poet in 1133 in Mallorca or in Bijāya.\(^7\)

The unification of Maghribi and Andalusi territories undoubtedly favoured the diffusion of *tawshih* 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.\(^8\) 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.\(^9\)

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 *lauđa* 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

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\(^{8}\) Péres, Henri, 'La poésie à Fès sous les Almoravides et les Almohades.' *Hespéris* 18(1934): 19.

\(^{9}\) For instance, Ibn ʿAbīs wrote panegyrics for the Almoravid rulers (*Lamtīʿna*) and later for the Almohads. He was called the official poet of the new dynasty (*ṣhd>ir al-khīldīya l-mahdiyya*, Péres 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 Andalusi muwashshashāt and the Romance zajal-like compositions. The use of more elaborate rhyme schemes is more common in Andalusi 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 Andalusi were inspired by such non-Arabic Iberian substrate, nor that poets from Occitania were inspired by Andalusi poetry. If Occitanian poets were influenced by the Andalusi, they probably borrowed the zajal-form. The fact that the musamma and the zajal-type is found much more frequently than the muwashshāh-type makes it probable that, if influence occurred, zajal were in existence much earlier than the extant manuscripts demonstrate; but we do not have any evidence for this assumption. The tasmit theory which explains the origins of the muwashshāh as a direct evolution from the qaṣīda simtiyya is based on firmer soil, because it is better documented. A serious problem is that very few musamma'tāt have been handed down which are earlier than the oldest muwashshāhāt. The fact that Hebrew poets already used the musamma't-form frequently in the tenth century makes the existence of Arabic parallels likely. The muwashshāh 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 musamma'tāt from this early period, since these poems were also written in classical Arabic.

The kharja as the final unit of the muwashshāh 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 muwashshāh 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 muwashshashāt and azjāl, although not all of these patterns are pure Khalililian metres. Isol-
syllabism does not mean that Romance versification is involved; aniso-
syllabism does not mean that the Arabic system is used.

Romance poetry can be anisosyllabic and the Arabic system can be
isosyllabic. As long as 'arūd- patterns can be found in the Romance, or
partly Romance kharjas, we can assume that this system predominates,
since 'arūd-patterns can be compatible with the Romance system,
whereas Romance poetry is not always explained by carūd-patterns.
The fact that 'arūd-patterns are used even in the Romance texts implies
that these texts are either new creations by the Andalusi poets, or ad-
aptations 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-t‘nū‘ot 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. Neverthe-
less, 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 Ro-
mance 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 ikfā‘. Luzūm mā lā yalzām ("requiring what
is not compulsory") is an Arabic technique which explains the rhyme-
practice of the muwashshahaṭ and their kharjas. To sum up, prosodi-
cally 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 'arūd-patterns and rhyme-techniques and
their licences.

6. Thematic features

The muwashshah is used, like the qaṣīda, for erotic and laudatory po-
etry. Like the qaṣīda, many muwashshahaṭ are polythematic, as is at-
tested by Ibn Sanā‘ al-Mulk. According to the prescriptions of the theo-
reticians, the panegyric muwashshahaṭ 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 muwashshah 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 ʿAbbāṣid 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 ʿUddat. 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 Andalusi 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-Muʿtaṣim. 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 muwashshaṭ with Romance or bilingual kharjas introduce more frequently a female voice than in the muwash-shaḥāṭ 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 muwashshaṭ 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'hūdāh ha-Lebī, 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 muwashshahāt than in Arabic muwashshahāt with Romance or bilingual endings. However, it is surprising that Yehūdāh ha-Lebī does not use the Romance expression ¿Qué farey? as do his later Hebrew and Arabic colleagues such as Ibn Ruḥaym (Almoravid), Abūrām b. Ṣzrā (Almoravid) in Romance; and al-Manīshī and Ibn ʿIsā (Almohad) in Arabic. Yehūdāh ha-Lebī opted for either the Arabic expression fa-yā ṭabb mā aṣnāʾ or, when he composed in Romance, ya ṭabb, como viveré yo.

There is no Romance equivalent for habībi recorded, such as amigo.

The raqib 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 fīlyūl alyēnō ('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 Andalusi 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 Hispanic-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 Bishri, muwashshaḥ at 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 tajnis, 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 Andalusi 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-dāṣṣa) reflects non-official language. Rhetorical embellishment made such expressions more acceptable for the literate courtly audience.

8. Conclusion

Most muwashshaḥat 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 *muwashsha*, as I tried to demonstrate, entered court literature. Ibn Quzmān and Madghallis 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 *āmmMi* and *ʿajami*-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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